**The Holy King Reigns**

Text: Psalm 99

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**Scriptures:** Luke 7:36-50; Psalm 99

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 99, 467, 318, 117

**Series:** Kingship Psalms (#8)

**Theme:** The holy LORD, who reigns supreme over all peoples, is perfectly just but also forgiving of His people; He is therefore worthy of high praise and worship.

**Proposition:** Brothers and sisters, highly praise and worship the reigning Holy King who is our God because He has forgiven us and avenged our wrongdoings in Christ

**Introduction**

The human governments face challenging times at present. Whilst COVID-19 is a new global threat, there have always been difficulties faced by the leaders of people groups. Psalms 29, 47, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, and 99 are Royal Psalms that speak to the kingship of God and how He governs this world. These psalms all reveal and confirm that the Lord, the covenant God of Israel, is the King who reigns. These psalms remind His people that He has reigned from the beginning. They present the universal perspective that His rule is not only over Israel, but over the whole world.

In a turbulent world of great uncertainty and changing world powers, Old Testament Israel needed to have their minds set on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (cf. Col 3:2). This is as true for us today as it was back then for them. There is ‘*nothing new under the sun*’ (Eccl 1:9). All world governments are lacking to a greater or lesser degree.

We need to live with the sure knowledge that our God reigns in absolute power over all this creation and that He is both a perfectly fair and just Lord as well as being a gracious King who forgives the wrongdoings of His people. As we will see, this psalm points forward to the reign of King Jesus. The three points this afternoon are:

1. The Holy Lord
2. The Just Lord
3. The Forgiving Lord
4. **The Holy Lord**

You can clearly see that the holiness of the LORD is revealed in this psalm. Notice the declaration which is made three times: “Holy is he” (v3); “Holy is he” (v5); “for the Lord our God is holy” (v9)

Do you know that the concept of holiness is used in different ways in Scripture?

**Firstly** ‘being set apart’. God is set apart from all His creatures as is evident from His uncreated nature (‘I AM’). His covenant name YHWH (LORD) used 6 times is related to the verb to be. He is dependent on no one and nothing. He is holy; altogether other.

**Secondly**, being perfect in being, in thought, in word and in deed. He is holy in his justice and his righteousness. His eternal power and His moral perfection.

**Thirdly**, to evoke veneration, awe, reverence. He is ‘great in Zion’ – but not only is He the king over His people, He is ‘exalted over all the peoples’ – worthy of all praise.

**Fourthly**, the locations where God is present. “*He sits enthroned upon the cherubim*” (v1).

Cherubim are closely associated with the holiness of God in Scripture. They are spiritual beings who dwell in heaven with God and are guardians of His holiness. They prevent unauthorised access to what God has set apart (Gen 3:24). The Cherubim were symbolically represented in the tabernacle (Exo 36:35 and 37:1-9) – which was a holy place because it was there that God made His dwelling place. By extension, the divine ‘footstool’ (verse 5: ’*worship at His footstool*’) also referred to the temple (Isa 60:13)- the place of God’s dwelling.

Notice in this psalm that the Holy Lord is ‘*enthroned upon the cherubim*’ (Ps 99:1). He is a King who rules with absolute holiness. This means that His reign is set apart from all others. He is an absolutely unique King. There is none like Him. That is why He is exalted over all the peoples. That is why He is to be worshipped. His ways are far above the ways of all other beings (Isa 55:9). Everything about Him and what He does is utterly awesome, majestic and without equal. This is why He is worthy of adoration, honour and reverence.

The whole world is called in this psalm to acknowledge the reality of who the Holy Lord is. “*Let them praise your great and awesome name!*” (v3). Today we have all responded to the call to worship the Holy Lord God as we gather to praise his great and awesome name. He is holy in all his ways, including in his justice, which brings us to our second point.

1. **The Just Lord**

You don’t have to live this life for very long to realise that this world is not a fair place. Injustice abounds in governments, workplaces and in families. People often do not receive what they deserve and frequently suffer as a result of difficulties which come upon them through no fault of their own. Since Adam’s fall into unholiness, it has been this sad way.

This world is not holy. It is not perfectly just. But God is. He has ‘established equity’ (v4) by giving His people Israel ‘*testimonies and statues*’. His perfect holy law is the standard for His perfect holy justice. He spoke to His covenant people in Old Testament times through Moses and Aaron to whom He communicated at the tent of meeting (Exodus 33:9; Numbers 12:5-6). He promised blessing to His people when they lived righteously according to the standard of His law, living holy lives in keeping with their status as a ‘holy nation’ (Ex 19:6). He would establish them as his holy people who would prosper and be ‘*high above all the nations of the earth*’ (Deut 28:1). His justice would result in great gain and protection for His people if they submitted to His holy rule according to His holy standard.

However, if they did not obey the Lord, they would suffer from covenant curses; plagues, diseases, defeat by their enemies, rule by foreign kings, hunger, thirst, nakedness and family strife (Deut 28:15-68). The perfect justice of God is seen in His delightful blessings but also in His painful judgements. The judgement of the Lord begins with His own people, the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). We see this pattern repeated through the Old Testament prophets; for example, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. First Israel is judged and then the surrounding pagan nations. In His righteous action, God’s perfect justice is demonstrated. There is no partiality in His judgement. He sets His love on Israel, but in no way compromises His perfect justice in His dealings with them.

Throughout the Old Testament history of Israel, we see that God avenged Himself against those who rebelled and who broke His covenant. He inflicted the rebels with plagues, fire and serpents; he opened the earth and let the generation of the wilderness perish (Num 11:33; 14:37-38). Later He used the mighty Assyrians as the ‘rod of His anger’ (Isa 8; 10:5) against Israel. Then He used the ferocious Babylonians ‘*a ruthless and impetuous people*’ (Hab 1:6) to enact His vengeance on His rebellious people. In verse 4: ‘Jacob’ stands for the whole people of God. “*The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob*”.

God is a consuming fire to those upon whom His perfect judgement falls (Deut 4:24; 9:3; Heb 12:29). He is an avenger of the wrongdoings of His people (verse 8), but He is merciful and gracious in His holiness and justice. He is forgiving Lord who has executed ‘*righteousness in Jacob*’– which brings us to our third point.

1. **The Forgiving Lord**

Throughout the history of redemption, the Lord worked through his servants: Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. These men ‘*called to the Lord and he answered them*’ (v6). The Living God is responsive to people like you and me when we call out to Him in faith, trust and dependence. Moses, Aaron and Samuel were amongst the Old Testament priests and prophets who interceded on Israel’s behalf as mediators (Ex 32:11-13). Moses carried out various priestly functions (Ex 24:6, 8; 40:22-27) while Samuel prayed on behalf of Israel (1 Sam 7:9; 12:16-18).

God revealed the holiness of his character both in justice and in mercy. “*The LORD passed before him {Moses} and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation*." (Ex 34:6-7).

The psalmist recalls the compassion of God in Israel’s history in verse 8. “*O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving**God to them*”. The Lord enabled the second generation whom He had rescued to enter the promised land. He brought a remnant of Israel back from captivity in Babylon. He acted to repair what His people had broken. After the period of exile from the promised land, worship was restored in Jerusalem. Sacrifices for sin were again made.

This side of the first coming of Christ we can see more fully the great holiness of the LORD both in judgement and in forgiveness. We know that the Lord has avenged the wrongdoings of His people in Christ. *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor 5:21). This is ‘double imputation’. It is like two bank transactions. The first ‘transaction’ is where a huge debt in your account is cancelled by the receipt of a massive payment. This is Christ’s payment for the sins of God’s people through His sacrificial death on the cross. The second ‘transaction’ is where a colossal credit in your account is created by the receipt of an enormous deposit. This is the crediting of Christ’s perfect obedience so that you are viewed by God as being ‘clothed’ in the righteousness of Christ.

We know that all the animal blood which was spilt on the altar pointed forward to the shed blood of Christ as the full and final payment for sin. “*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*” (Heb 10:4). We know that Jesus is the Great Prophet (Heb 1:1-2), the eternal High Priest (Heb 7:17) and the exalted King to whom every knee will bow when He returns in glory (Phil 2:10). We know that Christ is worthy of all worship because He is the Holy King who reigns; ruling with perfect equity, justice and righteousness.

We see the perfect justice and forgiveness of the King to which this psalm points. When a ‘woman of the city, who was a sinner’ came and anointed the feet of Jesus with her tears, wiped them with her hair and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment she placed her faith in the Holy King who reigns. She had saving faith in Jesus who forgave her sin. He said to her “*Your faith has saved you: go in peace*” (Luke 7:50).

Have you met King Jesus, weeping for your sin and trusting in Him alone? Beloved believer He says to you too “*Your faith has saved you: go in peace*” (Luke 7:50). No human government in this world can save you or provide you with complete peace. Christ has come and purchased forgiveness with His blood, the Great God who reigns over all is our God – a reality which is emphasized in the final verse: “*Exalt the* ***LORD our God****, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD* ***our God*** *is holy!*” (v9).

Brothers and sisters, we know that our King is like no other ruler. We know that we can truly worship God the Father in spirit and truth because Christ has opened up the way for us to gain access to the absolute holiness of God without being destroyed by the brilliance of His glory. Worship is an act of submission to his kingship and is a proper response to his awe-inspiring presence.

Brothers and sisters, highly praise and worship the reigning Holy King who is our God because He has forgiven us and avenged our wrongdoings in Christ. The LORD – the Holy King - reigns!

AMEN.