

SERMON: Psalm 47 :1-7**YOUR KING ASCENDS THE THRONE !**

¹*Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!*
²*For the LORD Most High is awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.*
³*He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.*
⁴*He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah*

⁵*God has gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.*
⁶*Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!*
⁷*For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.*

How often do you clap? There are more reasons than one for clapping. Sometimes we clap to instill urgency—Come on, kids, let's get going! Sometimes we clap in frustration—Taah! I messed this all up! Sometimes we clap in anger—Stop that right now! Sometimes—most of the time—we clap for happiness and praise. The Bible talks about clapping. A man named Balaam uttered four blessings in a row upon Israel, instead of cursing them like King Balak wanted. King Balak struck / clapped his hands in anger (Numbers 24:10)! On the other hand, when Prince Jehoshaphat, age seven, was crowned king in place of wicked Queen Athaliah who had killed all his brothers, the people clapped for joy (II Kings 11:12)!

The text for today also talks about clapping—clapping for joy. We don't know what occasion generated this psalm. Perhaps it was an incident after Israel entered the promised land under Joshua. God gave them victory after victory against the wicked Canaanites and their cities—Jericho (walls fell down), Ai, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, etc. At that time, the Children of Jacob/Israel had no earthly king. God was their “king”; Joshua was their leader. The writer gives praise, joy, and honor to their triumphant King! *Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome;* [unfortunately, “awesome” is a word we overuse today]. *He is a great King over all the earth.* The Lord's heartfelt mercy and His almighty help for them filled them with wonder, respect, and awe. Nothing could stand in the Lord's way! He was, and is, king over all the earth, not just a particular region or people. He is your awesome God too. Come humbly and joyfully before Him!

He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet. Whoever dares to stand in the way of God and God's people will be “subdued.” Both the Old Testament Church, looking ahead by faith to the coming of the Savior from sin, and the New Testament Church, looking back by faith to the Savior who came, both are safe. Whoever tries to stop the Lord's Holy Christian Church will put *under their feet*. In Him and in Him alone, you are forgiven, belong to God's family, and will not be defeated. All the forces and sources against you are subdued by God and put under your feet! At one point Joshua and the Israelite army defeated five kings at once. Joshua ordered the five kings to be laid down on the ground and told his captains to put their feet on the necks of these kings—total humiliation and defeat. Shortly, they were put to death. No wonder *Clap your hands!* Not even five kings at once could defeat the people of God! In the same way in Jesus, and in Jesus only, you are victorious over sin, over sin's condemnation, over death, over hell, and over Satan!

He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah. (The word “selah” appears in several Psalms. It is likely a term indicating a break or musical interlude.) The Lord loved Jacob/Israel dearly. The Lord chose their “inheritance” for them. He was giving them the land of Canaan; they weren't conquering it by themselves. He would also assign each of the Twelve Tribes their exact land-region-inheritance. At Christmas Dad and Mom don't just buy a sack full (trunk full?) of presents and randomly give everybody something. Not so. Tommy, Willie, Annie, Maggie each get specific things. Clap your hands! The Lord, your King, does the same for you! He assigns your earthly inheritance in His wisdom and love—just right for you! And He gives you the eternal victory in Jesus, full righteousness to enter heaven although you are a sinner. Your God is the best King ever! Clap your hands for joy!

As the psalm continues, it leads us to think of Jesus on Ascension Day. *God has gone up with a shout; the LORD with the sound of a trumpet!* Like a victorious king re-ascending his throne, so also Jesus, forty days after Easter standing on the Mt. of Olives with His disciples, “went up” into the skies until the clouds covered Him. He was returning to stand before the Father with His mission to save now “mission accomplished.” He suffered under Pontius Pilate for your sins; was brutally crucified for your sins; died for your sins; and was buried for your sins. But more! In victory, He descended into hell into the presence of Satan and all demons to proclaim His victory for you. On that third day He rose again from the dead, proclaiming to His disciples then, and today, His victory for you. He defeated sin, death, the devil, and won forgiveness and life forever! He commissioned His disciples—including us!—to proclaim the Good News of the Savior to all. Christ’s mission was completed and accomplished. He ascended to His throne, as King of kings, and Lord of lords! *God has gone up with a shout; the LORD with the sound of a trumpet!*

He visibly went “up”—“away from” the earth—to His throne! *He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God* (Mark 16:19). The “right hand of God” is not a physical location. Actually God does not even have a right hand; God is a spirit! The “right hand” of God is a position of honor, power, and majesty. A rancher may have a right-hand man—someone to act with full authority in his absence. At the “right hand” of God, Jesus rules with full authority. He steers and guides this world for the benefit of His Church and Kingdom. *“He [God] raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power . . . and He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church”* (Ephesians 1:20-22). Your victorious, ascended King is ruling all things for your eternal inheritance. You the believer are part of God’s family, the Church! Your inheritance is *eternal life in Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23). Jesus now blesses the church on earth. *“When He [Jesus] ascended on high, He led captivity captive [put death to death] and gave gifts to men. . . . He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:7-12). He sends the right messengers, shepherds, and teachers to His Church until the day the Church is with Him in heaven!

Accordingly, the family is one little unit within the Church. The Lord also sends messengers, shepherds, and teachers to the family. Dads and Moms! This morning we think about moms. From the tiniest beginning, a unique combination of genes and chromosomes embodied in a one cell(!), is a new life, inheriting half his/her traits from father and half from mother. The babe grows inside Mom. Mom is blessed to nurture, care, protect, love and influence that little life within her in a personal way than exceeds cold logic. In nine months she gives birth to that child and welcomes it into a much bigger world. She continues to make that baby her all. There is a bond between them, whether it's openly admitted or not. In the heart of the child, mother sits on the queen’s (king’s) throne. Little ones rejoice to see mom and cling to her. Mom has a one of a kind opportunity to train the child for this life and for eternal life. She has the opportunity to bring this child to Jesus, Savior of both of them. The devil will fill the hearts of human offspring—hearts already infected with sin by heredity from Dad and Mom—to challenge Mom and despise her. How appropriate is that? Is that a good way to treat Jesus your supreme ascended King and Savior?? No. Love mother, praise her, honor her, and forgive her. You are a physical part of her life. *“Honor your father and your mother, that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth”* (Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1-3). *The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.* (Proverbs 30:17). Cheer and clap for her, not just on Mother’s Day!

Was there any clapping, shouting, and rejoicing when Jesus “went up / ascended” before the very eyes of the disciples? It doesn’t read that way. Likely the disciples were bewildered by it all. On the other hand, do you suppose there was rejoicing and cheering from the angels and souls already in heaven? One would think so! Some of our Ascension hymns do put it that way. You and I, who are privileged to look back at Ascension Day, by the Holy Spirit can see and enjoy its full import! *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:2-3). Soldiers, bidding farewell to their victorious general who is returning home from the calm battlefield, also know with joy in their hearts that they will be called home too! *Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth! Sing praises with understanding!* Not just mindless singing, cheering, praising; but with understanding!

The facts of Jesus’ “mission accomplished” for you and His return to heaven for you, indeed give you reason to cheer and clap on Ascension Day!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---