

THE SON IS THE DIVINE KING

Psalm 45:1-17

INTRODUCTION

I began drinking coffee every day in about 1990. For years my coffee of choice was Folgers. A number of years ago my daughter-in-law, Anne, worked at a Starbucks Coffee shop in Madison. She began telling me about the superiority of Starbucks to Folgers. However, her words had no effect upon me. But then she began to give me bags of Starbucks coffee. Once I tasted the glory of Starbucks I forever renounced Folgers. I was converted from a Folgers drinker to a Starbucks drinker. I now drink only Starbucks coffee even though I no longer get it for free but have to purchase it myself. I have no trouble laying out the extra cash because I delight in the superior pleasure of Starbucks.

I would guess that most everyone in here has had an experience similar to mine. Some food or some hobby or some book or some vacation spot or some restaurant has been recommended to you by a friend but you had no interest in it until you actually tasted or experienced that thing your friend promoted. In experiencing it, you discovered its glory. The result is that now you, like your friend regularly seek to enjoy this food or event or activity as much as possible because it is glorious to you. This discovery of the glory of an object that leads you to forsake previously enjoyable things in order to experience the pleasure of this new found love is what the Bible calls conversion. This is what it is like to become a Christian.

John Piper describes this conversion to Christ like this in his book “Desiring God:” “Once we had no delight in God and Christ was a vague historical figure. What we enjoyed was food and friendships and productivity and investments and vacations and hobbies and games and reading and shopping and sex and sports and art and TV and travel...but not God. He was an idea—even a good one—and a topic of discussion; but he was not a treasure of delight. Then something miraculous happened. It was the like the opening of the eyes of the blind during the golden dawn. First the stunned silence before the unspeakable beauty of holiness. Then a shock and terror that we had actually loved the darkness. Then the settling stillness of joy that this is the soul’s end. The quest is over. We would give anything if we might be granted to live in the presence of this glory forever.”

How does God give to us this new taste for or delight in Christ? It is by the work of the HS as he enables us to see and taste and rejoice in the glory of Christ as he is revealed to us in the Scriptures. Jesus tells us in John 16:12-15, “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” The apostle Paul describes this process in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.” So the HS takes the word of God as it talks about the glory of Jesus and then enables us to taste and see that Jesus is indeed the most glorious of all beings. When we see him in his glory we trust him to save us and to be for us everything we need. He becomes the object of our most ardent faith and love.

Every Sunday this is the goal of what we are doing here. It is my aim each week to set before you the glory of Christ and the horror of sin by teaching what the Bible says. I do this in the confidence that the HS will take these words and by means of them enable you to taste and see that the Lord is good. This Palm Sunday, on which, if you will remember the glory of Christ was openly acknowledged by the people as he rode that donkey into Jerusalem, I intend by means of Psalm 45 to set before you the glory of Jesus. This Psalm was originally written by one of the sons of Korah, the Levite, in honor of the marriage of one of the sons of David. Look at vv. 1 & 17. The aim of the Psalmist, inspired by the HS, is to set forth the greatness and the glory of this king.

It is clear, even from simply reading the psalm that there is no way that the glory that is set forth in this psalm can actually be limited to a mere human being. Thus the writer to the Hebrews quotes verses 6-7 as referring to our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have frequently told you, when the NT quotes an OT verse we are not to think that it is just these verses that refers to Jesus but that the entire psalm refers to Jesus. So this morning I set before you the glory of Jesus Christ with the prayer that God will enable each one of us to see his glory and grant to us hearts full of faith in and love for him alone. It is my prayer that the pleasures of this world will be to us as sand in our mouths in comparison to the sweetness that is found in Jesus.

MAIN POINT

Jesus Christ is the most glorious of all beings because...

I. He is the most excellent of men (vv. 2-5 & 7-8)

Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, is a fully human being. However, he is the most excellent of human beings as v. 2 says. There is no man who can approach him in his excellence. With whatever measure you use to measure human greatness, Jesus excels in every possible way. The great British preacher CH Spurgeon says of this line, "...in Jesus we behold every feature of a perfect character in harmonious proportion." Look at the various ways that the superiority of Jesus as a man is set forth in this psalm. First, his lips are anointed with grace. It is without question that no one has ever spoken like Jesus Christ. When he was just 12 years old and talking with the religious leaders in the temple we are told, (Luke 2:47) "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." Then in his hometown of Nazareth, at the beginning of his public ministry we are told this, (Luke 4:22) "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips." The temple guards after being sent by the Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus returned to them without having arrested Jesus. When the leaders asked them why they did not arrest him they said, "No one ever spoke the way this man does." His wisdom and insight are unparalleled in human history. He subdued and silenced his enemies by the wisdom of his questions and words. He cut open the hearts of men and diagnosed our deepest maladies. Most importantly he is the one who first came and announced the good news of God's kingdom to lost sinners. When some of the crowd of people that followed him left him because of his hard sayings he said to the twelve apostles, "Will you also leave me?" Peter replied for them all when he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Do you know anyone else who has the words of eternal life? You are going to die one day. Who else can tell you the way to have life following death? Only Jesus.

Second, in vv. 3-5 we discover that Jesus is a mighty warrior who fights on behalf of truth, humility and righteousness. In the days of his flesh Jesus proclaimed the truth and lifted up the humble and promoted God's righteousness. He is the truth. He was and is the friend, the defender of humble, helpless sinners. He upholds God's righteousness by his obedience and gives his righteousness to those who trust in him. Today, all around the world we see and hear error and lies and deception being broadcast and embraced and promulgated. Billions of people are blind to the truth of who Christ is and what goodness truly is and what is the purpose of human existence and what is the destiny of this world. Error is clung to tenaciously and promoted with enthusiasm and defended with violence. Yet, we also see that the truth of the gospel has advanced around the world through the ages. Millions of individuals and thousands of people groups who once were immersed in the darkness of superstition and unbelief today embrace the truth of the gospel and live by it because Jesus has marched out in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness. He has used his mighty sword to destroy error and tear down the proud fortresses of men and overthrow the wickedness of people. Nations have fallen at his feet. His arrows have pierced the hearts of his enemies, converting them to himself. One day his arrows will destroy all who have refused him.

We at River Hills Community Church have firsthand experience with how this man Jesus has overcome his enemies. 20 years ago there was not a single known Christian among the Mongolian people. There was no Bible in the Mongolian tongue. Today we personally know dozens of Mongolian Christians. We have worked side by side with these conquered souls to set forth the truth of the gospel in the Mongolian tongue and have witnessed more Mongolians submit to Christ. We have witnessed Jesus ride forth victoriously in behalf of

truth, humility and righteousness in Mongolia. We have watched him overcome all the power of the evil one in establishing his kingdom among these formally hostile peoples.

Third, the excellency of Jesus is shown in the resurrection and ascension of the man Jesus to God's right hand, in God's palace where joyful praise resounds. This we see in vv. 7-8. It is because Jesus hated wickedness and loved righteousness so much that he willingly gave up his life in the service of God's righteousness that God has now anointed him and set him above every power and authority. He is now seated at God's right hand far above all rule and power and authority and every title that can be given in heaven and on earth. He is robed in all the beauty of heavenly glory and sits among the angels in God's throne room where he is worshipped and adored by all creation as we are told in Revelation 5:12-14, "In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'" What king or president or celebrity or athlete sits at God's right hand worshipped by angels? What human being has been anointed by God as his Messiah, his Savior? Why would you listen to or trust in any other human being, including yourself? Being a Christian is not primarily about living a moral life or performing acts of religious devotion, like coming to church. Being a Christian is to be a person who is astonished at the greatness and glory of this Jesus who gave himself for your sins. Christianity is trust in, love for and loyalty to this greatest of all men.

Jesus Christ is the most glorious of all beings because...

- *He is the most excellent of men*
- *And because...*

II. He is the sovereign God (v. 6)

The writer to the Hebrews has used this verse exactly as it meant in its OT context. The human king, whose glory is being extolled in this Psalm is identified in v. 6 as the God whose throne lasts forever and ever. This human king who is also God is exalted by God and set above all his companions as v. 7 says. In these two OT verses you can clearly see the revelation of the Triune nature of the Godhead. In fact, when we recognize that the Psalms were written by the HS as Jesus and the apostles' claim and that the job of the HS is to glorify Christ and that is exactly what this psalm does, we can see the full revelation of the Triune God in this psalm. God the Father exalts God the Son to his right hand while God the HS perpetuates the memory of God the Son forever so that the nations praise him forever.

The right of Jesus, as God, to rule over the world is set forth in verse 6. He exercises his authority with justice. He always does what is right. The NT reveals and rejoices in the fact that this man Jesus is also the sovereign ruler of all, the Lord over all lords and the King over all kings. Listen again to what the author to the Hebrews says about him, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." Or again, Paul describes him like this (Colossians 1:15-19), "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him..."

Why are you so impressed with mere human beings, the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve when the divine Son of God who became a man offers himself to you as your Lord and Savior? Why do you listen to the wisdom of men and refuse the wisdom that comes from God himself? Why do you trust in and depend upon people but refuse to trust in and depend upon the one who upholds the entire universe by the word of his power? When you refuse Jesus and when you do not trust him and when you turn your back on him to pursue other things and listen to other people you are turning your back on the eternal God. When you trust in Jesus you are

trusting in the one who made you and who right now is sustaining not only your life but the entire fabric of the universe.

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III. He makes the church his glorious bride (vv. 9-13)

In v. 9 we are given a picture of the court of this glorious king. In the court of this king are the daughters of kings from which he could choose a wife. But he has chosen one who apparently is not one of the daughters of kings. However, because she is his queen, she is more glorious than all these kings' daughters. She is dressed in gold. The queen stands above all the princesses as she has been exalted to the right hand of the king. She is superior to every king's daughter because she is this king's queen.

The use of the metaphor of God being married to his people is very common throughout both the OT and the NT. Ezekiel 16 uses much of the same language as here to describe how God married Israel and clothed her with beautiful garments and made her his queen. This same language is used at various places in the NT. Most clearly this image is captured in Ephesians 5 as Paul addresses husbands and wives. In the midst of his description of the husbands duty to love his wife he says this in Ephesians 5:25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Notice in this passage how Jesus, by his death makes his bride, the church fit for his company. He clothes her in holiness. He removes the stains and wrinkles and blemishes from her and makes her radiant and blameless. The church is clothed with the holiness and righteousness of Christ himself.

It is this reality to which the language of Psalm 45 is pointing. Especially note that the psalm says that the king is enthralled with the beauty of the queen. From where did this beauty come? We know from both Ezekiel 16 and Ephesians 5 that the beauty of the queen is given to her by the grace and mercy of the divine king. This is such an important thing for us to recognize. Jesus is delighted with his church, with us. Like a husband who is astonished by the beauty of his wife, that is, drawn to her and full of passionate desire for her so Jesus is enthralled with the beauty of his church, a beauty which he has given to her. It is not our native beauty that he is attracted to because we are, apart from him, the ugliest of creatures. But because of his death we have been given his very righteousness and thus he delights in our beauty which is his beauty. As v. 13 says we are all glorious within and without and so loved by our king. This beauty is the beauty of holiness, of being justified and of being progressively sanctified.

There are two characteristics of this bride to notice. First, the bride forgets her people and her father's house (v. 10). The bride is characterized by a forsaking of all others. She leaves behind her former allegiances and binds herself to her king alone. This turning from her former people and family to embrace the king alone is the result of the exhortation of the psalmist, who is speaking the words of the HS, to listen, to consider and to give ear. The bride must pay attention to the glory of the king and to the splendor of belonging to his household so that she willingly turns her back on her people and family. The bride is to find her security in being loved by the king, not in belonging to her family and people. So the church is a group of people who have paid close attention to the message about this king and recognized his greatness and the greatness of belonging to him and thus have turned our backs on all other allegiances. Is this not what Jesus repeatedly said? Listen to him in Matthew 10:37-39, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

This is how you know that you are a part of the bride of Jesus, you have turned your back on this world and all its sinful pleasures and upon trying to find your life in family and friends and work and have determined that all your hope for happiness is to be found in Jesus alone.

The second characteristic of the church is that we are a worshipping community. At the end of v. 11 the queen, the bride is commanded to honor her husband because he is her lord. The word translated honor here is usually used in the OT to describe worship, whether to false gods or to the true and living God. This kind of language can only apply absolutely to the relationship between Jesus and the church. Jesus is our Lord therefore we delight to declare his praises. We rejoice in him and in his mighty work on our behalf. We gladly submit to him and seek to honor him in everything we do and say. We regularly gather together, as his bride, to enjoy his company and admire him together. Daily in our families and each Sunday in corporate worship we bow before our king and honor him because he is our Lord. We remember that all this is true of us because of his work on our behalf. We are the glorious bride of this glorious king because he chose us to be his bride and he made us beautiful in his eyes.

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IV. He will live with his multi-ethnic, admiring church forever (vv. 14-17)

We have in these final verses a description of the consummation of the wedding. The bride is brought to her king in the company of a joyful assembly. So we, the church of Christ, will be brought to him at the final day surrounded by a joyful company of the heavenly hosts. This very real, human, historical wedding symbolizes that great wedding feast of the lamb when the bride is presented to her king and a great feast is begun that will last into the ages. We come to our king clothed in his righteousness and enter into his palace. We will live with our king in joy and gladness forever. It is quite amazing how weddings continue to picture this eternal reality. Weddings are joyful occasions. The reception is a joyful party celebrating the union of the bride and groom. The joy that is present in our human weddings is but a small taste of the eternal joy that belongs to the church as we enjoy our bridegroom, our king forever.

Notice also that the psalmist refers to the children of this union in v. 16. The “children” of the union of Jesus and her church are all princes and will each one rule in that eternal kingdom. These children will come from all the nations of the world. Here is a picture of how Jesus continues to “make” more children through his union with his church here on earth. But then what a glorious picture of the church in heaven made up of people from every tribe and tongue and language and nation come together, remembering the greatness of our king through all generations. Each member of that eternal family will be a prince in the kingdom of Jesus and will be given authority to rule over some portion of that eternal kingdom. Jesus regularly used this symbol in his parables. Listen to a couple of his descriptions of when he returns to establish his kingdom: Matthew 8:11, “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Luke 19:17, “Well done, my good servant! his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’” Or listen to what Paul says about us in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? ...Do you not know that we will judge angels?”

So there is this glorious future awaiting us because we are the bride of King Jesus. We will each one be a prince or princess in that kingdom. We will spend our days rejoicing in who he is and what he has done as we exercise the delegated authority we have been given in his kingdom. We will do this in the company of men and women from all the nations of the world. There is a day coming when you will be led with joy and

gladness into the palace of the king. Nothing in this world can take that from you. This is the hope we have as the bride of King Jesus. Right now, no matter what hardship you are facing you can truly rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. You can now rejoice in the confident expectation of that glorious day. Fix your heart upon that day and not upon the temporary and fading pleasures of this passing away world.

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