

Holy Worship

Psalm 24: 1-6

Introduction: *In the Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis said, “Throughout our lives we are either growing closer to God or further from Him.” If there ever was a time for us to draw closer to our Lord it is now. As a matter of fact, this is the only time we have. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never come, but we have this moment. Our text this evening seeks to usher us into the very presence of God.

WHAT

Some people read Psalm 23 and fail to read on to the next Psalm because of the sheer grandeur and sublimity of the shepherd psalm. I propose to you tonight that psalm 24 holds its own with revelatory force for anyone wishing to worship and drink from the deep wells of the divine presence. It is the prophetic word that finds fulfillment at Jacob’s well when in discourse with a Samaritan women, our blessed savior said, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” (John 4:23 NIV)

Tonight, I would like to share with you the first two movements of this short psalm. The first is found in verses 1 and 2, the second move in verses 3 to 6. The historical setting for this psalm is the occasion when King David takes the Ark of the Covenant from the home of Obed-edom to Jerusalem or Mount Zion. It is

widely believed that psalm 24 was the entrance liturgy of the celebration at the arrival of the Ark. In the first movement of the psalm we see:

The Undisputed Right of the Creator

vv. 1-2

***“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.”***

In Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” All creation belongs to him. All that fills creation belongs to him; that includes all of humanity. Paul said it like this: “For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him.” (Col. 1:16) Paul is of course, referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. He further states, “For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell.” (Col. 1:19)

The confession of God as creator answers the question: Whom do we worship? The answer is that we worship the God who made us. God has an undisputed right to the hearts and minds of every living creature. As the latter part of this psalm will show he is the glorious king. He is not some localized deity of a city state. He is the sovereign ruler of the entire universe which is much too vast to wrap our minds around. This, my friend is the foundation for the demand of holy worship.

The follow-up question is: Who may worship him?

The Unchangeable Qualifications for Worship

vv. 3-6

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?

Who may stand in his holy place?” v. 3

The question is not a superficial one, such as who may enter the tabernacle or visit God’s holy hill. Rather, who may live in the presence of God? Who can stand before him? Who can know him now and forever? In other words, who can dwell or abide in the presence of the glorious king. It raises the issue of permanence. In John 15 Jesus also calls us to dwell and abide with him. In both cases it is about knowing God intimately and remaining with him eternally. The questions include matters of destination, God’s presence and the qualifications for going there. To ascend the hill of the Lord, that is the mountain of Yahweh, Mount Zion. In Psalm 2:6, regarded as a messianic psalm we read: “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill.” Of course, the reference is to Christ.

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

Who does not lift his soul to an idol v.4a

It is from the purity of our hearts that true and holy worship comes. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8) We must be holy to enter the Holy Place. The one welcomed into the Holy Place is the one “who has not lifted up his soul to an idol. Exodus 20:3 reminds us, “You shall have no other gods

before me.” There may not be visible statues, but nonetheless, the idols may take a variety of forms. Here the words of the apostle Paul: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves (idol), lovers of money (idol), boasters (idol), proud (idol), blasphemers (idol), disobedience to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure (idol), rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.” (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Or swear by what is false.” v 4b

To swear deceitfully is to live a lie. It is to be deceptive to one’s neighbor. Jesus summarized the essence of the Law by giving us the Great commandment. The person who is truly acceptable to God is the person who loves God with all their heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... and Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-39).

So What

With those qualifications, you might be thinking – “I don’t stand a chance before God.” There are unredeemed attitudes; you live your life with a mixture of guilt and faith. There are areas and attitudes of sin which Satan has taken over which are dominated by the flesh. There are past hurts and memories that I cannot seem to get over. This demand for holy worship is for folks much more advanced in spirituality, I am simply feeling crushed by such demands. I am not worthy to even approach him. You are right, none of us are worthy.

Now what

This demand does not crush us because of Christ. Hebrews 13:12, *“And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.”*

Through the work of the Holy Spirit Christ will cleanse our hearts. He will heal the past hurts and memories that still shadow us. “Who the Son sets free is free indeed.” (John 8:36)

God can indeed qualify us *to come into his presence. The psalmist said:*

“He will receive blessing from the Lord

And vindication from God his Savior

Such is the generation of those who seek him,

Who seek your face, O God of Jacob.” vv. 5-6

The blessing is his blessed presence. Vindication is his righteousness. The righteousness described here is more than that imputed righteousness which comes when as sinners we repent and believe unto justification. It is actual, practical, imparted righteousness that characterizes our every day living. Such righteousness flows from a pure stream from the heart that is made holy through the regenerating, sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. That’s what qualifies us to be able to ascend into the hill of the Lord Jehovah.

This, by no means imply perfection of conduct, but perfection of love and motive. God does not require faultlessness but blamelessness. (I Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 5:23).

Conclusion:

In their historical setting, these verses refer to the priests who served in the tabernacle, but in their broader interpretation they apply to us all. The condition for fellowship with God is righteousness. "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John 1:6). Holy worship informs our **nearness to God**: Shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah. **Fellowship with God**: Shall stand in his holy place. **Special blessing**: He shall receive a blessing. **Increased righteousness**: He shall receive righteousness from God. Holy people are welcome in the Holy Place before the holy God. Let us pray.

Benediction:

"The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you. And be gracious to you and keep you. The Lord lift-up his countenance upon you and give you peace." (shalom) (Num. 6:24-26)