

TEXT – Psalm 24

Introduction: Christmas lights are starting to pop up everywhere on houses, trees and bushes. They shine and flash in various colors and patterns, some are even set to music. These lights are a sign to us that Christmas is coming. They engage the eyes. Christmas trees are being sold in vacant lots and parking lots. Every once in a while we see a Christmas tree strapped to the top of a car. At least with real trees they not only engage the eyes but also the nose emitting a unique evergreen fragrance. Christmas music is being played in stores and shopping malls, even on some radio stations continuously until Christmas. Such music engages our ears and maybe our voices too as we sing along. Christmas cookies and Christmas candy maybe yet are mostly in the planning stages just coming off the Thanksgiving holiday. Yet, once such treats are available they will engage the taste buds. Opening Christmas cards and presents that we receive during this time of year certainly engages our sense of touch. It's all there. All five senses are engaged to celebrate Christmas. But we've missed the most important part of our Christmas preparation – the heart. So as we approach the Christmas celebration, be encouraged by David to WELCOME JESUS YOUR KING. Welcome him with your heart keeping in mind that – 1) He owns the whole world, that 2) he is served by a holy people, and that 3) he is the King of glory.

I. He owns the whole world

- Although this psalm of David is certainly not limited to one person of the Triune God, our Advent King Jesus seems to be the ultimate fulfillment and focus of this psalm. If we are going to welcome Jesus our King properly with our hearts, then we will need to acknowledge what he as King rules over.
- Jesus is the King of the world and the entire universe. Everything that exists is only in existence because of him. The Apostle John at the beginning of his gospel writes concerning the Word as he refers to Jesus, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."
- The writer to the Hebrews acknowledges Jesus' creation and rule over everything when he writes, "But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."
- The psalmist's focus is on what we can see – our world, which Jesus made. He founded this world upon the seas and established it on the waters. The picture is not that the earth is floating on the water, as some ancients believed, but that the land is raised up above the massive seas for us to live on and enjoy God's blessings.
- But Jesus made the seas too. He made everything and it all belongs to him. We don't own anything that we have. It's Jesus' house and Jesus' car. It's Jesus' body given for our use – to bring honor and glory to him. It's Jesus' talents and abilities to serve him. It's Jesus' children that we have been given as an undeserved blessing to train and instruct them in the way of the Lord. It's even Jesus' heaven that he wants so lovingly to share with us.
- It's especially at this time of year, though, that we actually get a little greedy and selfish as if we were the creators and owners of all we have. We're upset because we know we won't be able to get what we really want for Christmas. We are disappointed because our plans for the Christmas holiday aren't working out like we wanted – as if celebrating Christmas is all about us and our family. When in fact it's about another family who brought the Savior into the world.
- That kind of self-centered thinking tells us that our hearts are not always in the right place. We forget that during this Advent season we are preparing our hearts to welcome our King, who owns everything and has provided for everything we truly need and so much more, namely our eternal salvation. Our Christmas preparation is dedicated to him.
- Our sinful world clamors, "Give me, give me." With thankful hearts for every spiritual blessing that we already have in Christ and so many material blessings we can't even count them all, we say, "Thank you, thank you." Paul reminds, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Transition: With grateful hearts filled with praise we welcome Jesus our King who owns the whole world and gives us everything we have. We welcome him too as the one who is served by a holy people.

II. He is served by a holy people

- The hill or better the mountain of the Lord, also identified as the Lord's holy place, is where God dwells. We can picture a mountain we climb to meet God or a throne room that we enter. David asks a question about who is able to climb that mountain and meet with God, to be in God's presence.
- Those who ascend the mountain to meet with God or walk into his throne room must have two things – clean hands and a pure heart. Clean hands are literally hands or palms that are innocent of guilt and exempt from all punishment. These clean hands are coupled with a pure heart. Those who approach the holy God must be purified of all sins – pure and sinless in their hearts as well as pure and sinless in their actions. In other words whoever ascends to meet with God cannot ever have had any impure motives even in the good things they did or have been tainted with the least bit of selfishness, anger, lust, jealousy, or pride. Motives and actions, hearts and hands must be 100% sin free.
- Why do anti-bacterial soaps only kill 99.9% of bacteria? Why can't they kill that .1%? That's because there is only a limited amount of chemical you spread around to interact with the specific number of bacteria that are present. The product also takes a certain amount of time to interact and kill the bacteria. Claiming 99.9% is just a marketing ploy. There is no way to know exactly what percentage of bacteria was eliminated and there are bacteria present everywhere.

- Clean hands and a pure heart to God are a spiritual matter. Only the most powerful cleansing agent in the world can kill 100% of sin – sins of thought, word, and deed. This cleansing agent kills all sins past, present, and future for every man, woman, and child who has ever lived on this planet. The Apostle John identifies this powerful cleansing agent when he writes, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”
- Jesus’ blood makes clean hands and pure hearts. It allows sinners to ascend the hill of the Lord and come into the presence of their King by faith. David reminds us that those who come with clean hands and pure hearts are those who have received blessing and vindication or righteousness, that is, forgiveness for all their sins from God their Savior.
- Jesus our King supplies this righteousness because he chose to rule in deep humility. He chose to have his glory come in the form of suffering and shame on the cross. Jesus chose to surrender all comforts and joys of his divine existence and clothe himself in human flesh to be punished in our place out of love for those who did not love him in return nor even want him as their King. He became such a King, a Savior for sinners so that through his powerful gospel he would have holy subjects who believe in him and willingly serve him.
- By faith in Jesus we are those holy people who serve him by worshiping him and studying his Word to grow in our faith. We serve our King by living to please him with our Christian example in front of fellow co-workers and neighbors and even when we are by ourselves relaxing in front of the T.V. or traveling through cyberspace on the internet.
- We also serve our King as his holy people by sharing the great Christmas message of our salvation, God’s gift of his holy Son, with those who need to hear it. What a privilege it is to tell or remind someone, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord.”

Transition: Be ready to welcome Jesus your King, who is served by holy people, sinners like you and me cleansed by his blood. With clean hands and pure hearts we welcome him, our King, the King of glory.

III. He is the King of glory

- David calls out to the gates and doors, whether that was referring to the gates and doors of a city or the gates and doors to the sanctuary. He calls on these gates and doors to lift up their heads. Obviously, gates and doors don’t have heads. They have handles and knobs but no heads to lift up.
- The picture, however, is an appropriate one as we imagine gates and doors being opened to welcome an approaching King or monarch. This King of glory is to be welcomed. Gates and doors are opened for him. But where is he entering? This King of glory is a spiritual King who enters by way of the human heart through faith.
- David says, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, be lifted up you ancient doors.” This speaks to our hearts – to open them up for our King. But the door to our heart is closed and locked up in our sin. The sinful heart wants nothing of Jesus. Paul says in Romans 8, “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.” The gates and doors to our hearts are locked up tight, secure in our own sinfulness.
- Those doors to our hearts are opened when God’s law breaks through the lock with his threats and punishment for sin, leaving the sinner with no place to turn and nowhere to go expecting only God’s righteous judgment. But the King of glory through his gospel then follows right behind, announcing to the sinner God’s love and forgiveness.
- “Who is this King of glory?” David asks. He answers his own question, “It is the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” That capital L-O-R-D was God’s special name as the covenant God who forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin through the coming Savior. The King of glory is Jesus himself who alone was strong and mighty enough to defeat our greatest enemies – sin, death, and Satan.
- Jesus’ glory is the highest praise he deserves for defeating our spiritual enemies and giving us eternal salvation in heaven. Give your King glory. Give him glory by opening the doors to your heart. In true repentance, the repentance John the Baptist preached, knock down the hills of sinful pride, fill in the valleys of despair, straighten out the crooked roads of lies and deceit, and smooth out the rough roads of meanness and cruelty.
- Give your King glory by believing that he forgives all your sins. Remember your baptism that washed you clean of every dirty stain of sin and made you a dear child of God. Give your King glory by then following through and producing fruits of faith, repairing the wrongs and hurts as you are able and changing your life by conforming your will and your ways to Jesus.
- Paul writes to Titus, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

Conclusion: The sights and the sounds of the season of Christmas are all around us engaging all our senses. But the true preparation for Christmas engages the heart to welcome Jesus our King. May our hearts welcome Jesus who owns the whole world, who is served by his holy people, who is the King of glory. “Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty – he is the King of glory.” Amen.