

**Second Sunday after Epiphany – January 18, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Psalm 45:1-7 (NIV)**

**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. 2) You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever. 3) Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. 4) In your majesty ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, humility and justice; let your right hand achieve awesome deeds. 5) Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. 6) Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. 7) You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

For us the Season of Christmas, which we recently observed, is a festive celebration. However, if we think about Christmas from Christ's point of view – we will realize that his conception, his birth, his circumcision, his flight to Egypt, and many of the other events that are often connected with the Christmas story point to his humiliation. Of course, the humiliation of Christ reaches its lowest point during the season of Lent, which directs our attention ultimately to his crucifixion and burial.

The Season of Epiphany connects these two seasons together. During the season of Epiphany the church, from ancient times, has spoken of the glorious majesty of the Son of God who came to Bethlehem as a little baby and who died on the cross of Calvary to set us free from our sins and to spare us eternal punishment in hell. Our text for today enables us to

**Theme: Behold the Glory and Majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ**

- 1. He is the most excellent of men**
- 2. His throne will last forever**

This text was written a thousand years before the Lord Jesus was born. It was written as a wedding song. So, we might ask, how can this psalm reveal the glory and majesty of Christ to us? In the opening verse of this psalm the writer says: **My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for (or about) the king.** Of course, Jesus is the King of kings but how do we know that these words weren't about David or Solomon or one of the other kings of Israel?

There are several clues in our text. Verse 2 proclaims; **“You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with grace, since God has blessed you forever.”** These words point to the fact that the king is not just an ordinary man – he is the most excellent of men! But there's more. The Psalmist says that his throne will last forever. Now that's not something that could be said of David, or Solomon (each of whom ruled for 40 years.) That is a long time to be king but it's also a long way from being forever!

When God promised David a son who reign forever, David asked, “Is this the usual way of dealing with man?” as if he wanted to say: “Hold on a minute, human kings can't rule forever.”

But there's even more. The psalmist addresses the King to whom he is speaking as God! **Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.** How do we know that he is talking about Jesus and not just the Father? There's a clear answer to that question too. The psalmist says; **God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.**

The King who is being spoken about is God himself and yet he was anointed by God! The only person in the whole history of the world who fits this description is Jesus of Nazareth who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. This is confirmed for us in the book of Hebrews where the writer quotes this psalm and addresses it to the Son: (Hebrews 1:8) **But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.**

God's Word makes it clear that the King whose glory and majesty are described in this Psalm is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. This picture of our Lord as a conquering King helps us to have a proper understanding of him and his work. It enables us to be comforted and sustained by our faith in him.

In so many ways, the Lord Jesus does not look like a conquering hero when we read the story of his life. Our text says that he is the most excellent of men – the fairest of men. That's an appropriate description for God's Son. Yet when Isaiah spoke of him he described him in this way: (Isaiah 53:2) **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.** What beauty is there in Jesus of Nazareth when you see him beaten and bloodied with a crown of thorns embedded in his skull and his bones out of joint as he hangs on a cross? It is then that we need to be convinced of who he is so that we can still worship and adore him as our Savior – the most excellent of men.

It is important for us to speak of Jesus majesty and glory during the season of Epiphany so that when we observe Lent we will realize that this man who seems to be so completely defeated by his enemies is not just a helpless victim. He is true God who willingly subjected himself to this treatment in our place. It was about 6 months before his death that the Lord Jesus took the same disciples who would be with him to observe his anguish and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane up to a mountain where he was transfigured before them. There they saw his face beaming with glory, his clothing became white as the light. The beauty and majesty which they saw there prepared them for the day when they would be witnesses of his great humiliation.

Epiphany is like a "mountain top" experience for us. It prepares to handle the humiliation to which Jesus is subjected today. When we look around in our world today, it does not seem to us that Jesus Christ is a conquering king. The Christian church is not growing as we would like to see it grow. And even in the Church there are many who do not honor the Lord Jesus as he should be honored – people who say that he is only the greatest man who ever lived but refuse to say that he is God. Out in the world we see heathen nations that hate and persecute the church getting away with their actions. And, we ask, "Why does God let such wicked men, who lie and kill, to become so mighty? Where is the conquering king of our text?"

When we see these things, we ought to remember that things today are no different than they were when Jesus lived here on earth. The greatest rulers on earth then were the emperors of Rome. The Roman governor in Judea sent the Son of God to the cross. The leaders of the church opposed Jesus and would not admit that he was the Son of God. In fact, they tried to stone him when he said he was the Son of God. In spite of all of that, we believe that when Jesus died on the cross, he still was a conquering King.

There are so many things that persuade us that the Psalmist is right when he addresses Jesus as a conquering hero saying, **Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. 4) In your majesty ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, humility and justice; let your right hand achieve awesome deeds. 5) Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. 6) Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. 7) You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.**

As we consider the story of our Savior's life during the season of Epiphany we hear how he stills the wind and the wave with his voice and we are reminded that he rules over nature. We see him feed 5000 men

with a few fish sandwiches and know that he is the one who created all things. We watch him call the dead back to life and we know that he has greater power than any man. We listen to him giving orders to the demons and see that they must obey him. We hear him say, “I am he” in the Garden of Gethsemane and his enemies fall backward as dead men. But, he lets them take him and kill him because this was the way in which he would defeat the devil once and for all and rescue mankind from his power and control. He conquered eternal death by dying that death for the world. Truly, our Savior is a conquering hero! Proof positive is found in his triumphant resurrection from the dead and his glorious ascension into heaven.

It is important for us to be reminded of these things so that we can have a proper view of our own lives here on this earth. It often seems that God’s children suffer much more than the heathen do – yet Jesus throne is forever and ever. Earthly rulers have their power for a short time. Where are Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Bin Laden now? That’s where the villains of today will ultimately end up. For a while it seems they get their way – but it never lasts for long. That’s the way it is with all nations. We don’t even have a guarantee that our nation will always be victorious over our enemies.

Worldly nations and kingdoms rise and fall. However, the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will never be overthrown. What a blessing it is to be part of that kingdom through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus rose on the Third Day, he established his rule forever. He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever. While we may not always understand his ways and while we might wish that things were different in this world, yet we can be sure as our text says that **a scepter of justice will be the scepter of [his] kingdom.** He will always do everything the way it should be done for the good of his people. For those who do not know him as their Lord and Savior, there is no hope, but for those who believe that he died to take away their sins there is forgiveness and salvation.

May God enable us to believe in Jesus as the most excellent of men whose throne will last forever. Then we will not become offended by him or lose our confidence in him during the difficult days in this world which will end when Jesus returns in glory so that every eye including the eyes of those who pierced him will see him as the Savior God. Amen.