

**Psalm 47 (ESV)**  
***Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!***

**Introduction**

Psalm 47 is called an Enthronement Psalm—sung as a hymn to worship God as the Great Creator and Sovereign Ruler over all, and written in poetic form by perhaps one among the sons of Korah (who's himself a son of Levi). The psalm was sung by the sons of Korah as they led ancient Israel in worship.

This psalm calls on God's people to praise and rejoice as they worship together. Behind this is a deeper call—i.e. to keep their trust in God and dependence on Him regardless of time and circumstances.

As you and I worship God together this day, how have our week been? Have we allowed time and circumstances to weaken our trust in God and dependence on Him? As we worship God, Psalm 47 calls us to always turn our thoughts back to God and trust Him whether things are going good or bad at the moment. Psalm 47 exhorts us to praise and rejoice as we come into the presence of God. And the psalm spells out reasons for us to so praise and rejoice.

As we shall see in this psalm, there are reasons why we should praise and rejoice in our worship of God; reasons that are as relevant today as they were when the psalm was first written.

We experience God's presence in many ways. We also know that our experience of His presence will be magnified when we see His visible rule. That really is the main idea in this psalm—i.e. we are called to praise and rejoice as we worship God for who He is while yearning for His visible rule one day.

Our psalm this morning naturally breaks into two sections as twice we are called to praise God for who He is. The first section is found in vv. 1–4 where we are called to ...

**I. Praise God for He is the Greatest (vv. 1-4)**

1 Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! 2 For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. 3 He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. 4 He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah

The psalmist has invited us into a time of praise and rejoicing in the greatness of God. The psalmist is saying, "All nations, all peoples of this world—you have something to be excited about! You have something to cheer for!"

The psalmist gives us two reasons to praise and rejoice in God's greatness:

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- *First, we praise God because He is the Most High over all in His greatness (vv. 1-2).* Recognizing God as the Most High over all is the foundational truth that you and I as believers in Jesus Christ stand on. It impacts how we view God's Word—whether we view it as just a historical book or the very authority that we place our lives under. It shapes how we view the world. It determines our decisions, thoughts and emotions. It is that truth that should guide us, shape us and change us. It is that truth that should cause us to be people of hope regardless of circumstances. And it is that truth that should drive us back to v. 1 in which the psalmist tells us to clap our hands and shout with joy.

One thing to notice in v. 1 is that the invitation to praise and rejoice in God's greatness is extended to "all peoples". It is the broadest term that the psalmist could use to make the point that he is calling on everyone to praise and rejoice in God's greatness. Yes, when the psalmist writes "all peoples" in v. 1, he immediately invites you, me and everyone into this psalm. Psalm 47 then becomes very personal because we as respondents to the invitation are now a part of it.

What does it mean that God is the Most High over all (*El Elyon* in Hebrew)? In the Bible, the Most High over all refers to the one who has supremacy over all powers—the Supreme Authority. God is described here as the Supreme Authority of this world—His world. As our Maker, He owns us; as our Owner, He has the right to spell out rules for living, and to deal with us according to whether or not we keep His ways.

The idea of God as the Supreme Authority is not one that pictures God as cold and dispassionate as He judges between good and bad; right and wrong. Rather, the biblical picture of God as the Supreme Authority is one that portrays Him as exercising wisdom, love, justice, goodness, righteousness; as well as disapproving injustice, wickedness and unrighteousness.

The biblical idea of God as the Supreme Authority portrays Him as one who exercises supreme responsibility in ascertaining the facts as He cross-examines, detects lies, exposes deceptions, and reveals the motives of the heart. When the Bible pictures God as the Most High over all; the Supreme Authority over all, it emphasizes His omniscience and omnipotence.

With His omniscience, He is the searcher of all human hearts and the arbiter of all truth and falsehood in His perfect wisdom. Nothing can escape Him; we may fool one another, but we cannot fool God. He knows us, and He judges us as we really are—no ifs and no buts.

With His omnipotence as the Supreme Authority over all, God executes His perfect judgment on all and over all. The modern judge of today

does no more than pronounce the sentence; another department of the judicial executive then carries it out. But God is His own executioner. As He legislates and sentences, He also acquits and punishes accordingly. Thus, the psalmist calls us to praise and rejoice in God's greatness as the Most High over all—the Supreme Authority over and above all powers.

But the reality of life is that there are so much pain, suffering, and injustice in our world today. And we feel like groaning and crying rather than praising and rejoicing. We want to be a Good Samaritan, but we feel so helpless because there is so much to do ... yet so, so little we can do.

It is exactly at a time like this that we need to stop focusing on the “so much to do ... yet so, so little we can do” and start fixing our gaze upward to the One who is the Most High over all—i.e. God who is the Supreme Authority of all. It is time to look up and know that in our times of helplessness and hopelessness, God Most High over all will always be our source of help and hope.

- *Second, we praise God because He subdues the nations and loves His people in His greatness (vv. 3-4).* Verses 3-4 read: “He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.” The psalmist is reminding God's people then (and us today) how He had defeated His enemies and delighted in His own people. And God is still able to accomplish the same today in His own time and way, even when evil and unrighteousness seem to have the upper hand at this time.

This builds on the idea in v. 2 where it tells us that God the Most High over all is “to be feared”. What does it mean to fear God? The idea in the Bible is that of reverential awe. It is that sense that would bring terror to anyone who opposes God. At the same time, it brings praise to those who revere Him. This implies that those with the right relationship to God can have great joy in His presence, but those without a right relationship to Him will be terrified in His presence.

The background here refers to a time when the nation of Israel had apparently been attacked by some foreign enemy. Israel was able to fend off the attack and defeat the enemy. In what had transpired, the psalmist recognized that Israel's victory was really due to the fact that God was fighting for them. God was the One who had subdued the other nation. God was the One who had protected their inheritance—i.e. the promised land. God can subdue all nations and He will always be able to subdue any power that intends to harm His people. Indeed, God will fight for His people and His people will eventually be victorious. We may not see it now. But we will see it in God's own good time. It is important for us to remember this truth.

At times we are prone to discouragement when it seems like those who are openly in rebellion against God are winning. But we must not be discouraged. God is not merely great, He is the greatest! He is able to subdue those who rebel against Him and all that He stands for, and He will do so in His own good time.

So, God will defeat His enemies and He delivers His own people. He is the ultimate “game changer” who will turn the tide of fortunes so that evil will one day despair in defeat and His people will delight in victory. He does not quit on His people. The big question is: “Are we quitting on God when things seem to be going all wrong?”

The late Walt Disney was an American entrepreneur, animator, writer, voice actor, and film producer. As a pioneer of the American animation industry, he introduced several developments in the production of cartoons. As a film producer, Disney holds the record for most Academy Awards earned by an individual until today.

However in Walt Disney’s early years, an editor at one of his first animation jobs told him this, “You lack imagination and have no good ideas. So call it a day and do something else.” Also, when he did venture out on his own, Walt Disney drove his first animation studio into bankruptcy. But his passion for animation kept his dream alive until he eventually created Mickey Mouse. Walt Disney once said, “The difference between winning and losing is simply not quitting.”

We often say that when we keep hoping, we will not stop going. Perhaps the other way is more accurate—i.e. when we keep going, we will not stop hoping.

([https://www.mindmovies.com/blogroll/famous-fails-6-people-who-turned-defeat-into-victory?data2=PI\\_180704&data4=PI\\_180704](https://www.mindmovies.com/blogroll/famous-fails-6-people-who-turned-defeat-into-victory?data2=PI_180704&data4=PI_180704))

God does not quit on His people. But are we quitting on God, especially when things seem to be going all wrong?

Perhaps as God’s people today, we don’t quite see His control in many of our present circumstances. But it is in such times that we must seek to live and see by faith. And by joining in praise of God today, we are symbolically saying and acting out the reality that our lives and our world have always been and will always be shaped by God’s perfect will and sovereign rule.

Notice that immediately at the end of v. 4, we see the word “Selah” which means “pause”. The word is placed here to give the reader or listener or worshipper the opportunity to reflect on what has been read;

what has been heard; what has been sung. And pausing and reflecting is an important aspect of worship.

And so we will take a cue from the psalmist and pause. I would like you to take a moment to think about this question: How does the truth that God will defeat evil and deliver His people encourage you to live and see by faith in your personal circumstance and our present world?

Take a moment to reflect and respond to God as He speaks to you.

In the second section of Psalm 47, we are called a second time to praise God for who He is. We are called to ...

## **II. Praise God for He is the Most Highly Enthroned (vv. 5-9)**

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 a psalm!  
8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.  
9 The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!

Here, the psalmist again gives us two reasons why we are to praise and rejoice in God's enthronement:

- *First, we praise God for His enthronement because praise is the right response to honour His Lordship (vv. 5-7). Verses 5-6: "God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!"*

When we set our hearts and minds on the One who has ascended to the Most High position, it brings forth praise; it brings forth worship in our lives. But how much of our lives do we spend in worshipping God versus how much time do we spend in worrying about the things of this world?

I watch the news on TV and other social media. Maybe like me, some of you need to turn off that TV every now and then; get away from that newspaper or website that is feeding your fear, anxiety, and worry. These feelings do not just stay inside us. They come out of us through our words, actions, and attitudes. Our natural reaction is to share that fear, or anxiety, or worry with other people because we are seeking those who share that same feeling. We then panic together and create a pandemic of fear, anxiety, worry, and pessimism.

God's people are encouraged to continue singing praises to Him. In vv. 6-7, five times we are actually commanded to "sing praises". The

repetition of this command to praise God is to stress the primacy of responding to His Lordship over us.

God's Lordship refers to His right to rule and govern over our lives. Yet He is not a God who is enthroned so high up that He has no personal interest in us as lowly created beings. He is not just the highly enthroned Lord. Rather, He is OUR highly enthroned Lord. We are His people, and we are to sing praises to Him who is not merely enthroned on high, but one with whom we have a personal relationship.

When we send a birthday card to someone with whom we have a personal relationship, we often want to write some personal words on the card for that person. In the same way, we need to think personally about the words we sing when we offer praises to God even though the lyrics are already there for us to sing. God does not want empty words of praise. He wants these words of praise to be first embedded words in our hearts. In other words, when we praise our enthroned God who is also personally involved and interested in our lives, we are to do so not merely with our mouth, but also with our mind, heart, and soul all stirred up with adoration of Him.

Such a deep engagement with God as we praise and worship Him reminds us that He is still on His throne as OUR Lord no matter what is happening in our lives and the world. He is in control, always will be, and nothing can dethrone Him.

It is so easy to worry and fret over what's to come. Will there be anything for me? Will I be prepared for it? What if I end up somewhere I don't want to be? These are valid and important questions, yet these questions tend to exclude God from the picture. We tend to forget that God is enthroned and faithful towards those who keep faith in Him.

Life can seem muddy, foggy, and confusing. But the Bible reassures us that because of what God has done in Jesus Christ, we no longer live in darkness; we live in the Light. Whatever comes our way, we can sing as the hymn goes, "It is well with my soul! It is well; it is well with my soul!" It is well now. It will be well in whatever's to come in the days ahead ... because God is enthroned as OUR Lord and He is personally involved and interested in our lives.

- *Second, we praise God for His enthronement because He rules and overrules over all creation (vv. 8-9).* God rules and overrules over all creation in His perfect righteousness and justice. This implies that He judges His creation with equity and impartiality.

On one hand, God's righteousness compels Him to punish the wicked. This is God's retributive justice. He brings retribution and destruction upon the wicked. If He is to judge impartially, He must give the wicked what they deserve, and what they deserve is His righteous wrath.

On the other hand, God's righteousness also compels Him to do right; to safe-keep His people; to deliver the weak, the oppressed, and the afflicted. This is God's restorative justice. Because God rules and overrules over His creation impartially, He will act in His righteousness to punish the wicked; vindicate the righteous; deliver the oppressed.

Verses 8-9 reads, "God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!"

This proclamation points to a prophetic future—i.e. the psalmist envisions a future beyond his time and even beyond his total comprehension to a glorious event to come. When it takes place, all the nations and their princes would have to submit to God's sovereign rule. And most exciting is that the psalmist is able to see with eyes of faith that all God's peoples from all over the earth would gather as "the people of the God of Abraham"—the one people of God. The psalmist speaks of this event in the present tense in vv. 8-9 – i.e. he envisions this future with his eyes of faith and visually pulls it to the present as if it is happening now.

In Psalm 110:1, King David says, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" In Matthew 22:44, Jesus quotes this verse in a discussion with the Pharisees in order to prove that the Messiah is more than David's son—He is indeed David's Lord. Jesus here is pointing to Himself as the promised Messiah who will one day come as the fully established King over all as He sits on His throne in Jerusalem. He will then overthrow the rulers of nations, and replace them with His people (the one people of God) who will reign with Him on earth regardless of their race, rank, and language (Obadiah 1:21; Rev 20:6).

For Christians, this is exciting news because we know that we who are in Jesus Christ will be in this great gathering of God's people. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is coming again to rule with His people one day.

But some may say, "Yes for sure! I know that Jesus is coming again, but He hasn't come for almost 2,000 years. There's no sense getting all worked up about it. If I need to get my life and relationship with Him right before He comes, I've got plenty of time."

Before Mount St Helens in Washington (US) erupted in 1980, its last significant eruption occurred way back in 1857. Sometime in 1980, when there were clear signs that St Helens would soon awaken from its 123-year-old slumber, authorities warned residents around the vicinity to evacuate. Some stubbornly

refused to do so. One of them was an 83-year-old widower named Harry R. Truman (not the late US President). He had vested interest—he owned a lodge on Spirit Lake near St Helens.

He said this when interviewed to give reasons for his refusal to leave, “I’m going to stay right here because, I’ll tell you why, my home and my life’s here. My wife and I, we both vowed years and years ago that we’d never leave Spirit Lake. We loved it. It’s part of me, and I’m part of that mountain.”

On 18 May 1980 at 8.32 am, St Helens erupted after staying dormant for 123 years. Harry R. Truman and his 16 cats were swept away and buried under the ferocious, molten avalanche. His remains were never found, but he became a little legend because of his defiance against what’s sure to happen.

God’s timetable is not our timetable—our thousand years are like a day to Him (2 Pet 3:8). So, let’s persevere to live for His Kingdom as if we still have many years ahead. At the same time, let’s prepare to meet our King as if this is the day.”

(<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/05/17/mount-st-helens-people-stayed/27311467>)

For some others today, let me ask, “Are you part of the people of God? Do you know that you can be part of this great assembly that the psalmist is envisioning?” If you like to know how you can be part of this great gathering of God’s people on that glorious day to come, I encourage you to contact our church, or speak to the pastor, or a Christian you know.

The final phrase in v. 9 affirms that all of creation is moving towards that glorious event when the Lord will be highly exalted. Indeed, the Bible tells us that history will end with every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). And this should give us great hope today.

In our days of uncertainties, many tend to lament with discouragement, “Oh, I don’t know where this world is going. I don’t know when the COVID-19 pandemic will end. I don’t know what is going to happen even after the COVID-19 pandemic. I don’t know this ... I don’t now that ...” And I can empathize with them because when we look around us, we see a world that does not seem to recognize God as King, or we don’t sense the reality of God’s control. We see a world that seems to be going from bad to worse. But the Bible is very clear about where this world is heading. The Bible tells us that the enthroned God is in charge and in control—evil will not reign forever and that those who belong to



Him in Jesus Christ will be on God's winning side ... FOREVER! (Rev 21:3-5)

The story is told of a very religious man who lived next door to an atheist. While the religious one was constantly on his knees in communion with his Lord, the atheist never even looked twice at a church. However, the atheist's life was good—he had a well-paying job, a devoted wife, and his children were good-natured. Conversely, the religious man's life was difficult—his wages were low, his wife was always finding fault with him, and his kids were wayward in words and actions.

This had long troubled the pious man. One night, in his troubled mind he dreamt that he was raising his eyes towards heaven and asked: "Oh God, I honour you every day, I ask your advice for every problem and confess to you my every sin. Yet my neighbour, who doesn't even believe in you and certainly never prays, seems blessed with every happiness while I remain poor and suffer many an indignity. Why is this so?"

Then he heard a voice ... not from heaven, but from within himself saying, "Because that neighbour of yours doesn't bother God at all!"

Perhaps that's the irony in life—the godless seem to be on the winning side and so they don't see the need for a God who cares. The pious seem to be on the losing side and so they doubt if God really cares and is in control.

Our psalm today reassures us that our future is not one of despair but one of hope. So no matter what happens in the present; no matter what happens today, tomorrow and the days to come, God will still be enthroned over all. He cares, and His righteousness and justice will prevail.

To so remind ourselves, let me now ask you to join me in pleading with God to intervene in our world today with His divine care, righteousness and justice. So, I ask you to pray with me in your heart as I read out this prayer on the screen:

Heavenly Father, there is much ungodliness and corruption not only in the lives of individuals, but also in the corridors of power in many nations. We plea for your intervention against such ungodliness and corruption.

For all peoples who suffer and perish helplessly and hopelessly from sickness, poverty, conflict, hatred, brokenness, and marginalization; hear our plea for your intervention.

For all peoples who need help and hope because their health and lives are adversely affected by the global pandemic and worldly turmoil, and for all authorities working tirelessly to control the pandemic and bring peace among nations; hear our plea for your intervention.

For those who are misguided in thinking that their weapons of war will resolve conflicts, and for those who conscientiously defy such violence and chaos; hear our plea for your intervention.

For the spiritual redemption of the victims and even perpetrators of unrighteousness and injustice in our world today; hear our plea for your intervention.

We pray that you will right all the wrongs that are taking place in our world. Keep us from taking matters into our own hands for vindication and vengeance belong to you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen!

## **Conclusion**

This morning we've been reminded that God is great and enthroned, and above everything and everyone else. And God is OUR God because we have a personal relationship with Him in and through Jesus Christ. This is why we can praise and rejoice along with the psalmist this morning. This is why we also yearn with the psalmist for the Lord's visible rule over all one day.

Kings, empires, and governments have been deposed and brought down throughout human history. But God will always be in charge and in control today, tomorrow and all the days to come. So our hope on this Lord's Day should be the same as our hope on the other days to come regardless of what happens.

If you wake up tomorrow and become anxious about something, you might need to ask yourself, "Where is the object of my trust and dependence; my praise and rejoicing?" If you wake up tomorrow and what you have wanted most comes to pass, you might need to ask yourself, "Where is the focus of my trust and dependence; my praise and rejoicing?" If your trust and dependence; your praise and rejoicing are centred on a thing or person other than God Himself, be forewarned that that will eventually disappoint you someday, somehow. We trust and depend on God; we praise and rejoice in God not because life experiences are always good, it is because God Himself is always good.

Let me conclude with this call: We give God our highest praise not so much by singing loudly to Him in our happiest times, but by trusting firmly in Him in our darkest hours. Amen!