



Royal Thanks

Psalms #5 | Nov 12, 2023 | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM | Preached by Steve Howell

Opening

- How do I handle fear?
- How do I praise God even when I'm sad?
- How do I trust God?

Throughout our past sermons, we've introduced some very *practical* concerns. These are issues that you and I face; they are things that matter in the real world. Our goal in looking at this range of songs (and gaining insights for reading them well) has been to help us **apply** these examples to our own situations. We want to **cultivate a mindset** that mirrors the godly examples we find throughout the Book of Psalms.

It has been a highly practical approach...until today.

This morning we are diverting into a category of songs that might NOT resonate with you. Today we will be looking at a category of songs that we will call "Royal Psalms."

Royal Psalms are (not surprisingly) songs about...royalty. They are songs addressed to the king.

And there's the problem.

As you know, our nation just held an Election Day on Tuesday, and regardless of who got your vote, you walked out of that voting booth knowing a simple truth. As a voter, you left knowing the kind of government we have. Our government is not a monarchy; it is a _____ . (A what? A mess!!! lol) It's a mess, but it's still a *democratic republic*.

We don't have a king! And we haven't...at least since King George III lamented our nation's rebellion and sent "a fully armed battalion to remind us of his love."¹

We are gloriously king-less in the USA. And so, out of the 150 songs we find in the Book of Psalms, the ones that focus on kingship seem more distant than the ones that focus on the human heart. We struggle to relate!

And because of that struggle, I have to wonder if we might just hit "skip" when it comes to the Royal Psalms. Would we be more encouraged by moving on to other songs instead of wasting our time here?

¹ "You'll Be Back" from the musical Hamilton.



In other words, are the royal psalms *useful*?! Aside from the historical references and insight into Israel's kingship, do they contain any lessons -- any *helpful* lessons -- for us today?!

Yes. Yes, they do.

You and I need to make a few connections as we read them, but then we'll see them as valuable. The royal psalms will prove Paul correct in what he wrote to his friend Timothy:

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is **useful** for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,"* (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV)

Let's connect the dots as we explore some of these royal psalms...and we'll arrive at a practical lesson that all of us need to embrace!

Songs for Israel's King

To dive into the royal psalms is to dive into the realm of politics.

When you and I think about songs connected to political leaders, we might think about Presidents. What song plays any time the President enters a venue? The official song is "Hail to the Chief." It is a song that has been used since the days of George Washington and John Quincy Adams, but it has gained popularity and developed into a tradition in the years since.

Israel (as far as we know) didn't have an official song like that, but they did have songs in the Book of Psalms that honored their nation's leader. These included royal psalms like:

Psalms 2, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132

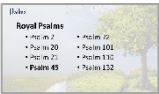
In these songs, you'll find inspiring praise of the king:

"My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, humility and justice; let your right hand achieve awesome deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet." (Psalm 45:1–5, NIV)

Wow! Those are some accolades! The songwriter really exalts the king here...which may be surprising when you consider that the role of "Israel's king" wasn't supposed to exist in the first place.

History: How Did They Get One?

What do I mean? Well, you have to go back in **history** and remember how Israel ended up with a king. Let's do a quick recap of their story, going back to Genesis.



- God initiated a new nation through a **promise to Abraham** and his descendants (Genesis 12 ff). They didn't exist as a people group, but they began to grow with God's promise.
- God helps the **descendants increase** and develop during their time in Egypt (Genesis 37- Exodus 1). Israel grew large enough to be viewed as people group...leading them to be enslaved and repressed by the fearful Egyptians.
- God claims this people as his own and **rescues them from slavery** in Egypt in the exodus (Exodus 1-18). They are now a liberated nation, not under the control of any human ruler.
- God **gives them the Law**, a system of government that regulates how they are to live -- socially, religiously, culturally (Exodus 19 ff).



In this situation, it is God himself who oversees the nation. They are HIS people. He provides authority, customs, laws, and protection. They are under “rule by God;” they become a true “theocracy.”

Note: By the way...Since God's relationship to Israel was unique, no one else could ever duplicate this system. Any government today that claims to be a “theocracy” is actually a “religiocracy” ruled by religious people rather than by God Himself.

As we continue to look over the story of Israel, it becomes very clear that God is the one in charge...but the people of Israel struggled with that truth.

As a true theocracy, God was their King and Defender. He told them they had no need for an organized system for defense, no need for central power. All they needed was Him! The nation felt vulnerable being dependent on God alone.... and so, rather than trust their God, they tried to take matters into their own hands.

The people asked for a king, so they could be like the nations that surrounded them. The nations around them to the north, east, south, and west had kings and armies and the appearance of power. Israel wanted to be like them.

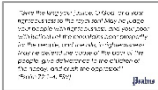
So, God honors their request.

“And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.”” (1 Samuel 8:7–9, ESV)

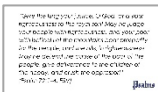
The nation that shouldn't have had a king now finally gets one. They move from a *theocracy* to a *monarchy*...a downgrade if ever there was one!

Praising the King

Despite the downgrade, Israel's human king still received honor and praise. He was revered by the people and viewed as special. He was expected to have the nation's best interests in mind and lead them to success. God gave commands about how this king should act and what his focus should be. And songwriters asked for God's blessing on the king so he could help the nation thrive.



“Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!” (Psalm 72:1–4, ESV)



The human king flourishes when he does the right spiritual things! The songwriter wants the king to have these qualities. But, did you hear the focus on this royal psalm? Inherent in the song is an acknowledgement of the limitations of this human king. Israel's ruler was not sufficient in and of himself; despite any hint of independence, he relied on God for these qualities! In the praise of Israel's king, we can't help but see the King of kings!

Songs for the Heavenly King



Sometimes one presence overshadows everything else.

Let me give some names: Les Clark, Marc Davis, Ollie Johnston, Eric Larson...

Recognize them? These guys are some of the talented artists who made animated movies come to life. These were the core animators for Walt Disney Productions, responsible for such classics as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Peter Pan, Alice in Wonderland and more. They were members of a group nicknamed the “Nine Old Men,” and their animation style had a profound influence not only on future films made within the company, but on other animators globally.

Yet, aside from a few hardcore Disney fanatics, those men aren't household names. They are all secondary to one person: Walt Disney himself!

Walt was the one who started the company, hired the men, guided their productions, and championed the works. None of those animators can claim success aside from him!

And that's why every animated film isn't a film by Eric Larson or Ollie Johnston... it is a “Walt Disney” film, with his name magically appearing in front of the castle!

Likewise, despite the move from theocracy to monarchy, God remained the true Heavenly King!!! Regardless of who was on the throne, God sat enthroned **above** them.

Royal psalms don't focus ONLY on Israel's king. Instead, they focus on the Heavenly King who gives their king authority and power.

Example: Psalm 93



- 1 The LORD is king! He is robed in majesty.
Indeed, the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength.
The world stands firm
and cannot be shaken.
- 2 Your throne, O LORD, has stood from time immemorial.
You yourself are from the everlasting past.
- 3 The floods have risen up, O LORD.
The floods have roared like thunder;
the floods have lifted their pounding waves.
- 4 But mightier than the violent raging of the seas,
mightier than the breakers on the shore—
the LORD above is mightier than these!
- 5 Your royal laws cannot be changed.
Your reign, O LORD, is holy forever and ever.

Sovereignty Explained



As we read about God himself on the throne in this song and others, we are encountering the issue of God's SOVEREIGNTY.

What does it mean to be sovereign? It means there are no limits on what you can do (a sovereign *nation* answers to no other country's demands; a sovereign *citizen* claims that they aren't subject to laws).

In the case of God, his sovereignty is a core attribute. He has the wisdom, power, and authority to do whatever He chooses. He alone chooses how He will act; He is not compelled by any outside force.

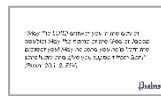
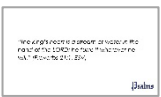
Israel's king might be sovereign when it comes to his relationship with other nations, but he is **never** sovereign when it comes to his relationship with God. God is the one who directs and/or permits the human king to rule.

"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1, ESV)

This is why the royal psalms include lines like the following from Psalm 20, a royal psalm describing the king of Israel's dependence on the King of All:

"May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!" (Psalm 20:1–2, ESV)

There is a progression as we read the royal psalms. We might praise the king (lowercase), but we are reminded that he is dependent on a true Heavenly King (all caps!) who is in charge.



Songs About a King's Actions

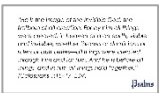
Let's keep connecting the dots as we discover how the royal psalms can practically help us...

The royal psalms don't just show God sitting on his laurels, reveling in his *status* as sovereign ruler. Instead, they show God in *action*. As king, God does many actions...but two main activities are usually the focus.

The King Provides



The King provides. One of the titles applied to God is that of “provider.” God *the Father* is *Jehovah-Jireh* in the Old Testament – God the Provider. In the New Testament, that title continues as God *the Son* is described as the source of everything. In Colossians 1, Jesus is portrayed this way:



“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
(Colossians 1:15–17, ESV)

So, if God is the Provider, what does God provide?

- God provides for our physical needs – food, water, shelter
- God provides for our emotional needs – peace, comfort, love
- God provides for our spiritual needs – blessings, salvation, hope

Secular society might hope to take God out of the equation...but you can't! You and I must rely on God for everything that we need.



This afternoon, TCC is planning to enjoy an all-church event called “Sweet Thankfulness.” I hope you'll join us at 3:00 in the Worship Center to share fellowship and desserts (reminder: cut them ahead of time)...and also share a time of thanks. You will provide desserts...but think about what *God* provides for that event to happen. We have:

- A building in which to dine. (Yeah, but WE donated the money)
 - o OK...He provided the job for your income (Yeah, but WE did the work)
 - OK...He provided the health so you could function!
- Food to share (Yeah, but WE cooked)
 - o OK...He provided ingredients (Yeah, but farmers grew the wheat)
 - OK...He provided the sun and rain and kept the hail at bay!

I'm not arguing that you and I don't contribute to what is happening, but *all that we have* depends on God's provision.

The King is a Provider.

The King Protects

The King also protects.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”
(Romans 8:31, ESV)

We used the name *Jehovah-Jireh* to describe God’s provision, but he has another title: *Jehovah-Nissi*, or “the Lord is my banner.” After God provided miraculous protection in a battle against the Amalekites, Moses uses this title:

“And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner,”
(Exodus 17:15, ESV)

The banner is the flag under which you fly. The banner is your rallying point, your identity, your strength.

When you drive past the Speedway on race weekends, you’ll see hundreds of RVs parked and camped there, most of which are flying numbered flags. They aren’t just people’s favorite numbers – nobody is flying 3.14 -- they are the symbol of their driver, the one they follow and support. #4 (Kevin Harvick), #22 (Joey Logano), #48 (more Jimmie Johnson than Alex Bowman), #54 (Ty Gibbs), or the ubiquitous #3 (Dale Sr). Fans unite under the same flag, the same banner.

When the Lord is our Banner, he is the flag we fly. We proclaim his name by doing so, but more importantly we claim the benefits of being on his team! We are his! He can protect us from the enemy.

What can God protect us from? Consider all the things you pray for.

- Physical dangers – protection from illness, from accidents while travelling.
- Emotional dangers – protection from a broken heart, from depression, from fear.
- Spiritual dangers – protection from temptations, protection from Satan.

The King is a Protector.

Songs Thanking the King

If God is actively doing the work as our King to provide and protect, then it leads to one logical conclusion as we connect all the dots: we must give thanks! God’s actions are worthy of thanks and praise.

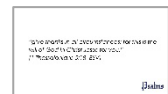
Unlike songs that simply declare God as praiseworthy, or the songs that remind us to trust him because of his power, some psalms direct the praise directly to God...expressing gratitude for His mighty works.

Example: Psalm 100



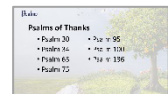
“A PSALM FOR GIVING THANKS. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100, ESV)

We should never take God’s gifts for granted. We should always be aware of what He has provided and respond appropriately. This isn’t to protect God’s feelings – he doesn’t NEED the thanks. But thanking Him is simply the right response – a chance to acknowledge the giving of a good thing. Christians are encouraged to be grateful:



“give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18, ESV)

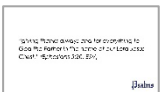
Psalms is filled with songs that express thanks to God. It is a theme woven into many lyrics, but we can find thanks expressed clearly in songs like:



Psalms 30, 34, 65, 75, 95, 100, 136

Directions for Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving is a godly attitude we are to copy. The attitude is modeled in the Psalms and commanded elsewhere. We are to be:



“giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Ephesians 5:20, ESV)

Did you catch those two directives? We are to give thanks:

1. **Always.** It isn’t a one-time comment. Thanks should be an ongoing attitude.
2. **For everything.** We should be thankful for the many blessings we have received.

The King deserves our thanks.

Putting It All Together



We started off questioning whether the royal psalms had any use for us. Since we aren’t under a king, do they apply?

Now, let’s put all the pieces together. We discovered that:

- Royal psalms focus on Israel’s political ruler, the king...
- Israel’s political ruler is dependent on a greater, heavenly King...
- They trusted their Heavenly King to provide and protect...
- His actions deserved their thanks and praise!



In other words: Godly thanks is rooted in God's good rule.

You and I might not have an earthly king, but we share a heavenly King. When we see Israel's royal ruler thanking *his* King for provision and protection, we can be inspired to look to *our* King for the same. And when we see His good sovereign rule, we are motivated to thank Him for His provision and protection.

The Royal Psalms lead us onto the path of thankfulness. So, ask yourself...do you travel that path often enough? Are you a thankful person when it comes to God? Or do you take Him for granted? Are we thankful enough?



Practical Challenge: Increase your gratitude.

I can just say, "Be thankful." But let me give you four practices that can help you thank your Heavenly King:

1. When you get to church, **write down a praise on your connection card** in the prayer section and thank God for it (Psalm 100:4 "enter his gates with thanksgiving"). In sharing with TCC, you increase not only your own thankfulness but ours!
2. **Join the praise team**, so you can "come into his presence with thanksgiving... [and] make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise" (Psalm 95:2). You can intentionally focus on thanking God through your worship.
3. Create a **"Thanks" journal** that you keep in your car. Write down items of provision and protection before you get out (Psalm 75:3 "We give thanks to you, O God...we recount your wondrous deeds).
4. Start a **"Thread of Thanks"** group text. Encourage others to join you in cultivating a grateful heart (Psalm 30:4 "Sing praises to the Lord, O you His saints, and give thanks to his holy name).

You can come up with other ways to tell God "thank you." But just remember that godly thanks is rooted in God's good rule. As you remember your King, remember to thank Him!



Let's pray...

***p* Invitation**

What are you thankful for? I'm going to invite some of our leaders (elders, deacons) to position themselves around the room [GUYS – RAISE YOUR HANDS]. As we sing our invitation song this morning, please come forward and join them in prayer to thank God for the blessings He has provided to those He has loved and redeemed through the work of Jesus.

And elders, please jot those praises down and share with us later!

Let's stand and sing!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Notes

Songs for Israel's King

Psalms 2, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132

History: How Did They Get One?

Praising the King (Psalm 72:1–4)

Songs for the Heavenly King

Example: Psalm 93

Sovereignty Explained (Proverbs 21:1 Psalm 20:1–2)

Songs About a King's Actions

The King Provides (Colossians 1:15–17)

The King Protects (Romans 8:31, Exodus 17:15)

Songs Thanking the King

Example: Psalm 100

Psalms 30, 34, 65, 75, 95, 100, 136

Directions for Giving Thanks (Ephesians 5:20)

Putting it All Together

Godly thanks is rooted in God's good rule.

Practical Challenge: Increase your gratitude.

Sermon Discussion ?s

Use the following questions based on today's sermon as a starting point for spiritual discussions with your family or a small group of Christian friends this week.

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- Are you good at writing thank you notes to people who have given you a gift? Why is it easy for you, or why is it difficult?

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- What is a “royal psalm”? Who is it written about/for?
- Read Psalm 45:1-5. What areas are the focus of the songwriter’s prayer and/or praise? Do you ever pray for your political leaders to share these qualities? If not, how do you pray for your leaders? (See 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
- Why do you think the Israelites wanted a human king instead of a Heavenly King to rule their nation? Which would you have wanted?
- Read Psalm 93. In what ways is God superior to a human king?
- As King, God provides for His people. Share a time when God provided for your needs. How did you express your thanks?
- As King, God protects His people. Share a time when God protected you from harm or danger. How did you express your thanks?
- Why should God’s good rule always lead us to thank Him?
- Is it enough to thank God privately, or should your thanks be made known to others? Explain your answer.
- On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your gratitude toward God. What would it take to move the needle up two notches from where you are now? Brainstorm 3 steps you could take to express your thanks to God.

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Spend time thanking God for the blessings in your life. Connect your situation to God’s attributes – in other words, how does God’s character lead you to praise him for these specific items. Thank Him for having those qualities.