

Psalm 24.

- ¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
² for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.
³ Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?
⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.^a
⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God his Savior.
⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, O God of Jacob.^b *Selah*
⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.
⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory. *Selah*

Lift up your heads.

The King of Glory comes righteous and having salvation.

He comes near to cleanse and forgive.

Our Savior is the King of Glory, He is the Lord Almighty.

“The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The world, and all who live in it.” And so it goes that another week comes and goes and it is another week where it was good to remember that God is in control. More disruptions, more questions than answers, more waiting and wondering, more suffering, more pain, more trouble. But in the LORD and in His eternal Word we have comfort and peace. Add Psalm 24 to the list of Psalms that God has given to supply us with comfort and hope in these trying times. *The earth is the LORD's and everything in it. The world, and all the people*

who live in it. God is in control, and we can come to him. When our heads are hanging, when our faces are downcast because of the sudden shocking and trying times we are facing, through the gift of faith in Christ Jesus we can look up with confidence and even joy, because we know that our God is in control. We can look to him because he has come to us. And through his Holy Word, we can look to our Holy and Mighty God and our spirits are lifted by his uplifting promises.

Lift up your heads, dear people of God, let all God's people rejoice, for we have a God who comes near to us with his precious promises to save us. In his grace and mercy, **the King of Glory comes near to us, righteous and having salvation. The King of Glory comes near to cleanse and forgive. Our Savior is the King of Glory, he is the Lord Almighty.**

God is in control and we can come to him with our prayers, with our requests, our concerns, our pain, our sorrow, our anxiety, our thanks, and praise. Why is that? Why can we as sinners look to the Almighty and come near to an all holy God? The psalmist here explores that connection with God, which God gifts to his people. In doing so, David, poses this pair of questions, ***"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?" "Who may stand in his holy place?"*** Since God is holy and perfect, why is it that sinners covered in the filth of sin, could ever come near the LORD? Dirty inside and out how could we ever stand before a holy God? In Old Testament times, God both stressed the sinful state of his people and also his desire to meet with them and be with them through the establishment of the priesthood. In those Old Testament times of the temple - and even before that in the tabernacle - God gave to his people the privilege to come up into the outer courts of his special dwelling, but only the priest would be able to stand in the presence of God and remain there. And this would be allowed only after the priest would undergo ceremonial cleansing. The priest would come to a large basin of water that was used for this purpose of washing. And having been cleansed, he could then go into the inner parts of God's dwelling as a representative of the people. He would carry out the priestly duties, at different times he would burn incense and offer prayers and sacrifices, and on a special occasion, the high priest would enter into the most Holy Place and offer the sacrifice of atonement, as God desires to be at one with his people.

And God was interested in - of course - not just clean hands, but a pure heart. He didn't want the priest and the people to just go through the motions, but to come before God with believing hearts, trusting in his promises. But that wasn't always the case. Despite God's steadfast faithfulness, so often the people, even the priests, would soil themselves with dreadful unfaithfulness, bowing down to other gods, giving their love and trust and time and energy and themselves to empty useless man-made idols.

With hands and hearts corrupted by sin, who could approach God's house? Who could stand in his holy presence?

Lent is usually a time of self-reflection and in this particular season of Lent, we find ourselves in a rather unique season of self-reflection. And if we are honest, we have been forced to take notice of some things in our life, including our priorities. And

in this time who of us has not been exposed as those who have an unhealthy love of certain comforts and for love things both good and bad too much during these last few days and weeks. Those idols that we never really knew that we had, have suddenly been exposed or taken away. How much time, energy, resources, and devotion did we give in honor of things like sports, and work, routines, schedules. How we love our routine and the idea that we are in control that we packed our lives so full of stuff that we very often left God little or no room at all. How we have hung our identity and our happiness on our jobs and our status, and our health, and even our wealth, more than our relationship with God. Our leisure, our freedoms, our independence, and our vices, and so much more have taken the attention and the glory and the honor from our God. Even now when life is put on pause, we still reach and grab onto so many other things for comfort and hope and security instead of going to God!

Our hands are not clean! No matter how hard we try to rinse off and make ourselves look presentable from a distance, we are unclean. And no amount of hand sanitizer or hand washing while singing to a clever tune could make things right, for our hearts along with our hands are dirty and corrupt. And so that distance between sinners like us and a holy God should only grow until we are piled up and discarded far away from the holy realms of God.

But God in his grace comes near. Even better than a high priest, the LORD himself comes as the fulfillment of all the prophets. He comes as Zechariah foretold, righteous and having salvation. The King of Glory comes and in his grace and mercy, he comes to cleanse and forgive. He comes as the priest who is also the Lamb, who in his great love God provided as the ultimate sacrifice of atonement. Jesus, God's own Son, God himself, would come to take on the wrath of God and the punishment that our sins deserve. He came to cleanse us by his blood, to make us holy, to give us his righteousness so that come before the Holy God and stand in his presence as beloved sons and daughters washed and made clean. Jesus comes to do this for us as our substitute and Savior, and so he comes with an absolutely pure heart, and with hands that were perfectly clean from sin. As you see him ride into Jerusalem consider how those hands helped countless neighbors who were hurting and helpless under sins curse. Consider how he stretched out those hands and healed the sick and the unclean. Consider how he restored the isolated and those cast away from society like the lepers and the unclean and think of how they rejoiced in a life restored. The hands that refrained from all wrong, and did so much right, would be stretched out on the cross so that he might draw all sinners to himself.

Consider how God has reached out with such hands of compassion to you and how through faith in Jesus's saving work he has gifted you with access to God. For Christ has claimed you as God's child through Baptism, and through the power of the Word God still comes near – even when we are unable to enter his house or come near to each other – our LORD comes near with his saving grace, with peace, and hope and life restored and made new through Christ. Rejoice! Lift up your heads! Give thanks and sing! Hosanna!

Yes, things are different, things are challenging, sin and its stain are both very apparent in our world today. But lift up your heads and take this moment to praise the LORD, for he rescues and restores you. Lift up your heads. Be lifted up! From one generation to the next, let us be lifted up as we lift up our heads and look to Christ who comes for us. Lift up your head for we are blessed with the opportunity to recount and remember how the Son of God went forth to war to win your Salvation. Lift up your heads and see how the Mighty One humbled himself to become obedient even to death on a cross to win the victory for you. Humbled yet still mighty, he would endure the devil's body blows for your sake. He would endure the anguish in the garden, the temptations to turn back, the betrayal, the desertion of his friends, the shame, the mockery, the brutal torture, injustice, and then the crucifixion. The mighty one endured all of that for you. To secure your salvation, he endured the worst kind of separation and isolation as he suffered up alone on that cross for us and for our salvation. He was forsaken by His own Father, so that sinners like you and me might be brought close to God, now and forever.

In these strange and trying times when we may be tempted to hang our heads in perpetual grief and sadness, hear the call of the psalmist beckoning you to gaze upon the unrelenting grace of our God. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift them up you ancient doors, for the King of Glory comes in! He comes near and now may we receive blessing from the sure and certain Word of God as we as children of God seek our Fathers face in these uncertain times. For we know and believe, we trust and rely on the fact that the King of Glory loved us so much that he set aside his glory to step down into the mess and the pain of this world to rescue us and to bring us back to God. The King of Glory loves you so much that he paid for all of your sins with his holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death. Lift up your heads, let the King of Glory come in, for he has cleansed you from all sin and has brought you into blessed communion with God, wherever we are. And this same Jesus, who comes gentle and riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, who comes bringing you the righteousness that you need to stand before a holy God, is also the same God who is in control of all things. Lift up your heads. Be lifted up! ***For the earth is the LORD's and everything in it. The world and all who dwell in it.*** Your God is in control. Jesus is the King of Glory! Lift up your heads and give thanks and bless his name. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest! Amen.