

# Psalm 20

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[ 0 : 00 ] So Psalm 20, perhaps you've prayed to Jesus before, maybe you've looked for blessing from Jesus.

! But I wonder, have you ever prayed for Jesus? Sounds odd, doesn't it? Is there a sense where your prayers are prayed for Jesus' sake and for his good?

But Psalm 20 is one of two or three slightly different Psalms in the book of the Psalms that aren't normally how we expect to pray.

Because strictly speaking, it's not asking something from Jesus, but it's a prayer to God seeking something for him.

It's a bit like a national anthem, God save our gracious King. As a prayer to be prayed for our King, for blessing and victory to be given to him.

[ 1 : 03 ] And actually that prayer is a really important prayer because if God answers that prayer to bless and give victory to our King, that is the answer to all of our prayers.

The people who pray this kind of prayer in ancient Israel are people who live in a time where personal happiness and success is dependent on the happiness and the success of your King. Your dreams of prosperity, of life, of security, depend entirely on the competence of your King. The King embodies your hopes of safety and of happiness.

So when the King wins, we win with him. And this Psalm gets us to see that actually the Christian life, thousands of years later, is still like that today.

That the Christian life is different from the life of our culture, which is so individualistic, isn't it? Where the winners at life are those who have got things sorted in themselves.

[ 2 : 13 ] No, the life of God's people is different to that. Because our hopes of winning are pinned in one man, pinned on one man, our King.

We live in a kingdom as Christians. We live in a sovereign state. We are citizens of heaven. So we've got to get into the mindset of this kind of heavenly royalism with this Psalm this morning. That when your King wins, then you win with him. When your King lives, you live with him. You are blessed when your King is blessed. So a couple of headings this morning.

First of all, it is a prayer for our King. It's a prayer for our King. If you look at the Psalm, it's pretty clear that this is a prayer for somebody, isn't it? Look at the words in verse 1 to 5.

Look at the word you there that's repeated over and over. May the Lord answer you. May he send you help from the sanctuary. May he grant you your heart's desire.

[ 3 : 17 ] But the big question that you've got to get really clear as you read the Psalm is, who is the object of this prayer? Who is the you being prayed for?

If you're like me, when you first read Psalm 20, what you immediately get is a kind of warm and fuzzy feeling, and you think that the you must be me. That David, who wrote the Psalm, is praying for me to get my heart's desires.

And for my prayers to be answered. We think the you in Psalm 20 is me. But actually, in the original Hebrew, the you is a singular word.

It's not talking about the people of God. David's speaking to us. It's a prayer for one particular person. And there are clues about who that person is. If you look at verse 6.

Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. Or verse 9. O Lord, save the King. So the you being prayed for here is not me.

[ 4 : 29 ] This is not a prayer firstly about us. And you can see the context of the prayer. The prayer is a call for victory for our King on the eve of battle.

We're not told the exact occasion, are we? But look at the sort of battle language. O King, may God answer you in the day of trouble. We pray, may God, the God of Jacob, protect you.

We pray, may God send you help, our King. May he send you support from Zion. And that's kind of army language, isn't it? May he send you reinforcements from Zion.

Maybe you can imagine one of those scenes in J.R.R. Tolkien's novels, *The Lord of the Rings*.

Remember the third movie, *The Return of the King*? It's at the battle, isn't it?

Outside the gates of Mordor. And the king has that rousing speech. Hold your ground, my brothers.

The day may come when the courage of men fails.

[ 5 : 36 ] But today is not that day. Today we fight. And then he rides off, doesn't he, Aragorn, to face the enemy alone. And as the king goes against our enemies, the enemies of mankind, you kind of shout at the TV screen, don't you?

God speed, King Aragorn. And Psalm 20 is like that. This is a prayer for God's valiant king, our king, our courageous king, as he goes into battle against our enemies.

We are behind you, our king. We are praying for you, in a sense. We are longing for your success in this battle. Verse 5. May we shout for joy over your salvation when you are saved in the battle and in the name of our God set up our banners.

It's like victory language, isn't it? Waving flags at the end of a battle. So it's like a rousing fanfare before battle. If it had a tune, it would probably be written by Handel, somebody like that.

It's a call for the king's colors to be held high on the front line that he might face our enemies and banish them forever.

[ 6 : 57 ] There are other psalms like this that speak about the king. So Psalm 45 is one of them. In your majesty, ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.

Or Psalm 72. May all kings fall down before you for you save the needy when you call. It's a prayer for the king. God save the king.

Long live the king. And notice in the prayer, we are praying for the king's prayers to be answered. Did you notice verse 1?

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May he hear your prayers as you go into battle. Or verse 5. May the Lord fulfill your petitions.

Our prayer here is that his prayers would be answered. As he rides out to battle, we want God to give him every help and support and to answer every prayer that he prays as he fights.

[ 8 : 07 ] Nowadays, as God's people, we don't live in the same situation, do we? We don't look to our king, King Jesus, to win battles against the Philistines or the Amalekites.

But we still do look to our king to win a war. Don't you admit that in life there are problems, there are enemies that are still around in our lives and in the world that we do not have the power to fight ourselves.

There are enemies that we can't face even if all of us together here. The singer Sarah Harding just this week has just revealed how she's been diagnosed with an advanced form of cancer.

And it's striking in her tweet how she uses kind of military language to talk about this cancer. She says, I am fighting as hard as I possibly can.

She recognizes that things like cancer are great enemies of mankind. But for everyone there comes a time when we can't fight anymore.

[ 9 : 20 ] Some battles are just too hard for us. There are some enemies that we have no answer to in and of ourselves. That when we face them alone we can't beat them.

And that is why we need a great king to face them. The apostle Paul talks about the serious enemies that we face doesn't he?

That Jesus faces for us. Our sins and our temptations. The things that separate us from God and place us under his anger.

And the last enemy he says is death. The last and greatest enemy of all. And perhaps you've come to the point in your life where you're willing to admit that your best hope against the most serious enemies of life and of death is not you.

It is your king. And you rely on his success. That for us to win against the serious enemies of life and death he must win.

[ 10 : 30 ] So it's a prayer for the king. Because secondly a prayer for the king is the answer to all our prayers. A prayer for the king is the answer to all our prayers.

The psalmist wants us to feel this morning the connection between your king's glory and your good. That the best for you this morning is to desire the best for him.

Just see that connection in the first and last verses. So the psalm begins and ends with a similar sentence actually in the Hebrew it sounds more similar. Verse 1 May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.

And then if you drop your eye down to verse 9 it should read actually more in the English May he answer us in the day of our calling. The word day is not in this translation.

In other words if you answer the king father God that will be the answer to all our prayers. But I wonder just as we go through this if you can sense something something holding you back from accepting this.

[ 11 : 41 ] Something stopping you from accepting this. Is this really true? Is it really true that if I desire his good that will turn out for my good?

because look again at the prayer that we are being called to pray here the prayer for the king. So important that we get who the you is here isn't it?

That the you is not you it's Jesus we're being called to pray for. Notice we are praying May he grant your heart's desire.

Verse 4 not my heart's desire. May God fulfill all your plans not mine. May he answer all of your prayers and your petitions not mine.

And that is quite a scary thing to pray isn't it? Praying for somebody else's desires and prayers to be fulfilled over and above my own feels quite dangerous.

[ 12 : 47 ] we feel naturally that the best life that we can live is where I am king. It's where my prayers and my desires are always answered.

And if I let anyone else rule me even for a day that's an unwise thing to do. To submit control to another king feels wrong. To pray to God let Jesus rule me.

That feels scary. Just imagine if I were a king. Would you want my desires to always be fulfilled for you? Would you want to see all of my plans for you fulfilled all of the time?

Mostly if kings or presidents or prime ministers could get all of their own way all of the time that is not going to go well for all of the people is it? Mostly what you get there is a dictator or a tyrant.

So I wonder if you feel reluctant to pray Psalm 20. Are you unsure that Jesus' rule and his total victory and his total reign over your life and over the world is the best thing for you?

[ 14 : 04 ] Are his desires and are his prayers ones that we would always embrace? Well let's think about it. In the Gospels we see that Jesus is a prayerful man don't we?

He spends considerable time in prayer and we've got recorded in the Gospels some of his prayers and some of his desires and you can get a sense of what kind of king he is from those prayers.

It's interesting in the Gospels most of the recorded prayers of Jesus are in the last 24 hours of his life before he goes to the cross.

So just listen to some of the prayers of our king. He contemplates the cross in John 12 now is my soul troubled and what shall I say?

Father save me from this hour save me from this suffering but for this purpose I've come into this hour. Father glorify your name. Father send me to die before the cross.

[ 15 : 08 ] In Luke 22 he prays Father if you're willing remove this cup from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done. And then on the cross our king prays Father forgive them for they don't know what they're doing.

My God my God why have you forsaken me? Father into your hands I commit my spirit. God. You get the sense of him don't you from his prayers and from his desires.

These are not the desires and prayers of a tyrant. They are the desires and prayers of a loving and a gracious and a valiant suffering king.

One who loves his people. One who came not to be served as a dictator but to serve and to give his life. And so whatever this king prays is a prayer that I really want to say amen to all of the time.

He prays for his people. He wrestles for his people. And whatever this king desires is a desire that I would want to say Father fulfill that desire.

[ 16 : 27 ] And whilst that may seem scary we want to rule ourselves don't we? this really is the best prayer that we can pray. That Jesus will rule over all.

And that he will rule over me. And that he will win over all of my enemies. Because you get the sense of this king. The one who prays at the cross.

That his people will be forgiven and welcomed and rescued. Who desires to do his father's will and to love his people even to the very end. At the beginning we sung that hymn.

Crown him with many crowns. It's kind of like this psalm isn't it? Give him the glory. Give him the victory. Give him the kingdom Father. Crown him with many crowns. But who do we want to see crowned? A tyrant? No, the lamb upon the throne. The perfect sacrificial offering.

[ 17 : 28 ] A suffering king. The dying savior. Please crown him upon the throne Father God. So when I see him as he is as king I don't run from that kind of king.

I welcome him don't I? I need his rule. I need that kind of king's rule. When I see him on the cross if any king is going to be in charge I want a king like him.

If any king is going to defeat my serious enemies I want him to be a king like that. So Lord send him help and give him the victory.

Spurgeon said that no man is so free, no man is so happy as he who loyally bows before the king of kings. He says to serve this God is to reign.

he who has God for his king is himself a king. So this is my best prayer for Jesus to rule me so that he can rescue me so that I can reign with him.

[ 18 : 44 ] And if you answer that prayer Father God it will be the answer to all of my prayers. Thinking about it Psalm 20 is perhaps the kind of prayer that Jesus Christ would have liked his disciples to pray for him in the garden of Gethsemane.

Remember that. Remember he asks his disciples to pray doesn't he on the eve of his crucifixion. On the eve of the greatest battle that our king would ever face.

Not with the Philistines but with the far more serious enemies that Jesus was going to face on the cross. And I'd imagine that Jesus would have loved to have heard his disciples praying this.

May the Lord answer you in the day of your trouble Jesus. May the Lord support you. May he help you tonight. May he answer your prayers.

May he give you victory tomorrow. Sadly I don't think the disciples did pray that did they? They were asleep. They were too tired.

[ 19 : 46 ] But with this background in mind as we read the gospels we are longing or we should be longing to pray this prayer. We are longing for Jesus to keep going aren't we?

On Maundy Thursday. We're longing for the disciples to sit up and pray this. We are willing him to win over the enemies that we can't beat.

Over the big serious questions of life so that we can answer those questions positively. Will my sins be dealt with?

Well if Jesus wins yes. Will there be hope in death? If Jesus wins yes. Am I loved?

If Jesus wins yes. So it's a prayer for the king which is the answer to all of my prayers if he wins.

And finally and lastly we know this prayer will be answered.

[ 20 : 52 ] We know this prayer will be answered. Do we need to pray Psalm 20 with our fingers crossed this morning? If he wins? Well notice the assurance of verses 6 and 7.

I know the Lord saves his anointed. He will answer him from heaven. the thing to see here is that the success of King Jesus does not depend on how well we pray Psalm 20 does it?

It doesn't depend on how well his disciples pray before he goes to the cross. David picks up on the language of Psalm 2 where God introduces this king as the anointed king.

as the king who God has chosen to bear the Holy Spirit in its fullness. As the king that he wants to win.

And actually in Psalm 2 we eavesdrop on God the father making a promise to his anointed king for something. If you listen to Psalm 2 verse 8 here is God the father speaking to his son.

[ 22 : 07 ] Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage. And the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

So God the father says to this anointed king his son ask for the world and I will give it to you my son. I will. You see this prayer for Jesus his victory already has a promised answer.

It's already been agreed and covenanted between the father and his son and by the spirit. And so when we pray for Jesus to rule that prayer will be answered not because we pray it well but because we are praying for something that God wants to.

Something that God has promised Jesus. Jesus. And that prayer is going to be answered even when it looks like it will not be answered.

Did you see verse seven? Some trust in horses and chariots but we trust in the name of the Lord. Well what is that saying? It's a nice verse isn't it? In this context it is talking about what you think

your king needs to give him the edge in victory over your enemies.

[ 23 : 30 ] So back then most people think don't they? Our king is great because he's got lots of horses and chariots so he's going to give us peace in our land. But Jesus is going to win even though he has none of those things or he doesn't use those things.

Even though he rides into his city on a donkey and he hangs around with some misfit disciples. Jesus won't win through what looks powerful not through things that seem strong one day but then the next day they collapse and fall.

Now in the day of trouble in the day of his battle he will win by the name of the Lord that is what we are trusting him to give Jesus victory as his anointed.

So we know that this prayer will be answered don't we? And actually it has been answered already as Jesus goes into battle on Good Friday he meets our most serious enemies and God answers this prayer by giving him the victory and raising him up on Sunday and he does it without a single horse or chariot in sight by the power of the Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead.

so I have to say actually as we close Jesus is a king who is destined to rule whether we like it or not whether you like that or not there is nothing that we can do to stop that and isn't that wonderful this morning whether you pray for this or not this morning Jesus will rule God wills it God is going to give Jesus the world as his heritage one theologian says the mere fact itself that God's will is irresistible fills me with fear but once I realize that God wills only that which is good my heart is made to rejoice you see Jesus' victory is irresistible and irreversible but that victory does not have to be your biggest problem this morning because actually

[ 26 : 03 ] Jesus' victory is your greatest solution it is the answer to all of your prayers you cannot beat Jesus' rule you can't stop it but Psalm 20 really gets us to ask the question doesn't it why on earth would you want to beat it why don't you just join it and sing for it and pray for it and rejoice in it since he is the king of the cross he is that kind of king the lamb upon the throne and just as it was on Easter Sunday this prayer will be answered again won't it finally and fully when our king returns as we pray come Lord Jesus Father give Jesus the victory Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 when Jesus delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority that's when the end will come for he must reign until he puts all enemies under his feet and the last enemy to be destroyed is death and we pray don't we this morning

Father give your son give the Lord Jesus fully and finally the victory that he is destined to receive over our enemies and over our last enemy death it's the best prayer that you can pray this morning the answer to all of your prayers the answer to the serious problems of your life and of your death God save the King God live the King the King of the cross let's pray together