

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRANCE OF KING JESUS

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church:

All of you lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up, O doors of eternity, and He will come in, (the) King of the glory.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Today marks the beginning of a New Year of our Lord. This is the start of the somewhat penitential season which was given some 1,500 years ago to the Church. Then it consisted of six weeks to help prepare God's people to receive anew Him Who has come in our flesh. Now, it is celebrated over parts of four weeks. We confessional Lutherans hold to recalling the muted joy of the Advent season, keeping it, with our "separated brethren" of Rome as a distinct time of reflection. This practice helps us to again behold our true need for the glorious, strong, and mighty Savior.

To assist in setting the season's tone, light illumines this season. Today the first purple candle of Advent, the one named "Hope," softly glows. The coming of the King of glory to save His people has been proclaimed. The true narrative of the triumphal entrance of King Jesus, the record of events long ago which have eternal significance rings out repeatedly through today's hymns and readings. Those are spoken, chanted, and sung that you might have true Hope in this Season which heralds the coming of our Lord to "Save now!" The Lord's Service to us today through His Word empowers us to know that we are His people whom He is saving, even as we cry out "Hosanna." It begins as the Psalmist declares just Who our God is, as this song begins,

¹ *Psalm 24:9.*

To YHWH (belongs) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there...²

You may have noted that that was declared to be the beginning of a song?

The word we translate “Psalm,” may be rightly translated to mean that this text is given “to make melody, to make music.” For centuries, into perhaps three thousand years, today’s Psalm has been used as a processional hymn. What this means is that, in the words which we spoke today (We will chant them at Wednesday Vespers), there may discovered the music that shows that YHWH is the only God. It proclaims Him Who hinders everything that would prevent us from hallowing His Name and delay the coming of His kingdom. The opening words which you have heard repeated, coupled with the next line, form an opening festive chorus. Hear them again:

To YHWH (belongs) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there; for He upon (the) waters has founded it, and upon all rivers made it firm.³

Those words and all that follow declare that the God to Whom they refer to is not just any local god. His is no limited rule and dominion as were thought to exist for the pagan gods in the last millennium of the Old Testament era. He is not the Black Friday or Cyber Monday shopping god, nor is He a magical elf dressed in red. Rather, as the Psalmist (the ancients taught that he was David) declares that the God, who revealed His Name to Moses as YHWH (“I AM”), is the Creator God. The Psalm declares that to this God belongs everything, and everyone, on earth. It begins with the Advent of our

² *Psalm 24:1.*
³ *Psalm 24:1-2.*

Lord in the work of His creation. It refers the faithful hearer/singer of its words to the beginning of creation where, by His revealed Word, God formed the land of the earth by raising it from the preexisting waters. It recalls to the believing mind the waters that nourished the earth, and rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden, aiding in the growth and development of those plants, animals, and ultimately the man and the woman that God set in Paradise to tend the garden.

How fitting a way to enter into the New Year of the Church. YHWH our Elohe made the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them. He came to create, and to sustain His creation. And, when man fell and brought death and decay to that perfect world, God comes to restore, refresh, and enliven His fallen creatures. This song may remind you, whenever you have fallen into some sin or another, particularly one that troubles you, that the God of Creation wills to restore you to and through His good grace. The Psalm continues from the chorus which recalls creation, and asks how all shall be restored to its former glory, as a voice sings out:

Who will ascend (the) Mount of YHWH, and who will stand in His Holy Place?⁴

That is the first of three questions, in the Hebrew, that voices call out in response to the chorus lines in the Psalm. (The other two ask, *Who (is) this King of the glory? Who (is) He, this King of the glory?*) These questions offer to the Church a song for Advent: “Who is the Man who is coming to stand, and save, and place us where our Creator God wants us to be?” To those, a refrain answer could be: “The Strong and

⁴ Psalm 24:3.

Mighty Lord, the Lord of angel armies, mighty in battle.” Thus, we might say, Advent is a time for reflection on our questions and God’s answers. Hear again His answer to the first question:

*Who will ascend (the) Mount of YHWH, and who will stand in His Holy Place?*⁵

*(One Who has) clean hands and pure heart, who does not lift up His soul to what is false, and swears not deceitfully...*⁶

The answer to the one who asks Who has all that is needed to be fully in the Presence of the Almighty, Who can remain without being consumed by His glory, is, “the Perfect Man.” Is that you? Are your hands not just clean of dirt, but free from sin’s stain? Are you, in yourself, at the center of your being, your personhood, your humanity, in possession of a pure heart? Are you without stain of any sin, or lust, or any desires for that which you know is forbidden by God in His Holy Word, that which was engraved on stones reflected by these under the cross?

In Christ, those descriptions may truly fit you. His hands, created without sin, hold in them the marks which your sins earned. His heart was crushed by the sins, your sins, with which He was burdened. His body was pierced for your transgressions against words such as those engraved in stone up there. His blood ran down and covered over, atoned for, all your sins. In the Water and the Word, His death in your sins became your death to sin; His resurrection to eternal life became your rising to new life. The One

⁵ Psalm 24:3.

⁶ Psalm 24:4.

Who could and did effect all that is described by the middle chorus of today's song,
God's Advent promise to His people:

He will receive blessing from YHWH and righteousness from (the) Elohe of His salvation. This is (the) generation of those seeking Him, who are seeking your face, O Jacob. Selah.⁷

From those lines of that Psalm chorus, the One who receives blessing and righteousness from God grants that which He has obtained to those who look to Him. The Man, Christ Jesus, is He Who received blessing and justice from the God of His Salvation. He was obedient, unto death, to the Father's will. The Father glorified Him on the Cross when He allowed Him to fully bear all sin into death. The Father carried forth that glory as Christ breathed out His Spirit into this fallen creation. The Father, with the Spirit, raised God the Son from the dead, to His glory.

The Son, to those whom the Spirit leads to Him through the Word, grants the power of God to be eternally right with the Father. Those who are in the Church are the ones who are continually seeking the face of Jacob, that is of the Israel who bears the Name of our Father. You know you are named with that Name, for you have been (or will be) marked with the water and the sign of the cross. In Holy Baptism, your name was, or will be, joined to the family Name of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To those realities a third chorus, that of a festive procession, begins to sing out in the second division of the Psalm:

Lift up, O gates, your heads, and all of you be lifted up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.⁸

⁷ Psalm 24:5-6.

The choir calls out to the gates of the Holy City to swell The glory of the King is so great that the lintels must raise, the doorways swell, to allow Him to pass through. His is a triumphal procession, the conquering King returning to display the bounty of His victories. The song declares that Holy City must open wide to greet the One Coming to her.

Here, where God has established His Temple built of living stones, the Lord of Glory has entered in The doors of our hearts are too small to allow Him in, a miracle is required, and given by God. That is, through the Word, God, the One who conquers sin in and for you, comes and opens wide your heart to Him.⁹ To that truth declared from the Psalm's middle chorus, a voice from the gates, (perhaps your voice today?) asks:

*Who (is) this King of the glory?*¹⁰

When the people, even in the crowds going before and after the King Who rides into the earthly Holy City in accord with the Word of God, when they cry out, "Save Now! Hosanna!" they really do not know Who they are heralding. Many of them think they are getting an earthly King. They hunger for worldly freedom and security, and many surely know the Words of this day's Psalm. They have certainly chanted or sung the last chorus of the 24th Psalm with Messianic hopes:

*YHWH, strong and mighty, YHWH (the) mighty Man in battle. All of you lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.*¹¹

⁸ Psalm 24:7.

⁹ Cf. "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates," *Lutheran Service Book*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 341, 2006.

¹⁰ Psalm 24:8a.

¹¹ Psalm 24:8b-9.

That song is of the Hero-god. There is the God all of us, in our fallen state, desire to have come to us. We want the Christ of the Last Day, glorious, coming on the clouds, the devil and his minions to cast eternally from us into the Lake of Fire.

What we get is that which the ancient Church in the first-century Levant received. We behold an humble King, seated on a colt, the foal of a donkey. We hear of His triumphal procession, followed by His Passion and death. We get the King of kings, lowly, entering to die, to pass through to God's own flame-lit altar, while all creation groaned, and the angels wept (A little poetic allusion to a hymn we are about to sing).¹² To that, a single voice (yours again?) sings out from the gates of the Temple of the Lord:

*Who is this King of the glory?*¹³

In the Psalm, the answer has been given. In the Psalm the question stands. Yet, this time, the questioner (you who have "got it," the reality of the Christ in this song) gives his or her own answer:

YHWH Sabaoth (is) the King of the glory. Selah.¹⁴

You know the Name of this King who enters your hearts, who swells the portals with His glory, who comes to give you true, eternal salvation. The text gives His proper Name and everlasting Title, "I AM of the Heavenly Hosts." There is the Name of God and His rule in creation, in His New Creation in you, through His Word. In His Name you are placed above the heavenly hosts. Their worship is united with yours.

¹² "The Infant Priest Was Holy Born," *Lutheran Service Book*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 624, 2006.

¹³ *Psalm 24:10a*.

¹⁴ *Psalm 24:10b*.

In Christ, you are given the answer to your own question. In Him, through the work of the Holy Spirit in you, you confess the King of the chosen people of God. You know Him to be He Who is, "I AM Who causes to be, of the angelic and celestial armies, the King of all that is set apart." His Word takes away all your doubts. His grace gives you to behold Him, to sing of Him and the King Who became the sacrifice; Who conquered death; Who leads you to the Holy Place; Who comes to you at His Table. He to Whom you cry, "Hosanna!" is He to whom you sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy..." Behold anew the Triumphal entrance to repentant sinners of the King of Jesus in Water, Word, Bread and Wine this Advent season, and "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!"

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Advent I (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 24; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 21:1-9

December 1, 2013

Pastor Michael A. Merhouse

Solī Deo Glōria

To David, Psalm:

To YHWH (is) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there; for He upon (the) waters has founded it, and upon all rivers made it firm.¹⁵

Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy standing place?¹⁶

Clean hands and pure heart, who does not lift up to what is false, my soul, and swears not deceitfully, will receive blessing from YHWH and justice from (the) Elohe of his salvation.¹⁷

This is (the) generation of those seeking Him, who are seeking your face, O Jacob. Selah.¹⁸

Lift up, O gates, your heads, and all of you be lifted up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.¹⁹

Who (is) this King of the glory?

YHWH, strong and mighty, YHWH mighty in battle.²⁰

All of you lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.²¹

Who be this King of the glory?

YHWH Sabaoth (is) the King of the glory. Selah.²²

“You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

What does this mean?

¹⁵ Psalm 24:1-2.

¹⁶ Psalm 24:3.

¹⁷ Psalm 4:4-5.

¹⁸ Psalm 24:6.

¹⁹ Psalm 24:7.

²⁰ Psalm 24:8.

²¹ Psalm 24:9.

²² Psalm 24:10.

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not despise his Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it.

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

What does this mean?

Answer: To be sure, the good and gracious will of God is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also be done by us.

How is this done?

Answer: When God curbs and destroys every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, of the world, and of our flesh which would hinder us from hallowing his name and prevent the coming of his kingdom, and when he strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith even to the end. This is his good and gracious will.²³

²³Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia