

The Ideal King

Psalm 45

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Grand Avenue Baptist Church

Ames, Iowa

August 9, 2026

This sermon will pick up where we left off last Sunday. I want you to remember that each Psalm is divinely placed where it is placed in the Psalter. The order is not haphazard or just a collection of Jewish favorite songs, like a Jewish Greatest Hits album. It is poetry that contains prophecy, and the Psalms have an overall poetic narrative flavor to them. You can see as we move from Psalm to Psalm the poetic narratives unfold, and we can recognize the prophecy hidden like gospel jewels in the Psalm.

Last Sunday as we concluded Psalm 44, I told you that Psalm 44 doesn't have resolution within the Psalm. So, to find its ultimate resolution, we went to Romans 8:31-39 and saw it in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Here's the part of my study that didn't make it into last Sunday's sermon.

Ready? Do you remember the innocent sufferers of Psalm 44:9-22? Verses 9-22 ultimately point forward to Jesus' experience as He goes to the cross. Jesus is the truly *Innocent Sufferer* who is the *Lamb of God* who was slaughtered *for the sake of His righteousness* and for God's glory. So, when we are persecuted and slaughtered as God's sheep, we are really not innocent sufferers but are only walking in the steps of the Lamb of God, the truly Innocent Sufferer that was slain for our sins. We need to make that connection.

So, let's keep digging. Here's what I want you to see. Psalm 44 not only finds its resolution in Romans 8:31-39 but also in the two Psalms that follow it: Psalm 45 and Psalm 46. Psalm 45 is a song about the King's love for His Bride and their wedding, and Psalm 46 is about the King's protection of His Bride.

Psalm 45 and 46 help give us resolution from within the Psalter. Now, I'm not going to preach these two Psalms together, but they certainly go together to help us understand how Psalm 44 finds its resolution within the Psalter.

Let me show you what I mean. Look at v. 26 of Psalm 44,

Rise up; come to our help!

Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

Now, look ahead to Psalm 46:1,

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*

These are the same Hebrew words for *help*. Okay, so the *help* comes from the King, who has risen in Psalm 45. Psalm 45 is the answer to the prayer of the people in Psalm 44:26.

One of our elders, Tim Young, said something like this to me last week when we were discussing the sermon. Psalm 44:26 says, "*Rise up; come to our help!*" *Who was the King that ultimately rose up?* If you are thinking of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, then you are seeing that shadow in the Old Testament being fulfilled in Him when He rose from the dead in the Gospels. We are also witnessing the rising of the King in Psalms 45 and 46, which also point to the rising of the King in the Gospels. Now, if you saw this connection, congratulations! You are learning to put on your Gospel Glasses and see the person and work of Jesus in the Old Testament prophesied and fulfilled in the New Testament.

Psalm 45 is one of the Messianic Psalms. It paints a poetic picture of a Groom, His Bride, and their wedding. As the Psalm unfolds, the poetry paints a picture of the glorious Groom and His beautiful bride and the wedding that produced an eternal legacy.

The big idea of Psalm 45 is: *Jesus is the glorious risen King who redeems His Bride (the church)*. When you hear that this is the main idea of Psalm 45, you can tell I'm considering it prophetic poetry that looks forward to Jesus.

At this point, there's usually a question about how much the writers of the Psalms understood them to be prophetic. In his commentary on the *Psalms*, J. J. Stewart Perowne explains it well when he says that when the psalmists use poetic prophecy like this, their message has a dual thrust. One is that they understand God is King of Israel and yet the Messiah is the true King who will be the reality of these kingly shadows in the Old Testament.¹

Let me give you the big idea of Psalm 45 one more time: *Jesus is the glorious risen King who redeems His Bride (the church)*.

There are four movements in the poetry in Psalm 45. I want you to see these movements. We will work through them and then make our application at the end. I will make some application along the way, but the heart of the application will be at the conclusion of the message.

Psalm 45 is about the king's marriage. It was most likely written and used at the marriage ceremonies of Judah's and Israel's kings, but it finds its ultimate meaning in King Jesus and His marriage to His Bride, the church.

Let's get to work on Psalm 45. Hang on because we are going to move quickly through the text.

I. Beholding the Risen King (v. 1)

In v. 1, the King's herald sets the tone for the wedding ceremony. He's part emcee, part poet, and part singer. His job was to set the right tone for the ceremony. He's kind of like a hype-man who wrote the song and sang it. Listen to v. 1 again:

*My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.*

He says his heart overflows with a "*pleasing theme*." This can be translated as "*noble theme*." So, his hype is not a lot of fluff or overdone emotions. His song is not his song, but an *inspired song*. The Holy Spirit is speaking through the King's Herald.

Listen, if we belong to Jesus, you and I have the same calling as this Herald. We are heralds and ambassadors of the good news of the King. We are to share the person and work of Christ in the gospel, who came and lived the life we should've lived but couldn't live, and then He died the death on the cross, receiving in Himself God's wrath for our sin. He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. Now, He calls all sinners to turn from their sin and by faith turn to Jesus for forgiveness of their sins and to receive the gift of eternal life and a relationship with God through Him. That's my call to you right now. As a herald of the gospel, I call you to turn to Jesus for salvation and abundant life.

We've got to keep going. Here's the second movement in Psalm 45.

II. Behold the King Who Rises to Redeem His Bride (vv. 2-9)

Verses 2-9 tell us about the beauty, majesty, and glory of the King who is the Groom who has risen to redeem His Bride.

We can't begin to work through vv. 2-9 without mentioning that these verses are the inspiration for the hymn *Fairest Lord Jesus*, which we will sing as we take the Lord's Supper. Listen to verse one of the hymn:

*Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O Thou of God and man the Son;
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor*

¹ J. J. Stewart Perowne, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:351; Also see discussion by Derek Kidner in his, *Kidner Classic Commentaries: Psalms 1-72*, 32-58.

Thou my soul's glory, joy, and crown.

The very first verse of this hymn is exalting the glory of the Son of God. Jesus is the fairest and most excellent of all men. Now listen to v. 2 of Psalm 45 again:

*You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.*

Verse 2 teaches us two important qualities of our King/Groom. First, *the King and His character are beautiful*. Verse 2 says he is the “*most handsome of the sons of men*.” This sounds like the psalmist is referring to His outward appearance, and it might be, but the thrust of this phrase is His heart and character of the King.

The NIV gives a better rendering of the text. It says He is “*the most excellent of men*.” The herald is telling us that the King is praiseworthy. His character is full of truth, humility, and righteousness. Jesus excels in all of these qualities. He possesses them to the highest degree.²

The second quality we see is: *The King's gracious words*. The herald says, “*grace is poured upon your lips*.” The word *grace* indicates that His words have the power to give life.

Here's the bottom line: The words of this King have real power, and no one has ever spoken like this King. If you remember when Jesus was arrested in John 7:46, the soldiers told the Pharisees, “*No one ever spoke like this man!*” In John 6:68-69, Jesus had given a series of hard teachings to the crowd, and they began to desert Him. He turned to His disciples and asked them if they wanted to leave too. Peter replied,

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

So, King Jesus is the most excellent of men whose words are full of grace and truth. They give life and wisdom to all who come to Him and seek Him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Are you seeking Him today?

The third quality we see is: *The King is victorious*. Look in vv. 3-5:

*Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!
⁴ In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!
⁵ Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.*

The King is a warrior-king! He is a man of great military strength. He has a sword strapped on His thigh and v. 4 says He fights for the causes of *truth, meekness, and righteousness*.

Listen, over the centuries wars have been fought for many reasons and some of them had stupid reasons, but in a world filled with lies, our King fights for truth. In a world filled with deadly pride, our King fights with powerful divine gentleness. Finally, in a world filled with injustice, our King fights for righteousness.

² James M. Boice, *An Expository Commentary: Psalms Vol. 2, Psalms 42-106*, 383.

Revelation 19:11-16 describes how He fights and wins the victory:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Here's the thing for children of the King. When it comes to the battles we face and fight in life, we don't wrestle with flesh and blood but with the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm, and we also wrestle with our own corrupt nature.

So, what we do to fight is put on the armor of God that the Apostle Paul calls us to in Ephesians 6:10-18. Then we fight the battle by beholding our King in prayer, by reading His Word, and by applying the gospel armor to our lives. When we do this, King Jesus fights for us. He conquers our enemies in the heavenly realm and brings our hearts into His submission.

So, let's keep going. For now, I want to skip over vv. 6-7a and come back to them. Look at vv. 7b-9. These verses describe the glory and joy of the King who is about to marry His long-awaited Bride:

*Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
⁸ your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;
⁹ daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.*

Quite simply, these verses paint the picture of King Jesus, leaving Heaven to redeem His Bride (the church). Jesus steps out of Heaven's ivory palace, becomes flesh and blood. As He entered our broken world to save us, He was anointed with myrrh, aloes, and cassia. It was out of love for us that Jesus entered our world of woe. King Jesus, betrothed to His Bride, enters our world. The New Testament unfolds the life of the King as He redeems His Bride and culminates in the "*Marriage Supper of the Lamb*" in Revelation 19:7-9 (Boice, 384). Behold our Groom who is God! Behold our God who is our Redeemer! We are to behold Him! Marvel at Him and worship Him.

Now, I want to come back to vv. 6-7a because they deserve special attention. Listen to these two verses again:

*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.*

Do you hear what the Herald is saying? He is saying, Behold your King; He is God! Here's the deal: All of these qualities of the King that we have seen in vv. 2-9 are true because the King is God.

Yet, believe it or not, scholars have haggled over these verses. Some scholars have said this only refers to a man. Some say it refers to God because the Hebrew is in the *vocative case*. This means it was addressing God directly. Some say it only refers to the throne and the One in David's line who sits on it. So, here's the answer to

these debates – Yes! It refers to all of these, and because Scripture interprets Scripture, Hebrews 1:8-9 settles this debate. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 45:6-7a, and he gives us the correct interpretation:

But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.”⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

The late pastor James Montgomery Boice, in his commentary on Psalms, is correct when he says:

The words of these two verses together are incomprehensible unless they are understood to refer to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Only he can be called God and at the same time have the Father as God.

In other words, vv. 6-7a are Holy Spirit-inspired words that look beyond the Old Testament era to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God who will redeem His Bride.

So, the Herald calls us to behold our King who is God and the Groom. Yet, the Groom’s work is not over. The wedding is still to come, and He has work to do to prepare His Bride. Now, the Herald turns to the Bride and declares her beauty.

III. The King Makes His Bride Beautiful (vv. 10-15)

Here’s our third movement in Psalm 45. The Herald proclaims that the wedding is coming, but the Bride needs some marriage counseling before the wedding, and it is the Groom who is going to give her that counsel because the Groom is God.

I want to explain vv. 10-15 in the words and in light of the oneness of marriage because this really is the imagery we are seeing as the King marries His Bride, the church. The Bride is given three pieces of marriage advice that can be summed up in these three statements.

The first piece of marriage counseling is given in v. 10 – *Leave and cleave*.

*Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear:
forget your people and your father’s house.*

The essence of this advice is basic biblical marriage counsel. She is told to *“forget your people and your father’s house.”*

When we get married, we are to *leave and cleave to one another*. The husband is to cleave to his wife and the wife to her husband. The psalmist is basically saying, she is to leave her family of origin and give herself fully to her husband.

The command comes from Genesis and is also found in Ephesians 5:31-32:

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.”³² This mystery is profound, and I am
saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

In this passage, the Apostle Paul illustrates oneness in marriage by what it means for the church to be one with Christ or in union with Christ. As disciples of Christ, we leave the world behind and cleave to our Savior. We become one with Him.

Listen, church, what this means for us is that we cannot live in two worlds. Jesus said we cannot serve two masters, for we will love one and hate the other. Jesus also said in Luke 14:26,

*“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife
and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be
my disciple.”*

We are called to marry our King and give ourselves fully to Him as our Lord and God. That's what this verse is calling us to do – leave and cleave.

Second, the Bride is advised to: *Submit to and honor her King*. She is to look to Him, love Him, bless Him, and submit to Him. Wow! Take it from me, saying something like this in a wedding sermon is like pulling the pin on a hand grenade.

However, this is what the gospel calls the church to do. We often look at this passage from the wife's perspective, but it is meant to be applied from the church's perspective as the Bride of Christ. Look in Ephesians 5:22-24.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

As the church, Christ's disciples are married to Him. We submit to Him and even bow down to our Savior in worship. We are to submit to and honor our King.

Verse 12 is the final piece of marriage advice – *Hope and trust in your King and you will be blessed*.

I'm going to read v. 12, and it may sound as though it is not saying the point I just made. As a matter of fact, it will sound like it is out in left field somewhere. Listen to v. 12:

*The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people.*

Man, I'm not a poet. I'm not even good at poetry. It's difficult for me to understand. I took a poetry class in college, and I was lost. I had a friend who was good at it, and if she had not helped me, I would have failed that class. Now, I've learned a few things as I've gone into the ministry and studied the Hebrew and Greek languages. So, I've gotten a little better.

Here's the deal: Poets don't use direct language. They use imagery to tap into the senses. So, instead of saying: *Hope and trust in your King and you will be blessed*. They say things like: "*The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people.*"

Everyone in that part of the world at that time knew what the city of Tyre was. It was a beautiful seacoast city just north of Israel, and at that time it was one of the wealthiest cities in the ancient world. When the poet wrote these words, it was his way of saying: *If you trust in your King, it will be like receiving all of the riches of Tyre*.

So, this was the final piece of marriage counsel. It sounds a bit strange to our ears, but the Bride was to look ahead with hope and trust that her King would do her good. He's going to provide all that she needs if she will hope and trust in Him.

Now, let's keep going. After receiving this last piece of marriage counseling, they were ready to party. Verses 13-15 paint the picture of the Bride being led out by the King, but He is not alone. All of His friends came with Him, and they were rejoicing as they parade His beautiful bride through the streets and proclaim her beauty to the world. After they have blessed the Bride, they head back to the palace because she is now prepared for the wedding.

IV. The King's Eternal Legacy (vv. 16-17)

The fourth and final movement in Psalm 45 is the marriage blessing.

*In place of your fathers shall be your sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.*

¹⁷ *I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.*

This is the poet's way of giving Abraham's blessing to be fruitful and multiply. God's people will be blessed and honored for all eternity because they belong to the King. This makes sense because Abraham's blessing was that God would give him as many descendants as there are stars in the sky. So, when Jesus goes to the cross and dies for not only the Jews but for Gentiles to bring them into the covenant, He grafted them in.

This wraps up Psalm 45, so let's begin making our application. Here's how I want to do it. As I studied Psalm 45, I thought of Isaiah 30:18, which says:

*Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.*

So, here's what we're looking at in Psalm 45: The Herald has called everyone to behold King Jesus as the Glorious Groom who stepped out of Heaven to redeem His Bride, make her beautiful, and marry her. Psalm 45 is a Messianic Psalm that is also a marriage Psalm. Verses 2-9 exalt the King and vv. 10-17 depict the mercy that flows from the Groom to His Bride in the marriage.

So, here's what I want you to see as we apply Psalm 45. The Apostle Paul tells us that marriage is an illustration of Christ and His church. So when we read Ephesians 5:31-32, we should be thinking church. So, let's listen to Ephesians 5:31-32 again and think Christ's marriage to His church:

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am
saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Now, let's dig deeper: We need to understand what happens when we are married to King Jesus by trusting in Him as our Lord and Savior; we become one with Him. So, here's what I want to do as we close. I want to apply the *oneness* we have in Christ from Psalm 45.

Here's the deal: I don't have time to show you all the implications of our oneness with Christ in the New Testament, but I can show you what we find in Psalm 45.

First and Second Implications: Reconciliation and Righteousness. Psalm 45 paints a picture of what it looks like to become one with Christ as He takes His Bride, the church, to be His wife. In Psalm 45, Jesus takes His Bride and then gives her all the good gifts she needs to flourish as His wife. So, here's how we need to see this on this side of the cross.

We become one with Christ when we are reconciled to Jesus through His substitutionary death on the cross, whereby He paid for our sin by being nailed to the cross. On the cross, the wrath of God was poured out on Him to pay for our sin. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Three days later, He rose victorious over death, proving He was the Son of God sent to save His people. Now, all who call on His name in faith and repentance are reconciled to Him and made one with Christ.

That oneness brings us into a right relationship with God the Father through oneness with Jesus. This means God doesn't merely tolerate you. Instead, like a husband does a wife, He cherishes you and nurtures you so that you grow and flourish in Him. You are in His family now. When He looks at you, He sees you clothed in Christ's righteousness. This means He sees you as if you had done all the righteousness that Christ had done. Because Jesus, being the amazing husband that He is, didn't just pay for your sin; He did for you all the righteousness you could never do.

I don't know where you are with Jesus this morning, but this is the first step you need to take. If you have not been reconciled to Jesus by faith, then none of the benefits of oneness with Christ are for you. You must be reconciled to Him in order to be one with Him.

Third and Fourth Implications: Holy Character and Sanctification. Psalm 45 paints the picture of the holiness of our King. Verse 2 says:

You are the most handsome of the sons of men;

*grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.*

Verses 6-7 tell us:

*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
⁷ you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*

When we are married to Jesus, we begin to take on our King's holy character. Oneness with Christ produces His holiness in us so that we become like Him.

The gospel of Jesus Christ produces holiness not through trying harder, but by faith. First, we are born again and given a new holy nature. Then, by remaining in Christ, we grow in holiness and grow in our sanctification.

Jesus says in John 15:4, "*Abide in me, and I in you.*" The result of abiding in Christ is Christ's holy character being produced. The Apostle Paul makes the same point in Romans 6. He says, because believers have died with Christ and have been raised with Christ, they must no longer present themselves as slaves to sin. The new life produced in us creates the desire to obey and abide in Christ.

Do you see this to be true in your life? Are you abiding in Him through His word, prayer, worship, and fellowship in the church? The new nature creates the desire in you to obey and abide in Christ.

Here's the fifth and last implication: *Adoption*. We are adopted into God's family. Christ is the eternal Son of God, our King. Through the King, believers become God's children. The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:26, "*In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*"

Also in Galatians 4:6, he says:

"Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts."

We have a new family relationship with God through which an eternal legacy is being produced. Jesus continues to produce sons and daughters through His Bride, the church. This is what vv. 16-17 tell us:

*In place of your fathers shall be your sons;
you will make them princes in all the earth.
¹⁷ I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.*

Oneness in Christ creates the desire to see others come to know and love Jesus as their King and Savior. A legacy is not only created in our immediate families but in our life as a church. It is the desire to see future generations come to know and love Jesus. Is this your heart? Do you desire this? Are you actively seeking to help others come to faith in Jesus?

Well, I need to land the plane here. Psalm 45 ultimately points to the end of the New Testament in the book of Revelation, where we see the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Listen to Revelation 19:7-9,

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The question is: Have you responded to Jesus' invitation to come to His wedding ceremony and celebration reception? It will be the party to end all parties. Will you be there? If not, I would love to talk with you.