

# Sing to the Great King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, not all invitations are made alike, are they? Some are good, some not so good, some! Some very important, others less so, some really exciting, some not so much. I was invited over! to a friend's to watch the football last night. I said no, without really a moment's thought.

That's not that big a deal, is it? We've gotten a few wedding invites though over the last few months. They are great invitations to receive, aren't they? Joyful invitations.

Some invitations are joyful, some invitations are also very serious. A few months ago I got a letter from the hospital telling me that I think a recent ECG had shown some kind of unexplained abnormalities and so they invited me at the bottom of the letter. They said, come at your earliest convenience and get further checks. That's a pretty important invitation, right? I've not actually heard anything since. I'm assuming it's all fine. The point is, right, not all invitations are created equal.

Some don't really matter, some are very important. Some are also full of joy. The first half of Psalm 95 that we are looking at this evening contains two wonderful, joyful, but also very serious invitations. We're going to begin this evening by thinking about how good, how wonderful, how joyful they are, before thinking a little later on about how serious they are.

Let me just show you that they're the two invitations. Verse one, first of all, O come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us sing to the Lord. And then another second invitation down there in verse six, O come, let us worship and bow down. And both these wonderful invitations are backed up by wonderful reasons to come. Again, just look there at verse three and verse seven, and you'll see they both start with the word for. It's like getting handed a wedding invite with the details of a great venue on one side and the cause for celebration on the other. Right, come to this place, but because these people you love are getting married. Well, so too in this Psalm, come and worship, because this is who God is.

[ 3 : 07 ] So let's just begin this evening by looking at these two invitations under our first heading, a call to praise. A call to praise, beginning with our first invitation there, to sing before our Savior.

If you just glance there through verses one and two, you'll see that we, all of us together, are being invited into the very presence of God. Invited into the very presence of God to make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. This is a glorious invitation. We've been thinking in this series, haven't we, about the Lord who reigns? The Lord who reigns. The great King of heaven and earth. And here he is saying, come in. Come in. An invitation is extended to us to come into the presence of the King.

Right, it is an invitation to the palace, to the throne room of the Lord who reigns. This is not a court summons. It is a call to make a joyful noise.

Come before me, the King says, not for judgment, but for joy. Great invitations are always met with great excitement, aren't they? You look forward to a wedding or a birthday party, but imagine an invitation from the King.

I have a close friend whose dad was invited to see the late Queen at Buckingham Palace. Right, that the very receiving of the invitation was a cause of great joy for the whole family.

[ 5 : 01 ] Right, that they were excited to tell everyone about the privilege, that they've got photos on the wall when you go into the house of the occasion. And of course they do, right? They're not bragging. They're not showing off. They're not kind of rubbing it in the face of their visitors.

They are rightly rejoicing in what is a great privilege. Coming before a queen, that is joyful enough in itself, but we are beckoned here.

We are beckoned to come before the great King who is our salvation. Not only is this King the sovereign, he is also our Savior.

More joyful praise, right? We are invited to sing not only because of his majesty, but also because of his mercy. So come on in. Come into his presence.

Brothers and sisters, that is what we do. As we gather here together each and every Sunday. Coming before the throne of God.

[ 6 : 13 ] By his Spirit, through his Son, we gather to joyfully sing his praise. Right, when we open our mouths Sunday by Sunday, this is what we are doing. By knowing God as our sovereign and our Savior, that might feel like good enough reason in itself to come and praise him, and it is.

But here in Psalm 95, that is actually just the invitation. Right, come and sing praise to the sovereign Savior because.

Because, verses 3 to 5, because there is no other throne room. There is no other throne room in heaven or on earth where you will find this majesty.

You could look at the highest heights.

You could search the deepest depths. You could comb the ocean floor and set foot on every piece of land. But nowhere in all creation will you find this majesty. Nowhere in all creation will you find a throne room like this.

[ 7 : 26 ] And so nowhere in all creation will you receive an invitation like this. For the Lord is a great God.

And a great King above all gods. I don't know if you remember where we began this series a few weeks back in Psalm 90.

We've mentioned it a few times throughout. This collection of Psalms here is being presented to us sort of in light of the Israelites' exile.

When God's people were defeated by their enemies, dragged off into captivity, Jerusalem and even the temple itself had been completely flattened.

There was nothing but rubble left. There were no people. There was no temple. Why is the Psalm, why are these opening five verses here, why are they so important?

[ 8 : 36 ] Well, you can imagine, can't you? The captured exiles looking at the flattened temple in Jerusalem. And then sitting in Babylon looking at the gods of their captors and wondering.

Even just for a moment. Who is king here? Who is really in control? Who should we turn to if we want to behold majesty and find mercy?

These gods of Babylon, they look pretty strong. They seem to take care of their people pretty well. Maybe we should go in there. Maybe we should go to their temples, to their palaces.

There's a question worth asking. Which throne room are we longing for an invitation into?

Probably not the gods of Babylon. We don't really need to be told, do we? That the gods of Babylon are not greater than our God. Because where are they now? But that does not mean we always get the answer to the question right.

[ 9 : 52 ] Which throne room do we long for an invitation to? Because there are times, aren't there, in our life when we really might not be too far from feeling that the gods of our age seem to be strong and mighty and able to save.

And the God of the Bible might seem fairly absent. Where do we turn for our security? Which temples do we look to for our comfort?

Which throne rooms do we believe power resides in? Whatever it might be tempting to think at certain times, this time reminds us, doesn't it?

It is not the gods of Babylon, but neither is it in the palaces of presidents. Nor is it in the vaults of the banks. Other gods, power, money, wealth.

We might well be tempted to look and think people on their side seem to be living the good life. People who worship those gods seem to be quite secure.

[ 11 : 06 ] Maybe we should go to their temples and sing their praise. But to people who are tempted to look to the gods of their age, verses 3 to 5 reminds us that our God is the great God.

The great king over all gods who holds everything. Who holds everything else in his hands. Verse 4 and 5, they present us with a picture of God holding the highest heights and the deepest depths and the great seas and the land itself, all in his hands, all belonging to him.

But the picture there is not just one of God's greatness in holding all creation, but it is specifically here, I think, God holding in his hands the supposed dwelling place of all the gods in ancient times.

The highest heights, the deepest depths, the sea itself. The psalmist says emphatically that our God holds all those things in his hands.

They are merely a piece of his creation. They belong to him. So too, with whatever we might look to in our day and age. In these verses we are reminded the sovereign God who saves holds everything in his hands.

[12:34] It is all his. It all belongs to him. And so we are called into his palace, into his throne room, before his presence, because every other supposed throne that pretends to exist is in fact only, well, it's nothing more than a stool in a shed hidden somewhere in his great kingdom.

Come to this God, the only God, and sing joyfully to your sovereign and your saviour. That is the first glorious invitation we are presented with here.

Come and sing to our saviour. Secondly, then we are invited to bow before our shepherds.

We began there with an invitation to exuberant, joyful praise. Verse 6 introduces our second invitation.

O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. Come and joyfully praise the king.

[13:53] But as you come, remember he is the king. This is his palace we're coming into.

We are coming before his throne. There is a right way to come in. Yes, singing songs of joy, but not marching in like we own the place.

We know, don't we, whenever we come into anyone's house, into their presence, we know we should show a measure of respect.

respect. We know, don't we, that it would not be right to walk into someone else's house at their invitation and kick off our shoes into the hallway and march straight into the kitchen and pour ourselves a bowl of cereal and lie down on the sofa and start watching TV.

But that is not how we come before people. If they have as invited us in, we come respectfully, don't we? We know that is right.

[15:08] There is a way to come. And the greater the person, the greater the reverence. We are invited here wonderfully into the presence of the great God and the great king above all gods.

But as we come in singing songs of joy, we are to do so with a right posture towards the great God whom we come before.

worship, worship, bow, kneel. I think that has implications for the way we live our whole lives before God.

But again, specifically, I think for how we gather to worship. It should be joyful and full of life, but it should not be flippant or casual.

Do you know, do you remember that when you come in, as you sit down and hear the call to worship, we are being beckoned into the very presence of God by his spirit.

[16:31] How should we come? What does the invitation here say? It is worth asking, isn't it, as we come, are we bowing before him?

Or are we doing the equivalent of wearing shorts and t-shirts to a black tie event? The invitation tells us how to come. Is that how we do come before his throne?

This absolutely doesn't mean you need to physically bow or kneel. You could do much worse. But we do, don't we? We need to come humbly, thoughtfully, carefully.

Even as we come into his presence, we do come joyfully and we do come as his children. We are so warmly welcomed. It is, in a sense, our family home.

The door is always open. But it does not belong to us. The one we come before is worthy of all praise, honour, and worship.

[17:39] It is so important that we respond to both invitations together. It's relatively easy, I think, isn't it, to do one without the other? To be full of joy but lacking reverence, to be so joylessly revered that you wonder if you've accidentally walked into a funeral.

but the right response is not to abandon one for the other. Instead, it is to make sure both are present. It is so, so important that we hold on to the joy that we have but we need to come with prepared hearts.

Meditating, even just for a moment before the service begins, on what we are doing. as we gather Sunday by Sunday to come and worship our great God for he is our saviour and he is our shepherd.

The end of verse 6 reminds us that God is our maker. But the focus here is not on our creation but on our being made into the people of God.

In this context he was the one who made Israel but the one who has now made the church us who were once not a people to now be his people.

[ 19 : 00 ] He is our maker. The only reason we come before God is because we have been made his by him. We have not chosen to come in.

That is why our service begins with God's words not our words. We have not decided to come and be God's people. We have not made ourselves worthy to come in. He has made us so that we might come.

And so we come to worship and bow down and kneel because, verse 7, because he is our God God's people and we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hands.

He is our savior and he is our provider. He cares and tends and protects and provides for each and every one of us each and every day as we walk with him.

So we come and kneel before him because apart from him, we would be nothing and we would have nothing. So we come in joy but we also come in humility.

[ 20 : 19 ] We sing his praise but we also bow before him. He is the great king and we belong to him.

So we have two glorious invitations. Come and sing to our savior. Come and bow to our shepherds. They are both wonderful invitations. They are both joyful invitations but they are also both very serious, solemn invitations.

Not all invitations are made alike are they? from verses one to seven we have a call to praise. From the end of verse seven through to the end of the psalm we have a call to listen.

Listen to the invitation because there are fearful consequences for those who do not. Just look with me there at the end of verse seven.

[ 21 : 28 ] today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as at Meribah.

Meribah and Massa the same place mentioned just below. These are names that bring the reader's mind back to the exodus generation. The generation living as exiles out of the promised land wandering without a home and having been saved from Egypt and provided for by God their saviour and shepherd the exodus generation at Meribah instead of singing God's praise and bowing before him instead of accepting this invitation they grumbled.

They did not thank God for their salvation and they did not trust God as their shepherds. Instead they hardened their hearts towards him.

We find this account in Exodus 17 when the Israelites find themselves without water and they basically they wish they were back in Egypt.

Just a few chapters after they have been saved from unbearable oppression in that land they wish they were back there because they were angry about their lack of water.

[ 23 : 05 ] They were angry about their lack of water even though in the immediate chapter before God had miraculously provided food from heaven for the whole nation.

They forgot their salvation and they did not trust their shepherd. And so they grumbled. They grumbled even though verse 9 even though they had seen God's work.

Do you hear where this warning is being directed this evening? It's not is it? It's not kind of to the people out there. It's to the people in here.

It's to the people who have seen God's work. This generation they knew what God can do but they leave their memories at the door and worry only about the problem in the present.

And the consequences are terrifying. Verse 10 for 40 years God says I loathed that generation and said they are a people who go astray in their hearts and they have not known my ways therefore I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest.

[ 24 : 41 ] They shall not enter my rest. Those who do not heed the invitation to sing to their Savior and bow before their shepherd they are the very same people who reject the invitation into God's rest.

The call to worship is not just something that matters for a Sunday morning it is something that matters for eternity. whether or not you accept that invitation will determine the eternal destination of your soul.

The Exodus generation but by the hardness of their hearts they missed out on a temporary rest in the land of Canaan. But as we read earlier in the book of Hebrews that was only ever pointing to the real true eternal rest.

And so their warning is only a sign of the real danger the far greater warning that we might miss out on an eternal rest by hardening our hearts in the same way.

The consequences of rejecting this invitation could not be more severe. So what must we do?

[ 26 : 21 ] What must we do? Perhaps we might hear these words and think, well, better not be like them. Better not harden my heart.

Better not let my heart wander. Now, that is a good and right and true instruction, but there's a problem, isn't there?

Tell me, honestly, how it would go this week? How would it go this week if you set out determined not to let your heart wander for a moment?

How would that go? that go? It wouldn't go well, would it? In the words of the well-known hymn, prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.

That is our hearts, isn't it? Even when we long to cleave to God, our hearts are so quick to leave him. be better is not something that is within our power to do.

[ 27 : 50 ] We cannot succeed where Israel fails. We are not better, we are not stronger than them. So where do we go from here?

What now? What now? Well, our reading from Hebrews 4 early in the service. Well, it began answering that question, first of all, I think, with the wonderful assurance that even though our hearts have wondered, the promise of entering God's rest does still stand.

God has not closed the door on us once and for all. The door is open and, we read there as well, didn't we, it is open today.

Again, the author of the Hebrews we heard earlier tell us that when the psalmist says today, he wasn't talking about the moment he was writing that psalm, he was talking about a time in the future, not the day he was writing, but the day we read them today, right, so at 6.59 on Sunday, the 1st of June 2025, today, the door is still open.

The invitation to come joyfully into the presence of the great God and King is given into our hands right here, right now.

[ 29 : 26 ] But the question, of course, isn't it, is, how can I come in? How can I come in? It is great news that the invitation still stands, but how can we come in if we cannot succeed where Israel fails?

Let me bring you to the wonderful words of verse 14 of Hebrews chapter 4. chapter 5. Let us hold forward to the Since then, we have a great high priest, a high priest, someone who stands in our place for us.

Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. let us hold fast to our confession.

We cannot succeed where Israel failed, but Jesus, our great high priest, can. His heart never wandered, his heart was never hardened, and for those whose faith is in him, he stands now as our great high priest.

And so because we have this high priest, because we have this high priest, let us then, Hebrews 4 continues, let us then, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace.

[ 31 : 10 ] because of Jesus, we can come in. Because of Jesus, we can come before the throne of the great God and the great king.

Because of Jesus, who is our salvation and our shepherd and our high priest, we come in his name into the throne room of God to sing his praise joyfully and to bow before him in worship.

Because of Jesus, we who have hearts that are prone to wonder are beckoned in before the throne of God that we might find eternal rest in him.

Today, today, if you hear his voice, come to him. If you have come to him, you have a savior and a shepherd who sympathizes with your weaknesses and who died for your sins that you may come in, that you may come before his presence as we do together now, singing joyfully as praise and bowing before him in our hearts that we might worship the great God of highest heaven.

If you have not yet come to him, I beg you, this evening, hear his voice.

[ 32 : 59 ] Hear his voice. Hear the voice of Jesus. We heard his voice at the beginning of our service this evening, come to me, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,!

I will give you rest. So long as it is today, the promise of entering his rest still stands, but only in Jesus.

only in Jesus can we come and worship the great king, only in Jesus can we receive these wonderful solemn invitations and joyfully accept and gladly come in before the throne of God to joyfully sing his praise for in Christ Jesus he is and always will be our sovereign savior, our faithful shepherd, our great high priest so let us come let us come into his presence in the name of Jesus to

sing joyfully and bow before him let us bow before him now in prayer before we sing to him joyfully!  
in song to!