



Sermon Transcript March 28, 2021

Psalms of Encouragement From Peace to Power Psalm 24

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on March 28, 2021 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com

Sermon Text
Psalm 24

The King of Glory
A Psalm of David

¹ The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,
² for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

³ Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.
⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the
God of his salvation. ⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Selah

⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O 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 gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.
⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!

Selah

Introduction

For these three weeks leading into Holy Week, we have been walking through Psalms 22, 23 and today we come to Psalm 24. And the starting point of our three-week journey was with the cry of pain we heard expressed in Psalm 22. *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* This cry of David is also the cry of our Lord as he hung on the cross. And furthermore, this is what we feel and what we cry when we too experience pain and suffering in this life. Our pain can often cause us to feel as though we are alone and helpless; often leaving us afraid and anxious.

Within the three-week period when we began this journey, there have been two mass shootings that have taken place in our country. Painful. The first one in Atlanta killed eight people and it exposed the pain that many in our Asian-American communities have been feeling due to the increase of anti-Asian bias that has been simmering in our country for some time now. Then, this past week we witnessed the terror of what took place in a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado, where ten people were killed at the hand of a lone gunman. It was painful to hear the stories of each of these individuals and it was difficult to imagine the terror that these people experienced, both those who lost their lives and those who survived. With each of these mass shootings, I feel the pain of not seeing any ability to come together as a nation and forge a sensible solution towards creating a deterrent to these senseless acts. The cry of Psalm 22:2 captures the pain I am currently feeling in my heart over this matter. *“O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.”* We just have a sense that this familiar pain will be felt once again . . . and again . . . and again. Painful.

Because this road of pain is our common journey, we are using these three Psalms to consider how we might journey through our pain. I don't claim to understand it all, but I do affirm that God uses our pain for our good. God redeems our pain. I was reading this week in Deuteronomy where Moses was getting the people of Israel ready to enter into the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 4 he anticipated the day when they would stray from God and end up living in exile. But he said that when these hard things—these tribulations—their pain—comes upon them that they *will return to the LORD*. And when they seek him in their pain, they will find him. It is often through pain that we come to the end of ourselves and we turn to God. God redeems our pain. This has been the journey that we have seen through these three Psalms:

We have seen that our pain turns our hearts to prayer and to God. Our prayer turns our hearts to the promises of God. The promises of God turn our hearts to praise God.

When we praise God, our hearts are filled with peace. That is what we saw last week. Praising Jesus for being our Good Shepherd, our Generous Host and our Eternal Home brings us great peace. So we say confidently, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* These are words that bring a great sense of peace in a world filled with pain. This brings us to Psalm 24. And it is here where we see that God's peace brings us power.

Pain turns to Prayer . . . Prayer turns to Promises . . . Promises turn to Praise . . . Praise turns to Peace . . . Peace turns to Power.

Psalm 24 is oozing and dripping with the imagery of God's power. Look at Psalm 24:7-8. *"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!"* Let's not forget how these three Psalms fit together and point us to Jesus. Psalm 22 is the Psalm of the Cross where we see Jesus the Savior. Psalm 23 is that most beloved Psalm of all and it is here where we see Jesus the Good Shepherd. And now we come to Psalm 24 and we can't help but see Jesus the Glorious King. Savior. Shepherd. King. Or as some have put it. You have there three pictures of Jesus: the cross, the crook and the crown.

But what kind of power are we looking at here in Psalm 24? How does Jesus demonstrate his power? I discovered this week that according to the ancient rabbis, Psalm 24 was recited by the priests in the temple on the first day of every week. On the first day of every week, the priests would say, *"Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!"* Did you catch the question that was asked two times? ***"Who is this King of glory?"***

And it is not too different to the question being asked out on the street on that first Palm Sunday—the first day of the week—as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, presenting himself as that *King of glory*, Israel's Messiah. As he was riding into Jerusalem, the people were singing, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!"* As Jesus made his way into the city, Matthew tells us that the people were asking the question the priests were asking in the temple that first day of the week: ***"Who is this?"*** The answer on the

street was that this is Jesus! But he was humble and came riding on a donkey. In fact Matthew quotes from Zechariah and says of Jesus, *“Behold your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.”* Both the people on the street and the priests in the temple were right. ***Who is this King of glory?*** Jesus is the King of glory. And Jesus is *strong and mighty*. But his power is often an “upside down kind of power.” And it paves the way for the kind of power that his peace leads us to. It is not a power that conquers pain or eliminates pain. Instead it is a power that endures pain and enters the pain of this world in an “upside down kind of a way.” It is the kind of power Paul speaks about when he says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*

This morning, as we live in a world filled with pain, I want us to consider how the power of Jesus is on display in the world . . . in us . . . and through us.

The Power of God

Psalm 24 begins with an acknowledgment of God’s absolute power and authority. It stakes the claim that the world belongs to God and all that is in it. All the rocks and the trees, all the birds and the bumblebees belong to God. Everything! That includes everyone sitting here in front of me and everyone watching me or listening to me and everyone who lives and breathes. It says in verse 1, *“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.”* Abraham Kuyper famously put it this way, “In the total expanse of human life there is not a single square inch of which Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare, ‘That is mine’.”

On what basis can God stake such a claim of ownership, authority—Kingly rights? It is quite simple. He made it. He is the Creator. That is what it says in verse 2. Here he gives the reason for such an absolute claim, *“for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.”* ***Who is this King of glory?*** Well for starters, he is the Creator of all that is and therefore he is King of all.

Philip Ryken made a great observation when he said that this is why the debate over the origin of life is so important. He said, “When people disagree about the origin of the species or about the beginning of the world, they are not simply arguing about how the universe was made, but about who’s in charge. If God is not our Creator, then he cannot be our King.”¹ But if he is the Creator, we are all accountable to him. Revelation 4:11 says it well. *“Worthy are you our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were*

created.” Or, as Romans 11:36 says, *“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”* So this Psalm begins with a display of the absolute power of God who spoke it all into existence. If you were asked to describe “power” or define “power” the creation of the world would be at the top of the list. It is what distinguishes God from man, Creator from creature. There is no one like God.

The Upside Down Power of Jesus

In light of the absolute power and authority of God, a question emerges in verse 3. It is a question that simply asks, “Who can stand before this God?” Look at the question with me. *“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”* It is an important question.

Most commentators believe that this Psalm was written to commemorate the day when David brought the ark of the covenant back into Jerusalem and back into the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant was that piece of furniture that represented the throne of God and it signified the presence of God with his people. When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant it was said that *“The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”* Therefore, much like the procession of Jesus on Palm Sunday, David led a joyful procession as the ark was brought back into Jerusalem. The glory of God was returning. I think part of the cause for joy that day was because the ark of the covenant had been absent from its rightful place from the time of Samuel to the time of David. It had been absent for 100 years. It was a long time coming. But the journey back to its rightful place wasn’t without its difficulty. At first, they put the ark of the covenant on a cart instead of carrying it the way they were supposed to and as the cart stumbled, a man by the name of Uzzah, reached out his hand to steady the ark and this casual and careless act cost him his life. It says in 2 Samuel 6:6-7, *“Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.”* Now let’s read Psalm 24:3 again. *“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”*

Notice how David answers the question. The one who can come into the presence of God and the one who can stand before God is *“He who has clean hands and a pure heart.”* The image of hands and heart speak to both the outward actions of a person as well as the inward motives and thoughts of a person. “Clean hands” speak to what

we do. “Pure hearts” speak to what we think. It speaks of both an outward obedience and an inward integrity. And then he says of this person that he is one *“who does not lift up his soul to what is false.”* That is an issue of worship. He doesn’t worship idols. In other words, he keeps the first and great commandment. He loves God with all his heart, all his soul and all his mind. And then he ends by saying, *“and does not swear deceitfully.”* This is the rest of the Great Commandment that addresses how we treat others. It is what Jesus said when he said that *the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself.* And so when you read the question again, *“Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”* . . . And you consider the answer . . . *the clean, the pure, the faithful and the obedient* . . . It ought to cause you to ask the question: Can ANYONE ascend to the hill of the LORD? Can ANYONE stand in his holy place? It is a question that acknowledges none of us can.

This is what brings us to the “upside down power of Jesus.” In fact, Jesus redefines power. This redefinition of power is on display as Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He rides into the city as a different kind of king. Keep in mind, this is the same Jesus of whom John said in John 1:3, *“All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”* In other words, this is the one that Psalm 24 speaks about at the beginning of the Psalm. This is the one who is sheer power itself. This is the Jesus who stakes the claim on every square inch of the universe, “That is mine!” He is worthy of worship. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And yet here he is, displaying a power that is unlike any power; becoming one of us, humbly riding on a donkey and beginning his trek all the way to the cross. This is a power that endures the pain of this broken world and enters the pain of others living in a broken world. Jesus redefines power.

Here is the wonder and the mystery. The power of Jesus is not most on display with the miracles he performed. Think of the power he demonstrated when he multiplied the bread and the fish to feed 5,000. Think about the power he demonstrated when he spoke to the wind and calmed the storm, when he cleansed the leper, restored sight to the blind, gave strength to the legs of the lame, cast out demons and called from the grave his good friend Lazarus. And yet, it is at the cross where the power of Jesus is most evident. Why? Because it is at the cross where sin and evil and Satan and death are defeated. Power is redefined by Jesus as he suffers, becomes a servant, sacrifices himself for others, becomes weak . . . he dies. Tim Keller put it this way, “We see Jesus giving up his power as he becomes a vulnerable mortal and falls victim to a violent miscarriage of justice. But Jesus’ apparent powerlessness is

actually power used to serve others, rather than power used to control others. To sacrifice power in love is to exert the power of love to change things. This, then, is the true power of God.”² *“The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Because Jesus endured the pain of this world and entered the pain of our lives, we can *ascend the hill of the LORD.*” We can *“stand in his holy place.”* That is power! Spurgeon put it this way, “It is possible that you are saying, ‘I shall never into the heaven of God, for I have neither clean hands nor a pure heart.’ Look then to Christ, who has already climbed the holy hill. He has entered as the forerunner of those who trust him. Follow in his footsteps, and rest in his merit. He rides triumphantly into heaven, and you shall ride there too if you trust him.” David says in verses 5-6, *“He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.”*

Upside Down Power Unleashed

The part of this Psalm is meant to be sung between a soloist and the choir. And it eagerly anticipates the ascension of the king to the throne. Ryken said that according to Old English pomp and tradition, whenever the King of England entered the city of London through the Temple Bar a herald would stand outside and demand that the gates would be opened so the king could enter. He would shout, “Open the gate!” Then those inside would say, “Who is there?” To which the herald would say, “The King of England!” The gates would swing open and the king would enter and receive a royal welcome. Perhaps the closest we have to this is the pomp of a State of a Union address where everyone is seated and waiting for the arrival of the President. But then the doors open and you hear the announcement, “Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States.” And everyone enthusiastically welcomes him—at least they act like they do.

And that is what is happening here with this antiphonal response between the soloist and the choir. The choir sings: *“Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.”* Then the soloist asks, *“Who is this King of glory?”* To which the choir responds: *“The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!”* Longing to see the king enter, with a measure of impatience perhaps, again the choir calls for the opening of the gates that the king may enter: *“Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.”* As the gates open and the king enters, the soloist again says with joy: *“Who is this King of glory?”* And with great delight they join their voices

together and sing: *“The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!”*

This was sung with great joy as the ark of the covenant made its way into the tabernacle on the holy hill of Zion. It was sung the day Jesus was riding into Jerusalem as Israel’s king. But this song points to a more glorious day than that. It points to the day when Jesus ascended into heaven as the triumphant King and sat down at the right hand of the Father. I wonder whether or not the angels sang this Psalm as Jesus entered the royal courts of heaven. *“Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. **Who is this King of glory?** The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. **Who is this King of glory?** The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!”* Jesus is the King of glory.

And right now, as the King of glory, his kingdom is advancing all over the world with great power. I wonder what you envision when you hear that. What do you envision when I say that the kingdom of God is advancing with great power around the world? Do you envision revival? Do you envision the miraculous? Do you envision thriving churches and church planting movements that are outpacing the ability to keep up with it? I think that is what we tend to think of when we think of the power of the kingdom of God. All of these things have been and can be part of the power of the kingdom of God. But I would submit to you that the normal means by which the power of the kingdom of God is on display is the “upside down power unleashed” through the pain and the suffering and the weakness and the sacrifice we humbly make day in and day out as we serve the King. It is a power on display when we forgive. It is a power on display when we serve. It is a power on display when we sacrifice.

This is causing me to see my pain differently than I am prone to see it. Often I see my pain—whatever the cause—as an interruption and a distraction. I see it as the thing that is keeping me from being what God wants me to be and to do what God wants me to do. But then I am reminded that the “upside down power of God” is on display most of all when I am weak—it is in my pain. Why is that? Because pain turns to prayer and prayer turns to promises and promises turn to praise and praise turns to peace . . . and this is power! I am convinced that this is when Jesus is most powerfully demonstrated in our lives. Two weeks ago I asked you to fill in the blank and identify your pain. How might you see your pain differently, if you knew that God was at work in it and that in your time of weakness, God’s power was on display in you? I am not saying it is easy. But it is hopeful.

Then also, it reminds me that I am not just enduring pain, but that the way of the kingdom is that I can enter the pain of others. And it actually moves me to reach out to the people in the margins. That is where Jesus went. He went to the lepers, the demon-possessed, the little children, the blind, the nameless, the Gentile. He met their need. I am suggesting to you that the power of Jesus is most on display in this world through the quiet and humble service that the countless number of Christians do in this world every single day. It is not splashy. It is not the things of the front pages. It happens every week in the quiet ministries of the church. It happens every week in the reaching out to neighbors and co-workers with compassion. It is taking the mindset of Jesus and entering into the pain of people with the power of love.

Conclusion

I hope these last three weeks have helped you enter into Holy Week. I would encourage you to go back and read Psalms 22, 23 and 24 this week and do so with Jesus in mind. Read Psalm 22 and see the cross and the Savior. Read Psalm 23 and hear Jesus say to you, *“I am the Good Shepherd and I lay my life down for my sheep.”* And read Psalm 24 and when it asks, *“Who is this King of glory?”* you can answer back, “Jesus is the King of Glory!”

But then let these three passages also speak to you pain and let it turn your pain into power. I had to preach this sermon to myself this week. At times, I have felt very weak and inadequate for the task before me. As I processed this sermon, I was able to see my own struggle from a different light. I said to myself—turn to prayer! Then rest in the promise of God and praise him. This gave me a measure of peace and a renewed confidence in what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9. *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* In fact, do you know what he says next? *“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* That is the power of Jesus!

“Who is this King of glory?” Jesus is the King of Glory!

¹Philip Ryken sermon “Enter the King of Glory” www.preachingtoday.com
²Tim Keller *Hope In Times of Fear* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021) 73

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COMMUNITY
GROUPS

Getting To Know Me Questions

1. What are your Easter plans? As a group, discuss ways that you can keep Jesus the focus of this Holy week.
2. Psalm 22 (Jesus the Savior) - Psalm 23 (Jesus the Shepherd) - Psalm 24 (Jesus the King) Which speaks most to you and why?

Diving Into The Word

3. Read Psalm 24:1-2. How do you see the power of God on display through creation? How does this point to Jesus being Ruler of your life?
4. Read Psalm 24:3-4. Discuss the meaning of “clean hands” and “pure heart” and “not lifting up the soul to what is false” and “not swearing deceitfully.” How does this describe the condition of man? How would you answer the questions of verse 3?
5. Read Psalm 24:5-6 and consider how they point us to Jesus. What do you think about the idea that the power of Jesus is most on display at the cross? What does that tell you about the way Jesus redefines power?
6. Read Psalm 24:7-10 with the picture of the ascension of Jesus (Philippians 2:4-11) How does the fact that Jesus reigns over his kingdom help you endure your own pain? How does it encourage you to enter the pain of others? See also 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Taking It Home

7. Pain to Prayer to Promise to Praise to Peace to Power - How does this help you in your situation?
8. Is there some way as a group you could “enter” into the pain of someone in need?