

Jesus is the King - Psalm 21

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[0 : 00] Shall we open our Bibles? We're on page 553, Psalm 21. The King rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories you give.

! You've granted him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request to his lips. You came to greet him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked you for life and you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever.

Through the victories he gave, his glory is great. You have bestowed on him splendor and majesty. Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. For the King trusts in the Lord through the unfailing love of the Most High. He will not be shaken. Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies. Your right hand will seize your foes. When you appear for battle, you'll burn them up as in a blazing furnace.

The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath and his fire will consume them. You will destroy their descendants from the earth, their posterity from mankind. Though they plot evil against you and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed.

[1 : 04] You will make them turn their backs when you aim at them with drawn bow. Be exalted in your strength, Lord. We will sing and praise your might. Lord, we pray that you'd be here this morning as we look at your word and we consider what you have for us.

Lord, we need you. We need you to speak. We need you to prick our hearts with what you have for us. Lord, we pray that you would work through the words that are said, not because they're particularly eloquent, but because you are behind them.

Lord, and that they would be your words and not mine. Lord, we pray that you would give us attentiveness to hear what you have, to know you a little bit better, to understand what you're doing in the world and in our lives so that we might follow you more closely and more fervently today.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well, we are looking at Psalm 21. Thank you, Rebecca, for reading it. Last week, we completed the kind of mini-series on creation, which is super helpful and encouraging. And we'll start in a couple of weeks' time the new series on Romans, which we're looking forward to. So we'll take a little one-week Sunday, one-Sunday detour into Psalms.

[2 : 23] And Psalms is a great option for that kind of thing because it's one of the things that makes Psalms great is that each of them kind of can stand on its own. And you can read one, and it's sort of complete in its ability to speak something to you and that you don't have to read a long passage different than some of the books and epistles where you've got a lot of content, right?

That said, this psalm, the one we're looking at today, while it does stand on its own, it is connected to the previous one, Psalm 20. And Psalm 20, we all looked at a few weeks ago, if you were here, when Luis brought the message.

And so these two, they're connected. It's Psalm 20 and Psalm 21. You can read them together. Both of them are written by David, and they have the same title. It says, for the director of music, a psalm of David.

And so just to remind us a bit of what Psalm 20 had to say, if I can make that happen. Sorry if it's a bit small. Let me read this for you.

In Psalm 20, David says, May the Lord answer you when you are in distress. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.

[3 : 40] May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. And may we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

May the Lord grant all your requests. Psalm 20 appears to be David before some sort of upcoming battle. He's praying to the Lord.

He's praying for deliverance. He says, answer me in my distress. I'm praying to God for deliverance, for strength, for protection, for support, and for victory.

You see it there. And then in Psalm 21, it's written after that battle. Psalm 21 is David's praise to God for the victory that's come.

David is now coming back to praise him for delivering the nation from its enemy in battle. And so as we look at that again, look at these words in that context, right?

[4 : 37] It says, The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories that you give. You have granted him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.

You came to greet him with rich blessings and you placed a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked you for life and you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. Through the victories you gave, his glory is great.

You have bestowed upon him splendor and majesty. Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. For the king trusts in the Lord and through the unfailing love of the Most High, he will not be shaken.

It reads on and on. Psalm 20, verse 1 says, Answer me, Lord, in my distress. He's a prayer in his distress. But Psalm 21, verse 1 says, I rejoice in your strength and victory.

Psalm 20, verse 4 says, Give me the desires of my heart, Lord. And Psalm 21, verse 2 says, You have granted my desires. Psalm 21 is praising God for giving the king the victory and for vanquishing his enemies.

[5 : 46] What an amazing passage. What an amazing thing to see King David and the nation of Israel reveling in the victory and praising God for delivering it. Can I level with you?

I have to be honest, as I read this psalm this week and the week before and was praying about how to teach it, and I've studied it and preparing for this, I really resonated with Psalm 20.

Psalm 21 was a struggle. I can relate to the king in distress. I can relate to asking for strength. I can relate to pleading for deliverance.

I can relate to wanting to succeed and not knowing if it will come. The struggle feels real and close. And victory of Psalm 21 feels far away.

Sometimes it doesn't feel like I'm very victorious. Sometimes it feels like my enemies are winning. Maybe you're with me this morning.

[6 : 55] Maybe for you, as with me, the struggle is real today. But maybe you aren't in that at the moment. Maybe you don't feel the same way. But my years of life, and as I keep going on, they tell me that if you aren't feeling it now, you can count your blessings because you've either felt it in the past or you're going to feel it again, and probably both.

And so today, I want to stay in Psalm 20, but we have to preach Psalm 21. And as I read over it again, as I read it this week and considered it further, I realized a few things that helped me receive Psalm 21 and its praise, and I want to share those with you.

Because as I read the passage, I saw three missteps, three mistakes we can make in looking at a passage like Psalm 21. There are three ways that we can miss what God is trying to show us in a passage like this.

Whether you've been reading and studying the Scriptures for your entire life, for your 50, 60, 70, 80 years, or you've never looked at the Bible before, and this is the first time you've heard it, these things should help each one of us.

First, it's mistaken timing, mistaken priority, and mistaken identity. Let's start with mistaken timing. That Psalm 21, verse 9 says, When you appear for battle, you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace.

[8 : 25] When you, you being God the Father, when you appear for battle, you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace. The key word in that verse is when. When you appear for battle, you will burn them up.

The New King James Version puts it slightly differently, and maybe helps it make a little clearer what we're talking about. I'll wait for the siren to go. But in the NKJV, it says, You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger.

It's like he's saying, God, you do what needs to be done, but do it in your time. See, the reality is we often assume that our understanding of time and timing is the right one, the only one.

And it's understandable. It would be weird for us to pray to God and say, God, would you deliver me from this thing in like two months' time? Right? I can live with it a little bit longer.

Maybe you have a few more lessons for me. No, but we think now is best. We think now is the time, right? And interestingly, as I've gotten older, I've gotten more mature and wiser, I'd like to say the way I enjoy sport has shifted.

[9 : 40] Right? When I was a younger man, I would make sure I could watch each game or each match of my favorite club live when it's happening and make sure I could be in the arena or watching on the television as it happened.

And I would watch the game play out and my emotions would rise and fall and I would live and die by every moment of good or bad for my team.

And now, most often, because I'm too cheap to pay for Sky and a lot of the sports that I follow are in far-off time zones, I don't get to watch them live.

And so what I find is that I check the score in the morning and if they won, I'll go back and watch the replay on YouTube. And so now I watch the same game, but I watch it with like a whole level of peace.

Right? Anytime the tension gets heavy, anytime the situation seems dire, I remember that I know the outcome. I know who wins. So I can rest easy and enjoy the game in a way that I couldn't before.

[10 : 48] Right? And imagine the battle that David is in. He's fighting. The fighting is still going on in the field and the victory is not yet at hand. He wouldn't be singing the praises. He'd be still praying his heart out.

Sometimes we struggle with Psalm 21 and singing praises because we feel like we're still in the middle of the fight. And it might be the middle of some crisis that we're facing, some thing that feels real, or just the fact that we're still in the world and sin is still here and Jesus hasn't come to deliver that final victory.

And we miss the forest for the trees. Right? All we can see is what's right in front of us and we can't imagine the ending because we're looking so closely at what's right here.

The beauty of the biblical story is that we don't have to wait for the end to know who wins. Just like the game from last night where I already know the outcome, we can look forward to a victory that's already assured.

We can look back on the cross and see the victor. And we can look forward to an eternity where he's crowned in glory. The problem is my view is often too limited.

[11 : 58] My timeline is too short. I've made the error of assuming that the deliverance I desire must happen now for God to be good. So if we're going to take this in looking to Christ's ultimate victory over sin and over death, we can take courage in our trials and our challenges in this life knowing the true end of the story.

Right? It doesn't mean the trials go away. It doesn't mean, it may not mean that the battle's over, but we can endure the ups and downs knowing that the war has already been won.

If you're sitting here and you're in the midst of a battle, you feel like you're in an absolute slog.

You feel like there's no way out. You can't see out of what you're in at the moment. Jesus in Psalm 21 says, lift your head. I'm the winner. You can know the score now.

And it may not make the battle go away, but you can have an inner peace as you walk through it that nothing else in the world can provide. Come to him, he says. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

[13 : 10] So we can make a mistake of mistaken timing. We can miss what that is. We can also mistake the priority. Verse 2 of Psalm 21 says, you have granted him his heart's desire and you have not withheld the request of his lips.

So the strength and the salvation of God came to David in response to the desire of his heart and his spoken prayers, right?

Of Psalm 20, we read. Prayer, it's at the heart of Christian life. It's how we relate to God and how we exist in relationship with him, right? And communication is key to any relationship.

And so prayer is our way to be that. And answered prayer is a particularly special thing, right? And that we feel God's presence. We feel and experience God interacting with us in a specific way.

And every Christian should know the thrill of wonderful answers to prayer. But there are times when we feel like our prayers aren't being answered. So when we feel that way, when we feel like our

prayers are not being answered, when God might not be listening, when we feel like we cannot say that God has granted us our heart's desire, we should look at our prayers.

[14:26] Is it because we are prayerless? It's possible that we aren't actually praying and bringing the things to God and including him in our situations, right? That might be a thing. If we're not praying, even if he is working, we may not recognize what he's doing.

Or is it because we're praying wrongly, right? It could be that how and what we pray is off in some way. What is prayer? What does it do?

Prayer is not asking God to move his will to match mine, right? Rightly ordered prayer is asking God to move my will to match his, right?

Prayer is much more about reconfiguring our field of view to align with God's. Not to make what I'm looking at clearer, but to look at a different picture. And so then unanswered prayer should be a warning signal to us that there might be a problem with something in us.

It's more likely that there's a problem with me than there is some problem with God. And there are abundant passages throughout the Bible where it speaks to why our prayers might not be answered the way that we want them to.

[15:40] Why they might be going unanswered. And I'm going to quickly list a bunch of them. Oop. That one. That's the one I want. Not abiding in Jesus, from John 15, 7.

Unbelief, from Matthew 17. Failure to fast, also from Matthew 17. Not asking at all, from James. Selfish praying, from James. Disobedience, from one John. Not praying in God's will, from one John.

Unconfessed sin, from James. Cold and passionless prayer, from James and two kings.

Prayerlessness, or lack of persistence, from Luke and Psalm. Sin against others, from Matthew.

Lack of unity, from Matthew.

Not praying in the name of Jesus, from John. Pride, from James and one Peter in Proverbs. Lying and deceitfulness, from Psalm. Lack of Bible reading and Bible teaching, from Proverbs. And trusting in the length, or the form, of my prayer, from Matthew.

Right, I put them on the screen, with the references, so you can go look them up. I'll give you the list later, but one danger, in making a list like this, is it feels like a checklist. It feels like if I just, tick these off, then God must answer my prayers.

[16:46] It's not how he works. He's not somehow in our debt, if we somehow come to him in the right way. But they can be a helpful clue, into where we might be getting off track.

To where our heart has moved sideways. Almost exclusively, what each of these have in common, is that the error is us.

Right, our prayers go wrong, because we're focused more on us, than we are on him. Right, not abiding in Jesus, is trying to do it on our own, rather than trusting in him. Unbelief is believing in ourselves, rather than God.

Failure to fast, is trusting in the provision of food, rather than God's provision. Not asking, is not even considering God to intervene. Selfish praying, is thinking of ourselves first. Disobedience is going our own way, and disobeying God.

Should I go on? Right, I could. Sometimes, often maybe I should say, our most fervent prayers, are around our present circumstances. We look out, and we say, God, I need you now.

[17:51] But here's the thing. In the early 20th century, at the dawn of the automobile age, Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company, and was responsible for bringing, the Model T, the first affordable car, to the masses.

He has a famous quote, that he has said, I think it's this way, he says, if I had asked people, what they wanted, they would have said, faster horses.

Right, and this is like our prayer. We see the world, and the things that are facing us, and we make a determination, of a preferred solution, or a preferred future. But if we could see the whole picture, we would know, that that vision, often pales in comparison, to what God has in store for us.

Our God is good, and he does care, about your present circumstances. But he is so good, that he cares more, than delivering you, from your present circumstances.

He, saw the ultimate, problematic circumstance, and he went to the cross, to deliver you from it.

Right, he saw that you were separated from him, and he made way to fix that.

[19:05] He cared enough, for you and for me, to give his own life, to cure your greatest ill, to heal your primary ailment, to deliver you, from your fiercest enemy, to save you, from the very grasp, of

death and destruction.

And so my problem, is that my prayers, are often too focused, on my will, rather than God's. That my priority, is something, entirely different, from his.

I want a faster horse. He wants to give me, a Rolls Royce. And his simple application, on this one, this Bible, this thing promises, whether you've known it, for your whole life, or, you've, hearing it for the first time, there's a promise here, that he, God, will, grant, my heart's desire, every, single, time, if I desire him, most of all.

It's mistaken timing, mistaken priority, finally, mistaken identity. It's another way, that we, misread, Psalm 21. Verse 1, it says, the king rejoices, in your strength, Lord, how great, is his joy, in the victories you give.

David, king of Israel, he writes this Psalm, just after a battle, a battle that, where the outcome, was victory for him. And rightfully, he comes back to the Lord, and praises him, for giving him strength, and delivering the victory.

[20 : 39] It says, he's filled with joy, knowing that God, has given him, the victory. And when we read, the Psalm, we read it, I read it, it's totally natural, to put ourselves, in the story, as David.

Right? But if we look again, we see the Psalm, while written by David, and about true events, in his life, David is just, a type, of a future king.

David is just, a symbol, for a king, that fulfill, that actually fulfills, each of these passages. And that king, is Jesus. Look at Psalm, Psalm 21, again with me, and I'll read them, this time, with perspective, that that king, is actually Jesus.

Oh, I was supposed to go back here. Let me see. It's helpful to see it. Here we go. Right? Jesus rejoices, in your strength, Lord.

How great is, Jesus' joy, in the victories you give. You have granted, Jesus, his heart's desire. You have not withheld, the request, from Jesus' lips. You greet Jesus, with rich blessings, as he ascended to heaven, and you put a crown, of pure gold, on Jesus' head, as our glorious, conqueror.

[21 : 48] Jesus has asked, for life, and you gave it to him, and delivered him, from the grave. Jesus' glory, is great, in your salvation, not in a battle, over people, but over sin, and death.

You bestow, upon Jesus, splendor, and majesty, befitting a true king. You grant, Jesus, endless blessings, and made him glad, at your presence, at your right hand, even after, having to turn away, at the cross.

The problem, when I read Psalm 21, is I've tried to put myself, as the king. But that's a case, of mistaken identity. I've missed, who the psalm, is about.

I am not the king, Jesus is. It was more impactful, if I had the thing there. He has won the victory. He has defeated, our greatest enemy. He is the king, who is worthy. He is the one, who saves, even saves, those of us, who could, who could rightly, have been called, his very enemies.

[22 : 54] He makes us friends, but not only friends, he adopts us, as his children. So if, if I read Psalm 21, and I'm thinking, mostly about my victory, or lack thereof, if I read, this psalm, and I'm mostly concerned, about my request, being granted, and if I read, this psalm, when I'm mostly worried, about my blessings, I'm not going to be able, to say it.

I won't be able, to read it, and praise God, the way that psalm reads. And I've missed, the beauty, and the glory, of what it's saying, because I've missed, who the main character, of the story is.

I think it's me. It's not me, it's God. It's Jesus. He's the main character. He's the point. Here's the thing. Most of us, in London, all of us running around this city, we're trying to make something, of ourselves, trying to be someone, trying to be loved, by someone, we're trying to, win someone's approval, we're trying to win, in some myriad, of other ways.

We're trying to be, the king, of our lives, the master, of our destiny. We want to win, the prize, right? We want to, wear the crown, if you will. Psalm 21 says, there's already a winner.

He's Jesus. He's the winner, and he's the king. And here's the amazing thing. His victory, can be your victory. We can be, on his team.

[24 : 22] And when we do, we can stop, trying to wear, the crown, of our own life. And we can let, the only one, who is true, and good, and wise, be the rightful king, for us.

And like David, we can rejoice, in his strength. We can have joy, in his victory. See, I was, came to, to this psalm, when I first started prepping, and I was looking at it, all wrong.

I wanted to see, myself in it. I wanted it, to be on my timeline. I want, to be delivered, from my battles, and my enemies, when and how, I want them to be.

But what I found, in reading Psalm 21, over and over again, until I figured out, what God was trying to say, is that, what was here, is so much better, than my version, of victory. Psalm 21, is a hymn of praise, but we can only sing, the praises of Psalm 21, if our hearts desire, is for Jesus, to be the king.

We can only sing, the praise of Psalm 21, if what we want most, is for Jesus, to wear the crown. We can only sing, the praise of Psalm 21, if we revel, in his victory.

[25 : 31] We can only, sing the praises, of Psalm 21, if our greatest joy, is in his presence. Shall we pray together?

Father, thank you for Psalm 21. Thank you for, opening our eyes, so that we could see you, clearly, for who you are, and what you've done.

Lord, I confess, that, too often, I want to make myself, the main character. I want to see you move, in a way that, matches my version, of reality.

what I think is best, what I want. And God, I recognize that, all I'm doing, is trying to put myself, in your position. I'm trying to be, God and king, over my life, when all, you ask of us, is to let you be king.

And we can have the victory. We can, be with you forever. You make that, clearly available, and we just have to, accept it.

[26 : 38] Father, as we, look at the things, that are difficult, in our lives, as we look at, what's facing us, and we, it feels, insurmountable. We can look to the end, of the story, and know who wins.

We can see you, in victory, the tree of life, standing there, that we can take, and we can eat, and we can have, forever and ever. Amen. God, would you, be king, of our lives.

Would you, wear the crown, so that we don't have to. We pray, in Jesus name. Amen.