

2014_11_30 Advent 1
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
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Who Is This King of Glory?

Psalm 24:7–10

INI

Grace and peace to you from the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord, who comes for you. Amen.

Psalm 24:7–10

- ⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall 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 up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
- ¹⁰ Who *is* this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He *is* the King of glory. Selah

You stand atop the gate. The walls of Jerusalem are wide and thick and you stand as a watchman, looking out over the Kidron Valley. Far off you on the slopes of Mount Olivet you spot a crowd. A crowd of pilgrims is making their way down the mount, shouting and singing, and in the center of it all, a lone rider. They appear to be spreading out their garments and laying palm branches in front of him. Who is this royal figure that approaches? You peer out from atop the gates of the city to see a lone rider surrounded by crowds of people singing and shouting and you ask: “Who is this king of glory?”

Today we enter into the season of Advent. A season of preparation. A season of anticipation. A season of fulfillment. A king comes to us from a far and today we gaze out from the gates of the city to find out who this king of glory is and how to welcome him. Today we answer the question which our psalm poses: “Who Is This King of Glory?”

1. Why do you ask?

You peer out from atop the city walls wondering who this is that approaches surrounded by singing and shouting. And you ask: “Who is this king of glory?” And a voice responds: “why do you ask?”

Why do you ask who this king of glory is? Do you not recognize Him? That is right. You ask because you do not recognize Him. And you don’t recognize Him because Your gates are closed. You see these crowds shouting and singing, but it is distant; far away from where you are at. You are behind the gates. Behind closed doors. And from the safety of your well fortified life, you can’t see what they see. But you like where you are at. Its what you know well. Its where you are in control. It is where you feel safe – for now. Why should you raise the gates? Who is this king of glory?

So went the ways of Israel in the time of the prophet Isaiah. Their own God, the LORD, Jehovah, was unrecognizable. Though He walked among them, though He spoke directly to them, they would not recognize Him, they could not hear Him. The people had become too familiar with other gods. The gods that they could see and touch. The gods that said the things that made them feel good, or didn’t say the things that made them feel bad. These gods seemed to offer so much security and prosperity for the other nations. These were the gods they recognized. Made out of silver or gold or wood or clay. This is what they knew. So when Isaiah came to them preaching repentance, and warning of the coming destruction that the LORD was bringing, it was as if they responded: “Who is this king of glory?”

Isaiah cries out to the LORD:

Isaiah 64:1,4,6-7 Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence — ... For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. ... But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities.

God had hidden himself because of the sins of Israel. That is what sin does. It results in God having to hide Himself from us. From the first sin in the Garden of Eden to Israel’s sins, to our sins, God has hidden Himself. He cast Adam and Eve out of His presence, out of the Garden, so that they could no longer see Him in His glory. And so His glory departed from Israel, where, for a time, He was no longer to be found in Israel. And destruction was approaching.

If God were to walk among us, would we recognize Him? If He would speak to us, would we hear Him? Or have we shut our gates, closed off our lives and hearts so that our own God is unrecognizable? What are the areas on your life where the gates are down? Where the LORD is shut out? Where are those secure and safe and comfortable areas in your life where sin has been left to lurk safely without repentance. Has God hidden Himself in a sudden judgment, a warning and wake up call to prove our fleshly securities are weak and to reveal how hopeless we are without Him?

Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence.

And the Holy Spirit responds: “why do you ask?” The Spirit leads you to peer into your heart and life and realize that unless God “rends the heavens” and “comes down” (Is. 64), He will be forever hidden from you. But behold He comes down.

2. Why should I tell you?

You see the crowd of pilgrims far off paving the way with the coats off their back. They make their way down the slopes of Mount Olivet on their way toward the holy city, Jerusalem. And in the midst of the shouting and singing rides a man. As they get closer and farther into the valley, the sight becomes more and more unusual. He wears no royal robe; He rides no royal steed. It appears this royal figure surrounded by shouts and singing is sitting on a dirty donkey. And again you must ask: “Who is this king of glory?”

But the response comes back: “Why should I tell you?” Are you merely curious? Is Christmas nothing more to you than a birthday celebration? Is the manger nothing more to you than a good Christmas card? Is the baby nothing more than a cute Sunday School lesson? Where does Jesus squeeze into your busy schedule this season?

But we reply, no – this is not why we ask. We must know. For the shouts and the singing are familiar. Something within us has been stirred up. And even though it is so unusual, and even though He comes on a donkey, we are beginning to see Him. A far off, but coming closer and closer. We are ready to raise the gates. But how to do it?

Yes, you ask the right question. I should tell you. I must tell you. I will tell you. Just listen. Listen to their shouts. Listen to their songs.

“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD. Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!”

This is the Blessed One of Psalm 118. This is the Coming One who Zechariah spoke of: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.” It is good you ask, because understanding who this is will teach you how properly to prepare for him.

In this way we give thanks that the LORD is hidden. Hidden in the humble form of a servant. If God were to reveal Himself in all His glory it would destroy us. We would be utterly consumed in our sins, cast off to hell forever. But He has hidden Himself for our sakes, so that we might find Him in His coming in the flesh. He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey.

So John writes in His gospel, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14).

Here is the glory of the LORD. The glory of the LORD is the fulness of God, a possession of what it means to be God. And manifestations of the glory of the LORD would normally bring about terror and destruction for sinners like us. But here the LORD comes, in His glory, a hidden glory, revealed in His saving work. Here the LORD comes, in the flesh, in a barn, born of a lowly, poor virgin, laid to rest in a feed trough. So the King of Glory comes for you.

*Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.*

This is His battle march. He rides to the city because He is coming to you. He rides to Jerusalem because He is coming for your redemption. There your King will meet His enemy. There he will meet death and there He will find His glory. He will face the uttermost humility and be raised to the highest glory. There He dies on the cross for your sins, and there He is raised again and exalted to the glory of God’s right hand.

Your King is coming to you; he is coming to your life; he is coming to your heart this Advent season. And it is time to lift the gates!

*Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.*

So God has stirred you up. In this command of His word, He has rended the heavens and spoken to your heart. Lift the gates! Join the pilgrim crowd. And the King of glory shall come in. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you. You run down from your post, you open the gates, you rush out into the world, into your work place, into your families, stumbling in your haste – you join procession, in repentance, humbly laying your possessions, your talents, your prayers, your time and effort before the way of the LORD. And you join the song “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”

3. Why, It’s the LORD of hosts! He is the King of Glory!

So you join the crowd, asking “Who is this King of glory?” The answer comes back responsively: “Why, its the LORD of hosts! He is the king of Glory!”

You say it again: “Who is the King of Glory?”

And the response: The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

Say it with me: “Who is the King of Glory?”

And the response: “The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.”

*Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.*

“Who is the King of Glory?”

“The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.”

And so the crowds reach the city, the crowds of saints, of those who recognize His coming, who are prepared to meet Him, who say: “The LORD of hosts, He is the king of

glory!" And thus the kingdom has come, the procession is complete, all the way to the cross, to the grave, to life and to the glory of eternity.

God raises up a crowd of pilgrims who have been through it all with Jesus. They have died in Him. They are raised in Him. And they enter the glory of God with Him.

Now we may properly praise Him this season. Because we see the manger, not just as a nice Christmas card; we see the baby not just as a cute Sunday School lesson; we see Christmas not just as a birthday celebration – but we see it as the coming of the King of glory. The LORD of hosts who comes in all lowliness, to suffer, to die, and to finally meet His glory in the victory of salvation for us.

So we may properly praise Him. Because we know He is the LORD of hosts, who even now reigns in victory. He reigns over all things, Lord of our sins, Lord of our problems, Lord of death – Jesus lives and reigns with the host of heaven at His disposal – to respond to any need, to care for every concern, to control all things for the good of His kingdom, and He will come again.

So we may properly praise Him. Because we He will come again. He will come in all His glory, for every eye to see. And so you have joined the crowds. The holy city is within view. You join the shouts and songs as you look onward to the great and holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. And in the midst of it all – a lone rider. No donkey, for he sits atop a white horse, He wears a robe, and a name is tattooed on his thigh: "KING OF KING AND LORD OF LORDS!"

We have raised the gates, we have reached the city, we are in that crowds of saints. And thus the kingdom has come, the procession is complete, all the way to the cross, to the grave, to life and to the glory of eternity. Together with all those who recognize Him, we are all prepared to meet Him, to sing His praises – because we know the answer to the the question:

"Who is the King of Glory?"

"The LORD of hosts, He is the king of glory!"

Amen!