

Psalms 19-01-24

Good evening, this is Thursday, the 24th of January 2019. We continue our study in the Book of Psalms. We resume tonight at Psalm 24.

I took an extraordinarily longer time than I should have last week, but we did finish Psalm 23 in two fulsome sessions. And with a quick summary of that study, we will begin tonight and then move on to Psalm 24. Let's take a moment as we approach our time of fellowship in God's Word to go before the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on this time of examination and thoughtfulness and availing ourselves of the grace of God as we find it presented before us tonight.

Shall we pray? Father, it is always so wonderful for us to get together and look at Your Word and try to get a better understanding of it so that we can be cleansed by the washing of water. We can be renewed by Your Holy Spirit. We can be motivated and encouraged and strengthened for the assignments that You give us each day and each week through the encouragement and the fellowship that we experience.

We pray that tonight as we look at this portion of Your Word, that Your Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, help us to understand what is being said, why it is being said, and how it can help us focus on our identity and our function here in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, Psalm 23, you could easily just get out your post-toll diggers and go to town on that, but we will content ourselves with summarizing what we saw last time. And in essence, the psalm is primarily reflecting on the provision, the presence, and the power of God as it directly impinges on us. Old Testament or new, whether it is David as a member of God's people Israel, of course, that's putting it lightly.

He was the great king. Or whether it is us as members of the body of Christ, we are encouraged as we reflect on the presence, the provision, and the power of God. And there is a focus there on the blessings that are associated with those three things.

And as such, we derive comfort and encouragement. It is a good thing to focus on. When you think about application, you don't always think, well, let me pull out the 23rd Psalm.

That's one of the arrows in my quiver. Let me shoot that into this situation and see how I do. I'm sorry for the bow and arrow thing.

I got a book for my birthday on the making of Native American bows and arrows, and I've actually read the whole thing. It's really fascinating. I don't know that I'll ever have the time or courage to try it myself, but it's really interesting and gratifying to find out the technicalities of how that's done.

So you get stuck with the things that are flotsamming and jetsamming around in my mind, and that's one of them. And of course, they're made of wood in that sense. These are made out of materials, and there's a lot of things made of wood in the 23rd Psalm, so the connection is not quite as tenuous as you might think.

But in thinking about the Lord as shepherd, of course, we cannot help but reflect forward to other parts of Scripture, such as Isaiah chapter 40, verses 10 and 11. The Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. His reward is with Him, and His work is before Him.

Remember, I've quoted this many times, Psalm 40, verses 10 and 11. He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

And that's a fascinating passage to lay alongside Psalm 23. Not only does Psalm 40, verses 10 and 11, reflect God's shepherdly care of His people, but it is prophetic. And in particular, if you enjoy trying to savor the fullness of God's Word, as we find it in passages like this, the fact that He is gathering the lambs with His arm, and carrying them in His bosom, and gently leading those who are with young.

When you look at the inception of the Millennial Kingdom, where do these young come from? And the possibility that those who were taken from this life prematurely, or without the opportunity to make a faith decision in a well-informed and responsible fashion, may end up coming back as these young, and as these lambs, so to speak, at a time when they can be brought to maturity, and be held accountable for a responsible decision, is a fascinating possibility to entertain. You also remember the Lord Jesus Himself identified as the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep. And so the personification of God's care, as is expressed in this Psalm, is particularly potent for us as we look back at the first advent of the Lord Jesus, and also as Psalm 40 anticipates the second advent.

But the spiritual restoration, the association with righteousness for God's name's sake, the Lord Jesus encouraged the people of God to let their light so shine before men, that they see that righteousness, see good works, and the result should be glorifying our Father in heaven. And to be led to the places of righteousness, you remember we looked at that word that is used for the resting place within the encampment, the place where there is a gathering for security, for fellowship, for communion in a time of rest, was very interesting. And I will say that there is always a bit of a temptation maybe to find novelty for its own sake, and there are a lot of things that cross into the largely vacant areas of my mind as I'm working through Hebrew and Greek and so on, and I do make an effort to try to only bring forward those that I think make a difference and are helpful in terms of our passages being both memorable and applicable.

And sometimes I succeed and sometimes not so much. But I do think in this case that if you look at the way these words would have been taken in the days when David wrote the 23rd Psalm and looking at its uses in 1 Samuel with regard to Saul taking rest and so on, that it does

bring a dimension to being led to these places of shared rest that is significant and not something we would think of just reading through the 23rd Psalm. So as we move forward in our studies of the Psalms, from time to time we may depart from the path a bit, but it is with that in view.

Does it help? Does it make a difference that either helps us remember the passage or help us to bring it to bear when it's time to make an application? And hopefully that's what these observations do. But as you think about God as shepherd, the Lord Yahweh as shepherd, ensuring that we don't lack in the sense of His understanding of what we need. Remember Jesus pointed this out as well, that take no thought for what you will eat or what you will wear and so on.

Your Father in Heaven knows what you need. And sometimes we may decide that there is something missing, but David has the assurance that because the Lord is his shepherd, he is not going to lack in any of these areas. And it's particularly interesting to think about not just the content of the Psalms that we study, but the arrangement and the order into which they fall in our inspired scriptures.

What was the Psalm right before this and how did it begin? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me and so far from the words of my groaning? You remember that? And you say, well, this seems completely in a different realm. I don't lack for anything at any time. Lush meadows and restful waters and restoration of my whole being, my soul, and these resting places of righteousness that reflect on God's name.

And even if I do find myself in the proximity of the darkness of death, I don't fear calamity. Why? Your presence and your contact points of the rod and the staff. And then we looked at that idea of shulchan, the table, or perhaps the weapons, the defensive weapons that are laid in order before me in the presence of adversaries.

And the very personal application of oil for comfort, for medicinal purposes. You get the idea that going through the valley in the rocky places, some of these sheep might have been injured and shepherds, I am told, carried oil with them to treat wounds that their sheep and goats might experience in the way. And so this is something that is in keeping with the overall metaphor.

And then you have two items that might seem to indicate that that shepherdly metaphor was abandoned. One was the cup being full to the brim and the other being dwelling in the house. And you say, well, see, obviously, cups and houses don't belong to sheep.

But the figure of speech, in fact, I've even seen, although I'm not sure I credit this, I've seen people who argue for the persistence of the entire psalm say that shepherds also carried vessels. And for sheep that were, for whatever reason, not able to get water to drink and so on, or if they needed something a little stronger for medicinal purposes, that they would actually hand nurse or hand provide water in a bowl. And that this emphasized the shepherd's care in a

time of need to the point of, if you can't take the sheep to the water, you bring the water to the sheep.

If you can't get whatever else is needed, then you bring it to them. And of course that's going to be true whether you see it as a table or as weapons. God is certainly providing.

But in addition to sustenance and rest and comfort, by the way, something I did not mention with regard to the lush meadows last time that I picked up in my review is that it does say, He maketh me to lie down in lush meadows, in fulsomely green grass and so on. And I am told, I am given to understand, they didn't actually tell me, I read it, that sheep graze standing up, and if they're lying down, they're not actually eating, which I didn't know. I didn't know it last week.

I'm always learning new things. And it is an interesting fact that if He makes His sheep lie down in green pastures, the notion would be, in my view, and this wasn't suggested in the source, but I would think that if you are lying down in the lush meadows, it's because you've already eaten your fill, and you're so stuffed you just want to plop down, and you have been there for some time. And if He makes you lie down there, there's also the assurance that where that came from, there's plenty more.

It's not like, we have a cat, and I have learned to read her behavior, and she will begin to call for my attention in a number of her habitual ways, not when she's out of food, but as soon as she can see the bottom of her dish. There's always, you know, it's seldom just completely empty, but as soon as she eats her way down, and there's some part of the bottom of the bowl visible, she's pestering me saying, you know, the bowl is not as full as it should be. My cup does not run over, and I'm in there.

But I can tell you when some part of the thing is no longer covered with that dry food. Well, in the same way, there is a sense of comfort in knowing that not only do I have provision for the day, but I am in a position to be confident that that same shepherd has got my future provision covered as well. Finally, let me leave you with this, and I debated and decided against saying anything about it last week, but I thought, well, let's just throw caution to the wind anyway.

And I'm back to the rod and the staff and the comfort that they provide, their association with the shepherd. And all I will say in this regard, without getting too far afield, is that I also read in my review and cleanup study this past week that people who know about such things claim that the shepherds in the ancient Near East only carried one stick. And if David is talking about a rod and a staff, that it was two different uses for the same piece of wood.

Others beg to differ and say, no, no, one is the walking staff and they will talk about the shepherd's crook and so on, and the other is a short cudgel type affair that they could stick in their belt. And even as they're walking along, you know, they don't want to swing their little skinny stick with which they might be reaching and guiding sheep or whatever, that they want this billy club type of thing that's a little more of an actual weapon. But the preponderance of testimony comes down on the side that the shepherd had a long staff and a short rod.

Well, if you take those two things, it doesn't take a lot of imagination to put the two together, one vertically and one horizontally, and you have the cross. Certainly for us in hindsight, David wouldn't have seen that coming. He didn't lash his rod and his staff together.

But, you know, God is not limited, in my view, to only what people would have understood or even had in their recorded scripture. But you think about the comfort that we have from the old rugged cross and the strong suggestion it makes for us as it points vertically toward God and horizontally toward one another in terms of the great commandment and the second which is like unto it, to love the Lord your God and love one another. You cannot sustain your horizontal relationships without that vertical having been established first.

We have so many beautiful, if somewhat fanciful, perhaps, associations with the cross. But I personally have no trouble being reminded in our perspective and from our position in history of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, and the association with those wooden implements and the wooden cross, the tree, as it's called by Peter in the New Testament, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree is not so far afield that we can't make use of it, at least as a helpful memory aid. So the goodness and the loyal love that follows us all the days of our life and then dwelling in the house of the Lord.

And we tend to think back to maybe Psalm 15 which we're going to revisit again tonight because it connects directly to Psalm 24. Who is qualified to dwell in the Lord's presence? Who is qualified to spend time in that periphery? We have that same idea coming up here tonight. But remember that house, especially in the Old Testament, has a greater significance than just a stone and roofed over type dwelling, both in numbers and the quotation of it in Hebrews of Moses being faithful in all his house and the Lord Jesus faithful in his house and house having to do with the administration or with the oversight and stewardship and responsibility.

The oikodomeo which is the oikos is house in Greek and when you have domeo you have the house oversight or the house service and responsibility is pertinent here in the sense that David says goodness and mercy will pursue me and be nipping at my heels all the days of my life and I will abide in the protective care, in the stewardship and oversight of the Lord for all of those days. And because of the spiritual overtones in all the rest of the Psalm, I think we can confidently take the house of the Lord to be his ownership as the one who is over the flocks and the shepherd and so on. Well that brings us now looking at this triplet of Psalms 22, 23, and 24.

We're going to move from the time of extreme testing and something special in God's plan in terms of God for his own to us inscrutable purposes stepping away and allowing calamity to prevail for a time. We know that all things work together for good because we've got a copy of Romans, but David moves in that direction in Psalm 22 and you remember that in great detail. Then in Psalm 23 you have what is the more normal and prevalent case of restoration, of restfulness, of peace, of provision, of protection.

Now in Psalm 24 we're going to move further in the direction of God's power and presence as a comfort and an encouragement and there is a joyful call to praise and to celebration because of

who he is. You can see a movement here and a reason why 22, 23, and 24 were ordered as they are. There is a progression even that we can imagine in our own salvation moving from where we started, which is a place of extremis, to security and safety and provision and comfort and encouragement to looking beyond ourselves and focusing on God himself and whether or not we will qualify not for rescue, not for sustenance, but for privilege.

That's what we're going to see in a terribly long Psalm and its phrases are very familiar to us. These have been enshrined in music and worship. It should sound pretty familiar.

This is a Psalm of David. The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who may stand in his holy place? Answer, he who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face.

Selah. Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O you gates, lift up you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

Well, as you can see, this Psalm falls naturally into three separate and distinct parts, so much so that the forum source Wellhausen JEPD critics have said, well, somebody took three different Psalms and mashed them together, and I saw a really nice comeback to that from, I believe it might have been Leopold. I was reading everybody this past week, but I think he's the one that said that these critics seem to think that the original authors of Scripture were extremely narrow-minded, and they couldn't have the same idea as the editor and redactor had, that wouldn't these be great mashed together. The original author couldn't have thought of that, only the redactor could think of it.

If a redactor could think of it, why couldn't the original author do it? Why couldn't God the Holy Spirit inspire it that way? If they're so good put together, what's the matter with the original author that he couldn't manage to do it? Well, of course he did, and this is a Psalm of David, and this whole, I think it's sort of a, well, I won't go down that road, but I think there are psychological issues with some of the critics that they feel the need to somehow exert dominance over the material, and you can't really take it at face value. Let me add my reworking of it, and of course this is a trap that anybody can fall into, and I'm nervous about doing it myself. I don't want you to think that you can't understand Scripture unless I talk about it first.

Let me just assure you that is not the case. There is a nice balance point in there where we can

compare Scripture with Scripture and look closely at the vocabulary and tax the text because we know God wrote it and you can't look at it with too fine a microscope, but not to begin to act like, well, this guy is indispensable to understanding the text, or if I don't go to a form-critical commentary, I'm never going to make sense out of this Psalm. I mean, that's just not true.

So you can see this, and you can see it for yourself. It's not rocket science that the first two verses here say something that is a complete thought. The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

He founded it on the seas. He established it on the waters. That's a full-on gaze at the omnipotence and the creative power of the Lord God, right? And it's the introduction.

It sets the stage. It lays the foundation almost literally. He's talking about the foundation that God put under the earth.

Well, this is the foundation for everything that follows in the Psalm. So verses one or two, this is your foundation. The second section talks about in the light of who this great God is and what He has done, what makes us think that we can be in His presence? Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in His holy place? How are you ever going to approach this God? He's great.

He's powerful. He created everything you see. And how can we qualify? Well, He gives the answer, and that's verse four and five, and we have an interesting claim in verse six.

Now in verse seven, the third part of the Psalm is given. What was the first part? Let's take a look at the Lord God. Second part, how are we going to qualify to be in His presence, to be on His holy hill, to be in His holy place? Third part is a call to the gates and the doors.

And these gates and doors need to move. They are currently in their present configuration, an impediment, right? If they were already open, if they're already out of the way, you wouldn't have to say anything to the doors and gates. But these gates and doors are not configured for the Lord to come in, are they? They got to move.

So lift up your heads, O you gates, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors. This always makes me think of a garage door. It's not like, swing wide, you door.

It's lift up. These things have got to go vertically out of the way. Be lifted up.

And I think, well, okay, English castles, moats, serfs pulling on the ropes, and up goes the gate with the little spikes on the bottom. But you know in the ancient world they didn't have those. So I'm curious about this verticality.

It seems to me all the gates and doors I know about, ancient and mostly even in the modern world, conveniently swing in the horizontal. So I'm just saying now that makes me curious. Lift up, be lifted up.

Why? Because after you get out of the way, the King of Glory will come in. Who is this King of Glory? Let's notice L-O-R-D there is capital L and then small caps. What does that mean in your King James? The Hebrew here is the Tetragrammaton.

Y-H-W-H. Yahweh. God's personal name and covenant name to Israel.

The name that He revealed to Moses at the bush. I was not known by this name in former times, but I'm revealing it to you now because I am your God. You are my people.

I'm promises to you. I will provide for you. I will protect you.

I will prosper you in the land so long as you keep the covenant. This is the Lord. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty.

The Lord mighty in battle. Mighty in battle. I didn't see anything about battle up to this point.

Did you? You have a creation motif. The land is established and the chaotic waters are subdued. Then you have the important question of being in the presence of this powerful God.

Now there is some sort of preparation that needs to be made so that He can come in. Well, why do we want to let Him in? Who is He? You know, you've got to guard on the gates and drive to any military base. I'm most familiar with Army posts and Marine Corps bases.

You're going to drive up and want to get on the post or on the base. What happens? You drive up to a gate. There's a sentry.

There's somebody on guard duty there. And what do you have to do? And I was riding with the Commandant of the Marine Corps and he still had to do this. Can I see your ID? Who are you? Commandant of the Marine Corps flashed his Marine Corps ID card.

The gate post was literally lifted out of the way and he sailed. So at gates and doors of cities and of important places in the ancient world, what did they have? They had gates and they're not automatic. They don't have sensors on them.

There's not a pressure plate under the street. Who operates these things? People with a responsibility for security, right? They're guards, royal guards, city guards, something. And if you're going to go in, what do you have to do? Got to be identified.

So there's a call that goes out, open the gate, lift up the door so that the King of Glory can come in. And there's a challenge. King of Glory, who's that? Right? Well, it's not just the Lord of the Covenant.

It's not just the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's you better move the door and you better open the gate pronto, because this is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. If you're mighty in battle, what do you do to gates and doors? You can demolish them.

You can get them out of the way and come in and conquer. Do you want to welcome him or do you want him to come in by force? This is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. So again, lift up your heads, O gates, be lifted up.

And it says everlasting. This is really probably better translated as ancient. And more about that in a moment.

Be lifted up, you ancient doors. Doors that have been lasting forever. Not so much as they're going to continue to last forever, but they've been here since anybody can remember.

So lift up and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of Glory.

If you need any further identification, not only is he strong and mighty, and not only does he conquer in battle, but he is the Lord of hosts. You remember the Lord of hosts, Yahweh Sabaoth, this is the Lord of the armies, right? So this is kind of a restatement and summary of the Lord strong and mighty in battle, the Lord of angelic hosts, the Lord of armies. He is the King of Glory.

Now, let's think about these three parts. And just for planning purposes, we're only going to have one session tonight. So stick with me because we've got only about six or seven minutes to go on Psalm 24.

Three parts. First of all, the earth is the Lord's. This is Aretz.

You can often translate this as land. It's important to remember when I say earth, a lot of people will capitalize it and they get a NASA picture in their mind. It's an orb.

It's the blue marble. It's this sphere and globe floating in space, right? The earth is the Lord's. And when I say the earth, you think big round sphere, latitude and longitude and equator and poles and the whole bit.

Bear in mind that when you said Aretz in the ancient world, not to say that the inspired scripture is not aware of the nature of the planet, but your average Hebrew, when he hears Aretz, he is going to think that's what I walk around on. And its extent is everything that I've ever seen or that I know about people saying, well, I was with a caravan and we went so far. It's a horizontal extent looked at from about four and a half or five feet above your toes.

That's the Aretz. It can be the Aretz Yisrael, the ground I walk on that has been ceded to Israel by God, or it can be the Aretz even beyond that, as far away as you've ever heard of Egypt, the ancient Ur of the Chaldees or whatever it might be. But people conceived of the earth or the land as a horizontal expanse past what you can see.

So when it says it can be earth or land, either one, just don't mentally inject the globe or continents. People thought in terms of their experience and what they heard other people's

experience of, and it was a relatively localized area. They had no knowledge of anything but maybe North Africa and perhaps Persia or some of these far off lands.

But China, they didn't know about. South America, North America, they didn't know about. India, doubtful they knew about it.

It's the contiguous landmass that I can walk around on or little islands I can sail to. So that Aretz is the Lord's and all its fullness. And this is a really good translation.

That's pretty much literally what the Hebrew says. The land, the surface of the ground is the Lord's and everything on it, everything in it, it's all His. But it's important to get this horizontal idea because of what comes up in verse 2. The world, this has a on the land as inhabited.

So He has said, here you've got the ground and now you've got everything in it. This is a super summary of Genesis chapter 1. God creates the heavens and the earth. He gathers the land and separates it from the waters and then He populates it.

So you've got the Aretz in the beginning. God created the Aretz. God separated the light from the darkness.

Then He separates the land from the water, Genesis 1. And the rest of Genesis is, here come the plants, here comes the fish, here comes the birds, here comes the creeping things, here comes the animals, here comes man. Everything on it, everything in it. So when He says the world, that assumes your understanding of the Aretz and everything in it.

The world is those two things combined. I won't give you the etymology of it, but the word for world has to do with the idea of something flowing, something traversing, the verb form does from which this noun is taken. But the world is everything going on, everything going on.

It's the world of chess or the world of hunting or the world of flower pruning or you name it. It's just everything that's going on. The world, everything that's going on, human civilization and society in particular, and those who dwell in it.

These are the current dwellers, not those that have gone before and are asleep in the dust, not those who are going to come in some future generation. This is the active, current status quo. Why verse 2? The earth is the Lord's and His fullness, the world and those dwell therein, because He has established it.

He has grounded it. He has stabilized it. And if you want to do a Strong's on founded and established in verse 2, they're two different words.

They cover much the same ground. If I can say that, that's for Dan Godbold's benefit. They have founded it upon the seas.

This is the Mayim and established it upon the waters. Waters is literally rivers. This is the Hebrew word for rivers.

And you find both of those in the first couple of chapters of Genesis. The Mayim, the waters and or the seas and established it upon the rivers. So you've got big reservoirs of water in the seas and you've got flowing water in the rivers.

Remember the verse 1, you've got the established earth and everything that's stacked on it. And then you've got the world and those who dwell, those who move around and do their business in it. So you've got the static world and you've got the flowing world.

You've got the, for purposes of illustration, you've got the static seas and you've got the flowing waters. And God has established everything that's going on, on top of these unstable and uncontrollable things. Man had not yet been able to create dams and locks and canals and all of the things where we try in some feeble and tiny way to control the chaotic waters of the sea or the rushing waters of the river.

And yet God has essentially imposed his order and his solidity and the solid land on these initially chaotic things. And it's harking back to Genesis 1. God took waters that were without form and darkness is on the face of the deep and he imposes order. And because of that, he is a formidable person to approach.

So who may ascend in the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? So notice you've got movement and then you've got static. Who may ascend? Who can start low and go high? Who can travel? Who can span the distance between where they're starting and arrive at the hill of the Lord? He's high, we're low. Who can make that climb? And once you've made it, who can stand? Who can remain? Who can make the trip? And once you get there, who's not going to get kicked out and rolled back down the hill, right? The answer is, he who has clean hands and a pure heart.

I want you to notice the beautiful poetic back and forth here between that which moves and interacts and that which is sort of static and at rest. He who has clean hands and a pure heart. You can see hands.

Why do your hands need to be clean? Because you are going to do something with them. You are going to prepare food. You're going to offer a sacrifice.

If your hands have been defiled, they've got to be clean before you can use them for any good thing. So you need clean hands and that, of course, represents our actions and a pure and clean and pure are close synonyms, just like establish and found up above. There's no significant difference between these.

So you could just as easily say pure hands and a clean heart here. They're two different words, but they mean essentially the same thing. He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

Remember Psalm 51, creating me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Clean hands and a pure heart.

Heart is invisible. Hands are visible. Hands do things and move things.

Your heart is more of a fixed type element. This is the source. This is the seat of motivation and so on.

And notice the second part of verse four, who has not lifted up his life, lifted up his soul, lifted up his nephesh to an idol. Idols are external. You do overt actions in worship of idolatry.

You end up using your hands to make the idol in parts of scripture. Nor pledged deceitfully. One is an action of the hands.

One is an action of the heart. Idolatry is an overt action type of thing. Deceit and deceitful pledging comes out of the heart, comes out of the soul.

So these are parallel. So who may make the trip to God's hill and once they've ascended, who can remain there? Just quickly, keep your finger here and take one minute to flip back to Psalm 15, which we covered some weeks ago. It's a short Psalm, seven verses as I recall, five verses.

Lord, who may abide in your tabernacle, who may dwell in your holy hill? Remember that? He who walks uprightly and works righteousness, there's your overt side, and speaks the truth. He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend. Verse three is the overt, the visible.

Verse four, in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord. Makes a pledge at his own expense, if need be, and does not change. These are heart characteristics.

This is loyalty and integrity and your priorities, your goals, your values. Verse five, he who does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He doesn't do good.

He doesn't give a benefit with a string attached. He's not looking for benefit in return. What is interest? Somebody needs money and you give it to them, but then you charge interest.

And this, of course, is within the context of the nation of Israel. There are portions of the law of Moses that talk about this. This is what got the tax collectors the unending hate and scorn in Jesus' day, is that they were implementing what was seen to be unfair, usurious interest.

He does not put out his money at usury. He doesn't do beneficial things with the idea of getting something back, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent, nor does he benefit at the expense of someone else. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Moved from where? The tabernacle and the hill, the presence of God. Well, you see reflection of that back here in Psalm 24. Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in His holy place? Now, there's questions about, and there's a lot of speculation, that this psalm was written to accompany the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Israel and David dancing and

celebrating and saying, here comes the Lord, here's the presence of the Lord, symbolized by the Ark, and more than symbolized in those days.

And, you know, open the gates that the King of Glory may come in. He's the Lord Mighty in battle, and you have a Philistine context there. And in support of this, and I do think it's an interesting idea, I personally don't think there's enough evidence to assert or deny this claim, but it is interesting that the Philistines had two gods that are more or less mentioned by name here in the psalm, and one of them is Mayim, and the other is Nahor, or river.

The fact that God has established and founded the earth upon the seas and upon the waters, the word for seas and the word for waters, unchanged, unmodified, are the names of these two Philistine gods. One of them is seas and one of them is waters. It's, I believe, something like Prince Seas and General Waters or something like that.

They had titles for them, and then this was their name. And so there's the idea that David is sort of poking a finger in the eye of the Philistines by saying, well, you know, those are your gods, our God used you for pavement, you know, type of thing. You pick up all kinds of interesting observations, even when you don't necessarily follow the conclusions.

So in terms of application now, having looked at this, the three stages, first of all, who God is, secondly, what is the qualification to remain in His presence, and thirdly, to make this ascent and remain, then suddenly you have a change. What does it take to be in God's presence in the central section of the psalm, the second part of the psalm? Where is God? He's up on His holy hill. He's in His tabernacle, same thing in Psalm 15.

What does it take to go there and be allowed to remain and to abide, right? But what's different, especially in comparison to Psalm 15, in the third part here? He's not talking about somebody going to see the Lord anymore, is He? What is He saying? Get ready down here for the presence of the Lord. Open the gate, get the door out of the way. Why? The King of Glory is not remaining up on His holy hill and ensconced inside His tent.

What is He doing? He is erupting. The letter I starts that word, to erupt, to interrupt, to come forth and come to a place where He was not before. And what do you see in this sense? When we were lost and without hope and without God in the world, what did He do? He didn't send instructions down.

He didn't drop breadcrumbs and say, well, if you do these things, I'll eventually wind the winch and drag you up here. What did God do? The King of Glory emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men. When we were in need, God didn't dispense third-person distant orders from His holy hill.

He came down. And you remember the first time you see God moving in this way, can you think to when it was? I'll give you a hint, it's Genesis. And I'll give you another hint, it's a single-digit number, chapter-wise, in Genesis.

When do you see God saying He's going to move? Remember in the days of Noah? He's righteous in his generations, but the evil imagination of men's hearts all the day is reported to God. And what does God say? I will go down. What does He say in the days of Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah? He does more than say, you see Him coming down and walking around.

There's a big problem here, and the Lord comes. Some people are going to be ready, some people are going to qualify and be preserved, like Noah and like Abraham, and even Lot. Others, not so.

So as we think about Psalm 22, here we are in a situation of extremis, and it seems like God is far away. And we examine, why could that be? Is there something I need to do? Or am I in a Job situation where it is for God's higher purposes that are beyond my immediate scrutiny or understanding? You go to Psalm 23, here's what I know about the Lord. Here's what I know about His provision, and His protection, and His power, and His watch-care over me, and His concern for me.

And I will be in His presence. I will dwell under His administration all my days. Then you come to Psalm 24, here is the Almighty God, dominant.

Who does qualify to be in His presence? And you return to the question of Psalm 15. Well, the answer is, can you open your gates and lift up your doors so that the King of Glory can come in? You don't always have to think about, how am I going to climb the high hill, and how am I going to stay there once I arrive? God has come. God has spanned the distance.

And so, there are times when we think, you know, I eventually want to be in His eternal presence, and I want to dwell in the New Jerusalem. I want to be a property holder and have an access card that's going to get me through one of those 24 gates. But what can I do right now? What are the closed doors and the sealed gates that need to move so that the King of Glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, so that He can come in? Can I, in some sense or in some fashion, respond to that call in my own life and say, you know, I think I've been slow to get those impediments out of the way so that the King of Glory can have full access in the earthly city that has still got walls and gates and doors.

We're not at the time when it's the peaceable kingdom, and there's, you know, no harm comes to children, and there's no more tears, and I want to qualify for that. But in the meantime, the King of Glory, who is still fighting battles and is still the Lord of hosts, and there is conflict. This is a time of conflict.

There's a time where there's a need for defense. There's a need for gates and doors. But if the King of Glory is approaching and the call for identification goes out and comes back, this is God, then how resistant am I or how welcoming and how quickly can I get those doors and gates open? So there's a very interesting flow of ideas across these three sections of the psalm, and regardless of the original occasion, could have been when he brought the Ark of the Covenant, but still, you remember when the King of Glory did come to the walled Jerusalem with its gates

and with its doors? Did they recognize him? He was Yahweh incarnate.

He was the King of Glory and the Lord of hosts in the flesh. Instead of opening the gates and flinging wide the doors, they took him outside the city, outside the gate, and crucified him with righteousness as their goal and holiness and protection of the name of God as their banner, but they were so utterly blind and misguided. It's scary.

It's frightening to think how fully we can miss it if we are not constantly asking for light, for healing, for forgiveness, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, asking and seeking and knocking and humbly coming before him and being ready for whatever he has in store, knowing that he's the creator God. It's in his hands. He is not only the one who may step away for a time to accomplish a purpose, as in Psalm 22, but he is also our shepherd, our provider, our keeper, and the one that will sustain us and follow us with goodness and mercy all of our days.

And in many ways, Psalm 24 is sort of a culmination of those two thoughts. After the strife is over, where is the King? Am I receptive to him now so that he will be receptive to me later? I open the gates and doors now. He will allow me to ascend the hill and stay there later.

So it's fruitful to think about. And I leave those thoughts with you. And we'll enjoy now the efforts of our musicians.

The Godbold family blesses us each time we meet with wonderful music. And so we'll close here in a word of prayer and enjoy that offering for this evening. Father, we do thank you for your word and the wonderful power that it imports into our souls, into our hearts, into our lives for cleansing, for healing, for restoration, for sustenance, for motivation and encouragement, for enablement, for a clear perspective as we try to improve the reasons that we do what we do, our goals that we set, the stewardship of our time and our efforts.

And we pray that as we reflect on what we've seen from your word tonight, that your Holy Spirit will help us to see clearly not only what it means, but what it means to us and the improvement that we can make in our dedication and in our focus on the things that truly important as we live the life that remains to us now and look forward to the life that will be eternally ours in the ages to come because of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for us and his faithfulness to your plan on our behalf. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.