

# Psalm 21 Matt Taylor 14<sup>th</sup> June 2026

We all need saving from something, don't we? That's the kind of narrative that we buy into from stories from the early age. It's the narrative of Paw Patrol, if you know that. No pup is too, no, how does it go? No, something's too small, no pup is too big, something like that. Anyway, it's there at the youngest age. It's there also in Pride and Prejudice. We need deliverance, need rescue from our pride, from our prejudice. These stories, they captivate our hearts because we sure need saving from something, don't we?

And so when the enemy is ignorance, our salvation is found in education. When our enemy's disease, well, the salvation is kind of the scientific medical realm. The enemy, loneliness, community is the answer. Inequality, it's justice. When the enemy is there in our minds, our fears are our demons. Will we go to therapies, to mindfulness for answers, don't we? And yet, with all these enemies and the vast array of saviours out there, is 1 enemy that looms over all. The dark enemy of death itself.

See, death casts its long shadow over this world and over our saviours too. For education, medicine, community justice and our psychological therapies. They can't save us ultimately from death itself. No wonder so many people drift into distraction and diversion. We need a saviour. We need a saviour who's strong enough and powerful enough to rescue us from death itself.

And so we come to Psalm 21. You'll hopefully have it open in your Bible as it's very small on the screen before you this morning and we'll see why in a moment. Psalm 21 is paired with its previous Psalm, Psalm 20, which we looked at last week. And Psalm 20 we were thinking about as a battle anthem that the army was singing to their king before battle. God save the king. And as the king trusts in the Lord, he gives him salvation. He gives him victory over his enemies.

And Psalm 21 functions as a bit of a post-match celebration. So on Thursday, was it Wednesday, Thursday coming up? England will play their first game. The night will begin singing God Save the King, the national anthem, and hopefully we trust it will end in our singing We Are the Champions,

celebrating the victory of England over Croatia in the first game. And in a sense, this is how Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 work together.

So have a look at the beginning and the end of Psalm 21. The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. Or verse 13, in your strength, Lord, be exalted. We will sing and praise your might. There's a focus in on the strength of the Lord in giving victory to his king. The king rejoices at the beginning, but at the end, all the people of God are joining in, praising God for his praise and his might.

And at the heart of this psalm, in verse 7, we have this relationship between the Lord and his king. The king trusts in the Lord, verse 7. And it's through the unfailing love of the Almighty to the King that he will not be shaken. And it's out of this relationship between the Lord and the King that the people experience salvation. It flows out from this relationship between the Lord and his King. Victory, vindication, rescue. The people are one with their King and their King is one with the Lord.

And Psalm 22 splits into two halves. The first half, the king rejoices in the strength of the Lord's salvation. And then there is a call to rejoice in the king and the Lord destroying their enemies. And what we're going to do this morning is we're going to look at those two halves. Firstly, as David would have sung it, for it's entitled to us, a psalm of David. And then we're going to do, as we've been doing other weeks, seeing how this is filled full in Jesus. How Jesus, the true son of David, the true king, sings this. And we, united by faith as the body of Christ, too can sing that. We're going to go two halves through three times. Hopefully we'll follow.

**1. Rejoice in the strength of the Lord in giving salvation to the king. (vs. 1-7)**

So firstly, rejoice in the strength of the Lord in giving salvation to the king. Have a look with me to verse 1. The king rejoices in your strength, Lord. How great is his joy in the victories you give. David is rejoicing in the victory the Lord gives him. See, last week, Psalm 20 verse 4, just throw your eyes over to little #4, the people were praying that the Lord would give to David the desires of his heart, that his battle plans would succeed. And post-match, post-battle, what's happening? Well, the king is rejoicing because verse 2,

the Lord has granted him his heart's desire. His plans have succeeded. He is the victorious one.

And verse 3, we have this wonderful image of blessings. The Lord greeting him with rich blessings. The word underneath greeting is literally confront. And we've had that a number of times in these Psalms already. The Lord confronting, but actually confronting death and destroying it. But this time he confronts David and showers him with blessings. What blessings? Well verse 3, it's a crown.

In 2 Samuel chapter 12, David has, he fell in chapter 11 of 2 Samuel with Bathsheba and there's a restoration in chapter 12. And at the end of chapter 12, David goes out to fight against the Ammonites and he musters an entire army and he attacks the town and he captures it. And what happens after the victory? Well, David is crowned on his head with a crown that is made out of gold and precious stones. See, to be crowned after the battle is a sign, a blessing of victory. That pure gold crown is placed on his head.

But also he has the blessing of life. And verse 4, He asked you for life and you gave it to him length of days forever and ever. In one sense that is answered in the king surviving the battle. He's been given life and not death. But more than that it is this sense that he has long lived the king. He has a long life as king. But also there is a sense in which that is for his descendants as well. This length of days forever and ever. There is a sense of a hyperbole in this song.

Crown, life, but also glory. Verse 5. Through the victories you gave, his glory is great. You have bestowed on him splendour and majesty. The glory, the weight of dignity and honour. You see, just as if England were to win the World Cup, the players would for the rest of their lives be bestowed with glory, splendour and majesty. The King would give them honours in the New Year's honours list. And in the same way, the King being given this victory is bestowed with glory, splendour and majesty.

But the ultimate blessing is there in verse 6. You made him glad with the joy of his presence. That intimate relationship between the Lord and his King. That joy of being in God's presence, the unending blessings.

On one level, these were given to David in his victories on the battlefield. But ultimately, we see them feel full in Jesus. You see, Jesus rejoices in the powerful salvation that the Father gives him. It is said that this is the joy that was set before him that enabled him to endure the cross as he fought death and sin and shame.

In John 17, Jesus prays before he goes to the cross, Father, glorify your Son. And the Father answers that prayer as Jesus is glorified in his death and resurrection. And every sinner that trusts in Jesus is an answer to that prayer that his desire of his heart would be granted.

And the blessings of Jesus's victory on the cross, well, they are a crown, aren't they? A crown not of thorns, but a crown of glory. He has eternal life. He's gone through death, never to die again. There's no hyperbole here in verse 4 when we sing, he asks you for life and you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever. Having defeated death, Jesus is never to die again.

And Jesus is the one who shows us the glory of God. He is the very outshining of the radiance of God's being. As Jesus walked on earth, there was a moment when the power of God's kingdom was displayed to a handful of people. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus' glory bursts forth and they behold his glory. And that which was glimpsed on the Mount of Transfiguration is shown forth in Jesus' resurrection. His resurrection body showing the glory of who he really is, the radiance of the being of God.

And in joy, he returns to the presence of his father in the ascension. And he is in that eternal relationship of love and trust with his father. And that relationship is sure and certain. End of verse 7, he will not be shaken.

And so wonderfully, for us, united by faith to Jesus as his body, we can rejoice in the strength of the Lord in giving us salvation. See, the triumph of the king is the triumph of all who are in him.

Imagine for a moment, and I will probably stop using football illustrations of the World Cup, but imagine for a moment that your country, be it England, Scotland or wherever, were to win the World Cup. And you were to know that was to be true. That victory that you will share in. Now all the ups and downs of what's to come, if you knew that to be sure, that would change how you watch the games.

So when England are 2-0 down to Germany and we get it back to 2-0 and then we head to penalties, it'll change how you watch it, won't it? For the joy that you know that is to come. And the same is true for us, for we do not yet wear the crown of life that will be ours. And yet we know that it is waiting for us, not because of anything we've done, but because we're united to Jesus and he reigns.

We can, to some extent, experience life to the full now. And yet, the sufferings of this age, sin, sickness, suffering, well we know that they will be done away with in the future. Life in all its fullness starts now and echoes into eternity. And the glory that will be revealed in us far outweighs the sufferings of this age, the splendour and majesty that will be of the sons of God, those united to the Son of God by faith. And fixing our eyes on that joy will help us endure the sufferings we go through today.

And this salvation is ours. Why? Because of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one loved by the Father who trusts him perfectly, the one who will not be shaken, guarantees an inheritance for us that is undefiled, imperishable and cannot be taken away from us.

Let us rejoice in the strength of the Lord in giving salvation to his king.

## **2. Rejoice in the strength of the Lord and his king in destroying their enemies. (vs. 8-13)**

But secondly, we are to rejoice in the strength of the Lord and his king in destroying their enemies. So have a look with me to verse 8. In your hands will lay hold of your enemies. Or verse 9, the Lord will swallow them up in his wrath. Or verse 12, you will make them turn their backs when you aim with a drawn bow.

See this theme that runs throughout the whole of the Bible, that salvation comes through judgment. The rescue of God's people cannot be achieved without the defeat of the enemies of God. And we see this modelled for us in the life of David.

You see in verses 8 to 12, all the yous here, they're singular, they're not plural. But there's a question, isn't it? Is the you of verse 8 that of the king or the Lord, your hand or lay hold of all your enemies? Well in a sense the answer is yes. For the union of the Lord and the king means that the judgment that is exercised over the enemies belongs to both. That the king is the means through whom the Lord exercises his judgment.

And we see this in the history of David's life. So in 2 Samuel, after he's had the crown placed on his head, David brings out the people who had been rebellious against him and he consigns them to heavy labour with swords and iron picks and axes and makes them work at brick making. David enacts the judgment of the Lord upon his enemies.

And we see this poetically brought out for us in verse 8 through to 12. So there will be nowhere to hide for the enemies, for the king will find them out. He will lay hold of their enemies, seize them. And his enemies will be consumed, verses 9 through, yeah, verse 9. This vivid picture of the burning up.

Now when Psalm 18, when the Lord descends to rescue his people, he appeared in fire, a holy consuming fire. And so the same picture is given here of the swallowing up of the enemies of God in his right and settled judgment. And ultimately, the enemies of God will be destroyed. Verse 10, there'll be an end of their lineage. Those who oppose God's king, their posterity will end. It's complete opposite, isn't it, to God's king, who will have life, length of days forever and ever.

Now as we hear this, these words of being found out, of being consumed, of being destroyed, we're right to ask the question, is this fair? Is this just? Surely the God of all the earth, the judge of all the earth, must do what is right. And so verse 11, it's good that we see that these people who are opposing God in David's day were plotting evil against the Lord, devising

wicked schemes. And this is a just judgment. To the end that evil cannot succeed.

The defeat is immediate. Seeing the bow drawn, they turn and flee.

And just as David is filled full in Jesus, and so the enemies of David's day are filled full in Satan and death. I mean, this is not new to us because in Psalm 18, which is a psalm about the deliverance the Lord has given to David against his earthly enemies, David speaks of his enemies as death and the grave and destruction. And that is the enemies that the Lord has rescued him from.

And so when we come to this psalm and we think about the Lord Jesus, he is the one who gives victory over Satan and death. And we see this in the accounts of Jesus's life. We sung about it earlier on. Jesus is the king, ruler over everything. And so when Jesus comes to earth, he finds out the demons, doesn't he? Goes into a synagogue and the demons that are there are found out. And what do they cry out in Mark's gospel? They cry out, What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. They realize who their enemy is. Jesus is the one who will destroy evil.

Yet their time was not yet come when Jesus came to earth. On the final day, there will be no hiding for Satan and death. Revelation tells us that the devil will be thrown into a lake of burning sulphur. Death itself will be thrown into a lake of fire.

See, here is a powerful victory over the enemies of humanity. Satan and death found out, consumed and destroyed. In Jesus, we have a saviour over the greatest of enemies. See, since the beginning of time, Satan has been plotting evil, devising wickedness, and his schemes will come to an end. They will not succeed.

We see a little taste of this in the Easter story on Good Friday. It seems like Satan's schemes have won. He enters into Judas. He gets Jesus betrayed into the hands of the Romans. He pins Jesus down onto a cross. You can imagine the evil world rejoicing. Their most wicked scheme. Their greatest plot of evil has succeeded.

And yet that's not the end of the story. For the strong and mighty Lord raises Jesus up from the grave. In the best plot twist ever, death is defeated, evil is destroyed once and for all. And so we as God's people can cry out, can't we, verse 13, be exalted in your resurrection strength, Lord, and we will sing the praise of your might.

David, Jesus, what about us? Well the reality is there is no spiritual Switzerland. There's no neutrality. We're either on team Jesus or we're on team snake. We're on team Satan and death.

See by nature as we're born into this world, we are on Team Snake. We're deceived by the evil one. And we band together, shaking our fists at God, wanting to be free from him, wanting to rule our lives our own ways. We rebel against God. We're in the rebel army.

I see that in my own life, in my lying, my lust and my love of money, that shows that I'm on the evil ones team by nature. And the honest reality is this, that his fate should be my fate too. I should be found out. I should be consumed. I deserve to be destroyed.

And yet, the good news of Jesus being the king is that when he came to earth to storm the stronghold of Satan, he didn't come with a sword drawn to destroy us, his image bearers. No. He came to set us free from the one who had held us captive.

He calls us to raise our flag of surrender, to lay down our opposition to him, and as Ewan testified to earlier on this service, to switch our sides, to turn our allegiance away from Satan and his evil schemes, to follow Jesus. And as we switch sides, Jesus says, my crown, my life, my glory will be yours.

So this morning, have you switched sides? Have you turned away from the deceit of evil? And have you followed Jesus the way, the truth and the life? If you're still thinking these things through, I'd encourage you to grab a copy. I think we've got Luke's Gospel on the table at the back and have a look at Jesus and the call he makes to follow him.

And if we have, wow, what wonderful glory, what wonderful life, what wonderful crown is ours. And these blessings are sure and they're certain, not because of anything we've done, but because of the king who trusts in the Lord, who loves him with an unfailing love, the one who will not be shaken.

See Jesus, in Jesus we have a sure and strong Saviour who can save us even from the greatest enemy, death itself. And that is worth rejoicing in today, but also on the wet Thursday afternoon, when we're feeling the strains of sin and suffering in this world, let us recall Psalm 21.

And together, verse 13, let's proclaim together as we finish. Join with me. Be exalted in your strength, Lord, We will sing and praise your might. And all God's people said, Amen. Amen.