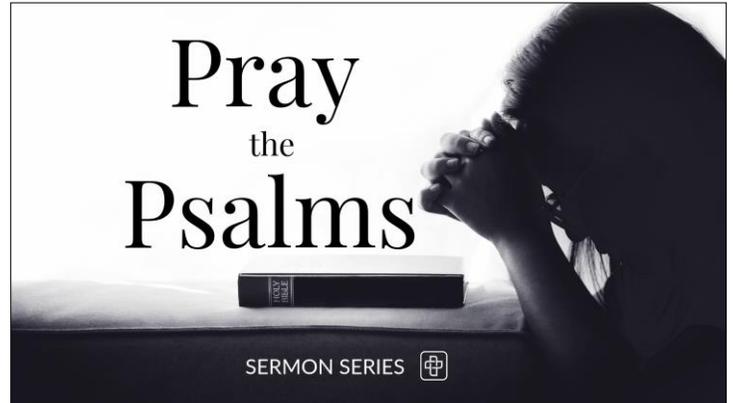




## Praise the Bridegroom-King

### Psalm 45

David Sunday      June 16, 2019



Happy Father's Day to all the dads. We want to honor the great work of fatherhood and we pray you'll be encouraged today. Maybe some of you are wondering, like Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, "Do you love me?" He asked his wife that question and it was kind of funny. They'd been bickering throughout the movie when he asks her that. She answers, "For 25 years I've washed your clothes, cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, milked the cow. After 25 years, why talk about love right now?" She concludes, "Well, I must, in fact, love my husband." But then in comparison to the budding romances she sees her daughters enjoying, she realizes there's something lacking.

That can happen in our relationship with Christ, can't it? The Holy Spirit warns us about this through the Apostle Paul. Look at what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 (CSB): "*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, because I have promised you in marriage to one husband—to present a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*"

The danger we face is seduction away from purity of devotion and love to Christ. We've been promised in marriage to Him and if we're finding our love waning today, Psalm 45 is uniquely designed to rekindle that love. This Psalm is here in our Bibles to help us be as smitten with the beauty of Christ as fiancés are with one another in the days leading up to their wedding. It's here to heighten our anticipation of being in a living, lasting, loving marriage with Christ. It's a love song, written for a wedding.

There's no other Psalm like this. Most of the Psalms are addressed to God or are about God. But here's a Psalm that's addressed to the King and about Him. It's written by a man who is overflowing with the pleasantness of his theme. Do you see that in verse one? He says, "*My heart overflows with a pleasing theme. I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.*" His heart is bubbling over with praise.

What is it that has captivated his heart? Well, in most weddings, the focus is on the bride. If I showed you a picture of our wedding and I kept pointing at myself, saying, “Did you notice what I’m wearing? How do you like my haircut? See how shiny my shoes are?” you’d think, “He’s weird”—or even worse, “He’s rude.” It’s the bride who is the center of attention. She’s the one you’re supposed to be focusing on. But not in this case. In this case, the Bridegroom outshines the bride. In Psalm 45, 11 verses are devoted to the Bridegroom and six to the bride. There’s something resplendent about this Bridegroom-King that breaks all conventions for typical wedding speech.

### **The Splendor of the King (verses 2-9)**

The first thing we want to do this morning is marvel at the splendor of this King as He’s described in verses two through nine. We don’t know which king of Israel this wedding song was originally designed to be sung for. All we know is that the expectations for his reign were greater than any other king. Look at verse two: “*You are the most handsome of the sons of men.*” Here the writer actually makes up a word. He’s saying, “You are doubly more beautiful than the sons of Adam.” In verse seven he says of this King that He stands head and shoulders above all His companions.

What is it about this Bridegroom-King that makes Him doubly beautiful and exceedingly excellent above all the rest? Well, look at verse two. It’s the graciousness of His words. Do you see that? “*Grace is poured upon your lips.*” Grace flows from His lips. The focus is not on what this King looks like; it’s on what He sounds like. Wouldn’t you love to live in a nation where every word of your leader dripped with grace, truth and kindness; where you’d never worry about the next thing that’s going to come out of his mouth? Clearly such a nation does not exist on earth, In fact, there aren’t any churches like that either. You’ll never find a church on earth where every word that flows from the mouth of her leaders is dripping with grace. We’d love for it to be that way, but we fall short.

And you’ll never find a family like this. The best of fathers aspire to be men of grace who speak words of grace to their children and wives. What comes forth from our lips is where we first become aware of our need for grace, because if anyone never sins in what he says, he’s a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check, but we all sin in what we say. We all need a King of grace like this King.

Here is a King Who, when people meet him, they say, “No one ever spoke like this man.” Grace flows from His lips. His words create forgiveness, cleansing and restoration. His words

breathe hope to the despairing. I heard an Irish preacher say that if you looked at the Jerusalem Daily News the morning after this King's wedding, that headline would read, "The King's Speech," because that's what stands out about Him.

For His grace-filled speech, He is rewarded. Look at verse two again. We find the first of three "therefores" in verse two, "*Therefore God has blessed you forever.*" Because the King's speech is full of grace, He is forever blessed by God. He's a man of grace. But notice, He's also a man of war, according to verses three to five. Here's a King Who knows not only how to forgive, He also knows how to fight. His lips drip with grace, but on His thigh is strapped a sword (verse three). And His right hand knows how to wield that sword. We see that at the end of verse four.

He pierces the hearts of the King's enemies. He rides forth in majesty, splendor and triumph. This King of grace is a Warrior-King. Jonathan Gibson says, "Only gracious men are qualified to fight in God's Kingdom." Being a man of grace is what makes Him a spiritual warrior. Only gracious men can fight in God's Kingdom. This is what makes this King's war magnificent, even beautiful. Look at verse four. He rides triumphantly "*for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness,*" or in the CSB, "*for the cause of truth, humility and justice.*" This is always what He's fighting for.

We just commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy. We saw men and women who were in their late 90s being honored for their service in World War II. If you asked any of those men or women, "Is war magnificent?" they would tell you some horrific stories of what they saw in that war. But if you asked a survivor of Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp, "What was it like to see an American soldier cross over that barbed wire fence and come to liberate the emaciated prisoners," they would tell you, "It was the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen." Those men came in the cause of truth, humility and justice.

Friends, no human being, no earthly nation, can claim always to fight in the cause of truth, humility and justice. But here is a King Who never tampers with the truth. Here is a King Who never gets puffed up with pride. Here is a King Who never deviates from the cause of justice and righteousness. Here is a majestic Bridegroom-King Who is never overcome by evil, but Who always overcomes evil with good.

He comes to His wedding just like Prince William or Prince Harry came dressed to theirs—in full military regalia—because this King is going to fight to win His bride. He will stand against the powers of hell itself to redeem, protect and defend His realm. He will make all His enemies a footstool for His feet, until He banishes every threat that would challenge His dominion. In verse one through nine, the praises of the splendor of this King are so exalted, so high, you've got to

wonder if this writer was just getting carried away with poetic license. Is he kind of like the best man on the wedding day, buttering up the groom with excessive flattery?

No. The clue that this writer is not going over the top is in verse six (CSB): *“Your throne, God, is forever and ever; the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of justice.”* What did he just call this King? What did he say? God? Now, if you were an Egyptian or a Syrian, you might use the word “god” regarding your pharaohs or kings, but not a faithful Jew who has heard the first commandment: *“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me”* (Exodus 20:2-3). Jews didn’t talk like this.

But here’s an Israelite praising the King on His wedding day. He’s calling the King of Israel, God, as we see in verse six. His Kingdom is divine. His Kingdom is eternal. *“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”* His Kingdom is full of justice and righteousness. *“The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.”* And notice verse five. He’s a King not only for Israel, but also for the whole world. All peoples will fall under Him.

But then look at verse seven. It’s clear that this King whom he calls God in verse six is also a man who is anointed by God. As you read these great descriptions of this King, you’ve got to think about how the godly in Israel would have yearned for a King in David’s line Who would be worthy of all the praises that are heaped on Him here in Psalm 45. But you’ll search high and low throughout the whole Old Testament and you’ll never find another king who perfectly meets this description. Not only did all the kings of Israel and Judah fail to be like this King, some of them went very far in the opposite direction and led the people astray to worship false gods. They were kings of deceit, arrogance and oppression, not truth, humility and righteousness.

So Who is this King Who is given the title God, yet is also a man anointed by God? Is there any other king in the Bible who fits this description? I love how Derek Kidner comments on what is going on here. “This paradox” (this King Who is God is also anointed by God) “is consistent with the incarnation” (with God the Son becoming man), “but mystifying in any other context.” You’re just going to scratch your head and think, “Who could this writer have been talking about?” Kidner goes on to say, “It is an example of Old Testament language bursting its banks to demand a more than human fulfillment.”

That’s exactly what we hear in Hebrews 1:8 which is a direct quotation of Psalm 45:6-7. So Hebrews 1 is telling us, “Make no mistake about it. The King of Psalm 45 has come. He came into the world, in Bethlehem, when all the angels said, ‘I bring you good tidings of great joy—the King

is born.” But would you believe I read a whole commentary on Psalm 45 and it never once mentioned Jesus? Not once! I thought, “This is worthless. This is missing the point.”

I’d much rather have Charles Spurgeon talk to me about Psalm 45. This is what he says about the Psalm: “Some see here Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter only.” They’re thinking that’s what this is about. The problem with that is Solomon had a little more than one wife. He doesn’t fit this description. “Some see here Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter only—they are short-sighted. Others see Solomon and Christ—they are cross-eyed. Well-focused spiritual eyes see here Jesus only.” I’d say, “Spurgeon, I’m with you on this one. I’ve gone to Hebrews 1 and that’s where I’m landing.”

Let’s talk about Jesus, because I love the Jesus we see in this Psalm. If you struggle at times, like I do, to keep your love for Jesus burning hot and growing stronger, this Psalm can rekindle that love. Maybe you’re here today because it’s Father’s Day. Maybe you grew up in the church and thought it would honor your dad to come today. We’re really glad you’re here. But maybe Jesus has grown dull and distant to you. You hear people talk about Jesus, but you wonder in your heart, “What’s really so special about Jesus?”

Look at Him in this Psalm. No man can compare with Jesus. He is the magnificent Man Who shows us what it means to be truly human. He is the doubly most excellent of the sons of men (verse two). His words drip with grace. His enemies tremble as He girds on His sword and draws near. He’s the eternal God Who will reign on His righteous throne forever.

And notice that in verse seven He is a joyous King. The second “therefore” in this Psalm is in verse seven. Because of His uncompromising love of righteousness and His fierce hatred of all that is wicked, “*Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*” He came into this world as a Conqueror Who knew that victory was at hand and was filled with joy at the thought of that victory.

The Bible says it was for the joy set before Jesus that He went to the cross and endured the shame (Hebrews 12:)2) and it was from that cross that He sent forth the arrows dripped in blood—His own blood—that pierced the hearts of the King’s enemies, that pierced the heart of the devil and death and sin and hell and destroyed the dominion they have over His people. It was because of the joy that was set before Him—a joy that exceeds all His companions, a joy that is unshakeable. Donald Macleod says, “A joyless life would have been a sinful life. Jesus experienced deep, habitual joy.”

There is no one as joyful as Jesus. Friends, the joy you see in Jesus in verse seven is a joy He wants to share with you. He's the Savior, Brother, Shepherd. Friend, King and Defender your heart longs for. He wants you to enter into His joy. In fact, everything you've ever wanted a Father to be, Jesus is. When you know Jesus, He brings you into a right relationship with His Father so that you and I who trust in Jesus can call God our Father and know Him as sons and daughters.

Wouldn't it be great, if your love for Jesus is waning a bit, to take Psalm 45 and pray through all the qualities we see in this King, until the Holy Spirit sets your heart ablaze with more love for Jesus? I want to invite you to ask the Holy Spirit today to help you see the magnificence of Jesus, until your heart is overflowing with the pleasing theme that's on the heart of this Psalm writer. Don't let the beauty and magnificence of King Jesus pass from your sight until you've praised Him, until you've loved Him more deeply.

I want to put a prayer on the screen that we can pray together. This is from Tim and Kathy Keller. Before we move on to the next section, which is amazing, I want us to just let this sink in and ask the Lord to be filling us with the kind of delight in our King that this Psalm writer has in his. Let's pray this together:

Lord, Isaiah 33:17 says, "*Your eyes will see the king in his beauty*"—and in this psalm, with the eyes of faith, I can indeed see Your Son humble and weak yet powerful and majestic. Only because He was both divine and human could Your Son save me, and for that I am grateful forever. Amen.

May we be grateful forever for this divine and human King, Who is full of grace, Who comes to fight against our enemies to set us free from that which would have destroyed us forever and to fill us with the joy that fills His heart. Oh, praise the name of the Lord our God. Praise His name forevermore.

That's what the first part of this Psalm should be doing. If our eyes are open, if our ears are not deaf, if our heart is not made of stone, we will read these words and will say, "Jesus, I would praise You afresh today and will love You more and more for what You are revealing about Yourself here."

Now, if this description of the splendor of the King has moved your heart to praise Him, you're going to bubble over with amazement at where this Psalm is going next.

### **The Beauty of the King's Bride (verses 10-15)**

What we see next is that this King doesn't want to live alone. He longs for a bride who will share His throne with Him and reign with Him forever. Look at Psalm 45:8. He comes with the

fragrance of myrrh and aloes and cassia diffusing from his robes. He comes forth from ivory palaces, with stringed instruments that are making his glad heart even gladder. Daughters of this King are gathering around as bridesmaids of honor and at His right hand stands “*the queen in gold of Ophir*,” the finest gold which she could only have received from her Bridegroom-King (verse nine). Also in verse nine, we have a snapshot of the wedding.

Then we move backwards and see the King’s bride, the princess, before they get married. We see the beauty of the King’s bride in verses 10-15, and some words that are addressed to her in these verses. Let’s look at Psalm 45:10-15 together and see the beauty of the King’s bride. What I want you to realize here is that the whole Bible is a love story. Our marriages here on earth are supposed to be a picture of the eternal marriage that has existed between God and His people, between Christ and His Bride. We’re called to reflect and reveal this in our marriages. We are called through our marriages, in the words of Greg Morris, “to perform heaven’s drama on an earthly stage.”

That’s what’s going on when Johnna Forth and Andrew Warman get married. They are reflecting in this world something of the beauty of God’s eternal marriage to His people. This is what the Bible story is about. Did you notice that the Bible story after creation begins with a marriage in Genesis 2?

God the Father puts His first son to bed for the night and takes a rib from Adam’s side. Out of this rib He shapes with His own hands a delightful bride. God the Father performs the role of Father of the bride, leading her to His son. God wakes him up and Adam is ravished by her beauty. What a sight! “*This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” (Genesis 2:23).

The Bible story begins with a marriage. And then the Bible ends with a marriage as well in Revelation 19. You can read there about the marriage supper of the Lamb. The whole story of the Bible is God’s pursuit of this bride, who is often faithless and not living for Him—yet He keeps pursuing her. Jonathan Edwards put it like this: “God created the world to provide a spouse and a Kingdom for His Son.” That’s the reason God made the universe, Edwards is saying. “And the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ and the spiritual marriage of the spouse to Him is what the whole creation labors and travails in pain to bring to pass.”

Wow! The gospel is the story of how God the Son came out of the ivory palaces of heaven, down into a world of woe, to claim His bride. “How from heaven He came and sought her to be His holy Bride and with His own blood He bought her and for her life He died (lyrics from The Church’s One Foundation by Samuel Stone). That’s what the gospel is about. As the Psalm writer

turns his attention to the King's bride, he instructs her how she is to prepare for this wedding. As he instructs her, we can learn how we are to prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb as well.

I was helped here by another pastor, Rod Weeks, who pointed out two exhortations that we find in verses 10-15. This is how you and I can get ready for the marriage that we are engaged to Christ to enjoy for all eternity. Exhortation #1 is that we need to break with the past and give all our allegiance to King Jesus. See that in verse ten (CSB)? *"Listen, daughter, pay attention and consider: forget your people and your father's house."* Why? You have a new priority now. There's a leaving and a cleaving that must take place (Genesis 2:24). Your first priority is no longer your parents nor your friends; it's your husband.

As we know, when a spouse wants to run back to his or her old family that can cause enormous strain in a marriage. If you want to follow Jesus Christ, you've got to pledge your first and highest allegiance to Him. As you do, that will actually make you a better spouse, a better friend, a better son or daughter—but this is what keeps a lot of people from following Jesus. We see throughout Luke's Gospel that what often keeps people from following Jesus is they don't want to leave their father, mother, brother or sister.

Maybe some of you are struggling with this today. Are you ready to put Jesus above your family, above your boyfriend or girlfriend? Are you ready to say, as we sing in a hymn, "Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, naught be all to me save that Thou art"? In other words, "May everything else be as nothing in comparison with You."

Why? "Because You're the high King of heaven Who has won my victory over sin, death and hell. You're my chief Treasure. You're the One, Jesus, Whom I need to flee to. You're the One Whose counsel I most need to seek. You're the One Whom I want my heart to please above all else. Past loves must fade, former loyalties must shift and a new allegiance must now reign in my heart. I am committed to You, Jesus, above all else." That's what it means to be a Christian.

It also means, in verse 11, that we now bow to Him. *"Bow down to him, for he is your lord."* A Christian is someone who says, "Jesus, You have my first allegiance now," gets down on his knees and bows to Jesus, saying, "I am Your servant. Be it done to me according to Your word." This is not drudgery. Look at what the King's heart toward His bride is like in verse 11. What does it say the King sees in his bride? Beauty. *"The king will desire your beauty,"* it says.

We know from the book of Hosea that it's not because the bride is lovely in herself. We know from Ephesians 5 that the Bridegroom-King gave himself up for His bride. He died for her on the cross to cleanse her, to wash her with the water of His Word in order to make her holy and without blemish before Him. Just as His words toward us are dripping with grace, so also His vision of us is tinted by grace. He sees us through eyes of grace because of the work He's done for

us to clothe us in the rich splendor of the gold we see here, the gold of His own righteousness, and to cleanse us with His blood. So in the eyes of Jesus, we who trust in Him are beautiful. Jesus is enthralled with His bride. He says to her, “You are altogether beautiful, My love. There is no flaw in you,” just like the lover says in the Song of Solomon.

Some of you came to church today feeling very unattractive. You might feel more like trash than a treasure. Some of you have had people who should have been desiring your beauty and building you up, but instead tell you, “You’re trash” and treat you like trash, not a treasure. Maybe some of you today are feeling undesirable, unbeautiful, because of your sin or because of your circumstances. You feel like no one cherishes you, no one thinks you’re beautiful, no one finds you desirable. If that’s you, I want you to see what verse 11 says and personalize it. Jesus, the King, desires your beauty. Jesus sees you as beautiful. He died to make you who were unlovely through sin now lovely in His sight by grace. That’s how Jesus sees His people. He died so that one day you can hear the sound of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, saying, “Hallelujah to the Lamb” and calling you to the marriage supper where you will be clothed in the finest of linen.

How can you respond to a love like this? When I think about the proper response to a love like this, the love of a Bridegroom-King Who says, “Oh, you are altogether lovely to me,” when the most handsome of men sees His bride as the most beautiful, I think the way you should respond is like the woman in the town who was a sinner. When she found out Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, what did she do? She brought an alabaster jar of perfume and stood behind Him at His feet, weeping. She began to wash His feet with her tears, then wiped His feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with perfume. She was forgiven much, so she loved much (Mark 14:3-9).

Friends, the King desires your beauty. Since He is your Lord, bow at His feet, anoint them with your tears and lavish on Him your costliest treasures. Give Him your all. That’s what it means to be a Christian. Break with all that is past. Forget all the things that are behind; they’re covered by the blood of Jesus. Press forward now to know Christ. Submit to Him as your Lord. Jesus is calling you to Himself today. Can you hear Him? Can you hear His voice saying, “Oh, I would have you to be My beautiful bride”? Can you hear Him calling you?

If you hear Him calling, the way to respond is to say, “Yes, Lord, I do now receive You and I do now believe on Your name.” As you do that, God is working a miracle in your heart called the new birth, causing you to become part of the King’s family, betrothed to Him as part of His Bride. That’s what He’s calling you to right now.

I want you to know that whatever you lose for the sake of Christ, you will gain infinitely more at the marriage supper of the Lamb in the new creation. Look at verse 12: *“The people of*

*Tyre...*” They were the legendary billionaires of the ancient Mideast. They were the rich and famous. *“The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people.”* They’re going to come to you. They’re going to bring you gifts, because they’re going to want your favor, now that you’re the bride of this Bridegroom-King.

It reminds me of Kate Middleton, Prince William’s bride. It was a storybook romance, with a wedding watched all over the world. Wherever she goes, she is adored by millions of people. She’s like the 21<sup>st</sup> century ideal of what a future queen should be. Billionaires give her gifts. She will be the queen of England in the future. She’s William’s wife.

But in 1996, when she was only 14 years old, she had to leave the all-girls school she was attending called Downe House. She had to leave in the middle of the year, because she was being bullied so badly. She lost so much weight and got eczema on her skin because of the stress the bullying was causing. They say she was bullied because she was “too perfect.” It must have been very painful for a shy 14-year-old girl to endure.

But if she had known then that a decade or so later she would marry the future king of England and would stand in Westminster Chapel in the finest of robes, with millions of people watching her on TV, I wonder how her future marriage would have changed her perspective on her circumstances as a 14-year-old. I wonder, too, if her classmates would have known that one day Kate was going to be queen, would they have treated her a little differently? Would they have thought, “Maybe we should act in such a way as to be on her friend list, not her enemy list”?

Friends, what we need to realize is that one day we, the Bride of Christ, are no longer going to be bullied by the world. We’re going to be the envy of the world. All the wealthy will seek the favor of Christ’s Bride with gifts. In our culture, there’s such a temptation to blend in and mute the fact that you’re a follower of Jesus, hiding your true allegiance to Him. But these last verses are calling us to recognize what an enormous privilege it is to belong to Jesus Christ. We don’t know the wedding date yet, but we are engaged to a most glorious Bridegroom-King. One day, if you are joined to Jesus, no one is going to think you are insignificant. No one is going to think you are stupid to follow Him.

So focus on the joy and gladness that will be yours when you’ll finally meet the One you’ve bowed the knee to and to Whom you’ve sworn your allegiance. Just look at verse 13 and think about the robes of righteousness embroidered with gold in which you’ll be clothed. Look at verses 14 and 15 and see the joyful procession that will take place as the bride and Bridegroom enter into their new life together in the King’s palace. You who have trusted in Jesus, realize, “This is my future. Everlasting joy and a rich inheritance in the palace of the King of kings and Lord of lords is what I have to look forward to.”

The last thing we need to see in this beautiful Psalm is the fruitfulness of this King's marriage to His bride. In verses 16 and 17, the writer turns his attention back to the Bridegroom-King once more, telling us this is going to be a fruitful marriage. Jesus is going to bring many sons to glory (verse 16) and they will reign with Him as princes in all the earth. Friends, Jesus is going to be filling heaven, the new creation, with people like you and me—people from all the nations, people who have no right to be there, but who are there because they've been redeemed through the blood of the Lamb, forgiven, cleansed and clothed in His righteousness, faultless to stand before His throne. Not only before His throne, but beside His throne as rulers with Him, reigning with Him as princes and princesses in His Kingdom. That's the future of those who have trusted in Jesus. You can have that future, if you receive Him and believe on His name.

I heard a preacher say this to those of us who are following King Jesus: "Living for and loving Jesus is the only thing in this world that will matter in the world to come." That's what we see here: living for and loving King Jesus is the only thing that will matter in the world to come. So that should be the only thing that matters to us in this world. Look at the last verse of this Psalm. There's only one name that's going to be remembered for all generations. There's only one name that the nations are going to praise forever and ever. It's the name of this Bridegroom-King. His name will forever be praised. God will ensure that the name of Jesus is remembered forever, that all peoples, from every tribe and language and nation, will praise this worthy Bridegroom-King. And we have the privilege of preparing for that on this Lord's Day, as we worship Him together.

As the worship team comes to help us do that, let's pray together in unison in response to this Psalm. This prayer helps us think through how we should respond to these beautiful words. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, You look on us as a spouse and lover, with passionate love and delight. I praise You that You can love like that, but I confess that I do not live like someone who is loved like that. Make it a truth that controls how I act every day. Amen.

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