

PSALM READING FOR JULY 12, 2015

START WITH SCRIPTURE: Psalm 24

OBSERVE:

This Psalm of David is entitled Entrance into the Temple. But what exactly is the Temple to which the Psalm refers? Is the Temple that which is built by human hands, or the Temple of the created order, or the hearts of the worshippers?

The Psalm is divided into three essential units. In the first section, the Psalm relates to the Lord as Creator and Owner of all things (verses 1-2). The second section describes the moral and spiritual qualities necessary for the human worshipper to enter into God's presence (verses 3-6). The third unit is an exhortation to the personified gates of the city that they be opened *that the King of glory may come in* (verses 7-10).

The first section provides a divine perspective. God's reign and presence are not limited to a dwelling place in the Temple or seated in the ark of the covenant. His reign is universal, as is his Lordship: *The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.* God's claim to the title as Ruler and Owner of all is quite simple — he is the Creator of all: *for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.*

The second section asks the vital question, *Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?* Interestingly, the Psalmist does not offer the conventional answer — the Priests and Levites. No, those who are qualified to climb this holy hill are not qualified by their titles or lineage, but by their character: *Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.*

They shall be vindicated and blessed by *the God of their salvation.* And perhaps the most significant quality required of those who are deemed worthy of climbing the ascent to the Temple Mount and standing in the presence of the Lord is their spiritual hunger: *Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.*

The third section personifies the *ancient doors* of Jerusalem, as the Psalmist exhorts these gates to lift up their heads. But even more significantly, the Psalmist justifies the purpose of opening these presumably long closed gates — the Lord and Sovereign of all the earth, and the one whom those of clean hands and pure hearts are seeking, is preparing to enter!

*Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.*

APPLY:

There are three dimensions to this Psalm that lift us to true worship.

First, we are reminded that the Lord is God, the Creator and owner of the universe that he has created — and we are not! This provides a sound theological foundation for our perspective. We own nothing at all — God is the owner of everything. So, we worship the Lord as the one from whom all things flow.

Second, we are reminded that worship is never casual and careless. The qualifications for entering into the presence of God require *clean hands and pure hearts*. This is a moral imperative, that we enter worship only after scrupulous self-examination and repentance. From a Christian perspective, we know that there is none of us who is worthy to come into the presence of God, except through the redemptive blood of Christ and his grace. But his grace both pardons and cleanses us: *If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)*.

Moreover, we are reminded that our response to the grace of God is to seek him with all our hearts. God acts and we react in response to his gracious initiative toward us. But by seeking him we find him who is already seeking us. Jesus says “*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7-8)*.”

Finally, we ask ourselves, where is the Temple into which God awaits entrance? For us, is it not ourselves, the people of God? As Paul tells us: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst (1 Corinthians 3:16)*? We are to open the doors of our lives *that the King of glory may come in*.

RESPOND:

Recognizing that God is Lord over heavens and earth is vital. However, when that truth becomes real in our hearts, we begin to recognize the vast chasm between ourselves and God. He is *The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory*.

How can we possibly come in to his presence, and offer appropriate worship? Only when, through his grace, we have been cleansed and made suitable:

*who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.*

It is this quest, to know and worship the *King of glory*, that drives me to *seek the face of the God of Jacob*.

Our Lord, purify my hands and my heart, that I may suitably worship and glorify you! I seek you with all my heart, though I so often fall short. Grant that I may see your glory! Amen.

BY TOM LETCHWORTH

<https://soarlectionarybiblestudy.wordpress.com/category/psalmspsalter-scriptures/>