

28/07/2025 Psalm 145

Here's a verse from today's Gospel that is perhaps easy to miss:

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force *to make him king*, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. John 6:15

The verse reveals the perennial human temptation:
And the temptation to treat God as an earthly leader,
As if God exists to ensure that our *felt needs* are met.
It's closely connected to another temptation:
To treat earthly leaders as if they are God,
As if they can fill our deepest needs as human beings.
Today I'm proclaiming Good news from God's word:
It is God, rather than any human being, who is the true king,
And it is Jesus, the one who proclaimed the kingdom of God,
The one who is risen from the dead,
It is *Jesus* who saves us from turning political leaders into idols,
And who gives us *true satisfaction* for our souls.

Even though our psalm today starts at verse 10
I want to go back to the beginning of the psalm

Because it sets the scene.

Here's what we read: **I will extol you, my God and King,**

and bless your name for ever and ever.

This is a psalm about God being the true king.

What is not obvious in our English translations

Is that the psalm is an acrostic,

That is, each verse of the psalm starts

With a letter of the Hebrew alphabet - from the first to the last letter

Like going from A-Z for us.

So, it would be fair to say that the psalm gives us the A-Z

Of what it means for God to be the true king.

Now, in this psalm the psalmist sometimes speaks directly to God

And sometimes he is addressing us as we listen.

As we begin the psalm we're listening in

To the psalmist speaking to God,

We are listening into *his prayer*.

As we read on we find that the psalmist is speaking *to us*.

This means, by the way, that as we pray the psalm

Sometimes we are speaking directly to God

And sometimes we are speaking to whoever is listening –

And in the psalms it doesn't need to be another human being

Who is listening: it could be the angels, or the sun or the moon,

Or mountains or hills, or indeed all of creation (see Psalm 148).

Just before the verses chosen for today

We read these words addressed to us

That remind us of *what sort of king* God is,

About his attributes, about his character.

This is what we read:

The LORD is gracious and merciful,

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The LORD is good to all,

and his compassion is over all that he has made.

Now, as it happens, the psalmist here

Is using the same words to describe God

That God has already used to describe himself.

Back in Exodus 34 the Lord reveals his glory to Moses,

And preaches a short sermon on his name:

'The Lord' means the one who is merciful and compassionate.

God wants all people to call on his name,

And to experience through trust, through faith,
That he is indeed gracious and merciful,
And that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
Shall be saved.

It's with this in mind that the psalmist then talks with
God

About what his kingship means for all of creation.

Listen: **All your works shall give thanks to you,
O LORD,**

and all your faithful shall bless you.

**They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,**

**to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.**

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

***and your dominion endures throughout all
generations.***

Let's pick up on those last words.

Human beings can have pretensions of creating
kingdoms

That will last the ages,

And sometimes we can be tempted

To take these pretensions seriously.

But no human leader, good or bad, lasts forever.

In fact in the very next psalm we read these words:

**Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.
When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.**

It is only God who has a kingdom that is eternal

So: human leaders are necessary:

From Scripture we understand that God appoints them,

And that we should honour them in a fitting way,

Whether it means paying our tax

Or addressing them respectfully, or praying for them,

But it is folly to trust them as if they are God.

Only God has a kingdom that is everlasting,

That will be around when all earth's proud empires
have passed away.

In today's psalm the psalmist then goes on

To articulate what you could call a principle that is at
work

In the kingdom where God reigns.

Listen: **The LORD is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.**

**The LORD upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.**

This is the same teaching that we get repeatedly
From our true King Jesus, and from his apostles.

This is what Jesus says: **All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.** Matthew 23:12

Our Lord Jesus shows us that he is the true king
By raising us up as we come to him in need,
As we admit our sin, as we ask for help.
In God's kingdom the naked are not shamed,
The poor are not turned away,
The powerless and not shunned,
And the hungry are not sent away empty.

On the contrary, while political leaders
May present themselves as able to satisfy our
deepest needs,
It is God who is the true giver of every good gift.
This is how the psalm goes on:

**The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.**

Do these words sound familiar to you?

If you look in our Small Catechism you'll find them
In the section dealing with prayers before mealtimes.
The prayer goes on something like this: ***Lord God,
Father in heaven, bless us and bless this food which***

***you have given us out of your kindness; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

I'm not sure that anywhere in the Bible
We are specifically commanded to give thanks before
we eat,
But we know that Jesus gave thanks before he ate,
And as subjects of the true king we copy him,
And acknowledge God as the one who in the end
provides us
With our daily bread: with all that we need
To live as his dearly-loved children.

So: it is not as if God is only concerned for our
spiritual good
But leaves bodily goods in the care of worldly leaders.
No: God is the one who provides for us in body and
soul,
And so, while it is fitting to acknowledge those
Who grow food, who maintain good order in society,
Who work in preparing and sharing in all good things,
It is in thanking God that we see who is truly the king
And who shows his kingly authority
In his generosity and kindness.

This is how our psalm ends today:
The LORD is just in all his ways,

and kind in all his doings.

**The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.**

In God power and goodness are not opposing forces
But come together in a way that bring true blessing.
The justice that we can look for in worldly leaders
But that will always ultimately elude us,
Comes to us in Jesus, the Lamb of God,
Who takes away the sin of the world,
And who makes himself our king
Not by force, or by gold or silver,
But by his holy and precious blood
And his innocent suffering and death

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says
**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,**

For they will be filled – for God will fill them.

We will hear from John's Gospel in the weeks ahead
That Jesus is the true bread from heaven,
And that it is in eating his flesh that our true hunger
is satisfied.

Let us put our trust in him

Who gives us nothing less than his Spirit,

And who frees us to love one another

To the glory of God the Father. Amen.