

Sing to the King

Fellow subjects of the King,

What makes you shout for joy? It's football season—maybe when your team wins an exciting game, you stand up and shout. If you're a student, you might shout out if you get a good grade on a test you thought you would fail. If you're worried about a serious illness and you get word back that the test is negative, you could well let out a shout.

This is Christ the King Sunday. We focus on Jesus as our King, worthy of our praise.

That is expressed so well in our Psalm today, the first part of Psalm 95. **“Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation.”** “Make a joyful noise” could be translated “shout aloud” or “raise joyful shouts”—in other words, a loud joyful noise. **“Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving, let us make a joyful noise”** (there it is again) **“make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.”**

This Psalm is called the *Venite*, the Latin for the first words. The early Church used this Psalm at the start of the daily morning service, Matins. In fact the Old Testament Jews used this Psalm also to begin their services. It is an invitation to Christians to gather together and sing—not just sing any song. **“Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord.”**

Sing to the King. The Psalm reminds us, he is our Creator, and he is our Savior.

“For the Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods.” In other words, the Lord is one-of-a-kind. There is no one like him. When it says he is “above all gods,” that does not mean that there are real gods; Old Testament prophets mocked the heathen for thinking their gods of wood or stone could do anything. No, the point is that the Lord above anything we humans might want to elevate to gods.

That's a good reminder for us. We can create our “gods.” Our possessions become more important than serving the Lord—many people, faced with the loss of a job, come to realize how many things have taken up prime importance in their lives. Or we may make our own ability our god—look at all the things I did. But Scripture reminds us, “You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...” (Deut. 8:17-18). No, we must give all glory to the Lord.

“The deep places of the earth are in his hand; the heights of the hills are also his. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hand formed the dry land.” God created the whole world. Scripture that by him, that is Jesus, all things were made. And he holds it, every part of the world, in his hand—The Lord is the one who sustains all life on earth.

About 80% of the ocean has not been mapped or really studied. Scientists know more about the surface of Mars than they do about the depths of the sea. We don't realize how deep the seas are. The deepest part of the ocean, the Mariana Trench, is estimated to be 36,000 feet deep. By comparison, Mt. Everest is 29,000 feet high—so the depths are much farther from the earth's surface than the highest mountain.

With robot submarines going deeper and deeper, scientists are shocked by the life in the depths; like jet-black animals that are almost invisible in the deep. Or this giant siphonophore they found this year, called the “silly string” animal—it spirals out like a spider web, estimated at 400 feet long.

God knows all these animals. He made them. He holds them in his hand. And God knows the remotest part of the desert or the polar regions. Everything on earth is by him.

When we recognize how amazing this world is, we have to marvel at the one who made this earth. And he made each of us, with all the parts of our bodies, and gives us each breath we take. We can sing the praises of our God, for he is our Creator.

But there is more reason to praise our King.

A boy who lived in a New England seaport loved to watch the ships come in each evening with the daily catch of fish. He decided to build a model sailboat. He spent weeks getting all the parts just right. Finally he took it down to the beach and put it in the water. He was proud to see that it stayed afloat—until the wind shifted and his boat was swept out to sea. The boy came back every day for a month looking for his boat. One day he was in town and looked inside a store window—and there was his boat! He ran inside and told the storeowner that this was his boat. The woman was not moved. She said that the boat would cost \$10. He pleaded with her, but it didn't help. Finally he pulled out his money and paid her for the boat. As he left the store, he said to the boat, “You are mine twice. You are mine because I built you, and you are mine because I bought you.”

Our King, the King of heaven, made us, and we are his. But we are also his because he bought us back from our sins.

Our Psalm refers to God our Savior in the first words: **“Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”** That picture of a rock of salvation could refer to a fortress, or maybe just an outcropping or a leaning cliff where you can find shelter from a storm. Your heavenly King saves you not only from storms. He also saves you from the punishment you deserve for your sins.

We heard it in our Gospel. Jesus, the Almighty King, was given a scarlet robe, a crown, a staff, and soldiers bow down and shout, “Hail, king of the Jews!” But it was all mockery. His crown was made of thorns pressing into his skull. The soldiers spat on him. They took the staff and beat him on the head. And then they crucified him.

This was the Almighty God. This was the One who had created those soldiers. Yet he allowed their mocking. He allowed them to beat him. He allowed them to kill him. He allowed all this because he was the sacrifice, the Lamb who would pay for the sins of the world. His death was supposed to be our punishment. Now there is no punishment for us who believe in him.

Instead, there is life. We heard it in our Second Lesson. In Christ all will be made alive. When Jesus returns to this earth, everyone will see him, and all will acknowledge that he is King. And all who trusted in him will be welcomed into eternal life.

Jesus can do this, because he is our Savior King. Paul writes that Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth.

And what does Jesus use that power for right now? He watches over us. **“Oh, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God, and we**

are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.” Our King is our shepherd. Just like Ezekiel prophesied, our Lord tends us and keeps us safe. He seeks us when we stray away from him, calling us to repent and then believe in him again. When we are wounded he bandages us up; when we are weak he strengthens us.

King David had been a shepherd when he was young. Throughout his life he saw God watching over him; as he wrote in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd.” When David was a young man, the Lord protected him from Goliath and later from King Saul who wanted to kill him. When David was old, and his son Absalom tried to have him overthrown, the Lord was with David and kept him safe. When David fell into great sins, the Lord led him to repent and then restored him in his faith.

Jesus, our King, is our Shepherd too. He has saved us, and now he watches over us.

When we remember what Christ our King has done for us, we will want to do as our Psalm says, and shout for joy. But there’s another reaction we have: **“Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord.”** Yes, we want to show our humility to our King. He is our Lord. He is our Creator. He is our Savior. He is worthy of all our praise.

When we get a good report from the doctor, we can thank the doctor, but we can also thank the Lord—maybe even when we’re talking with the doctor. When we succeed in school or at work, we can give God the glory—you could say to a co-worker, “Without God’s guidance I could never have accomplished this.” We bow down and worship our King.

We seek to praise him not just in church, but everywhere, as we obey his commands, as we read his holy Word, and as we sing his praises.

So Sing. Sing to the King, your Creator and your Savior. Amen.