

“Open up and let God in!”
A meditation on Psalm 24 by Kat Wagner

Psalm 24

Of David. A psalm.

¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

² for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

³ Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure
heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.

⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God their Saviour.

⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek
him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.

⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

The start of a new year is a good time to reflect on the important things of life.

I'd like to present Psalm 24 as a good place to look for what is important in our life and our faith. Psalm 24 speaks of who God is; of the relationship between God and us; and a reminder, an encouragement, a cry to 'open up and let God in'.

This evening, I would like to take a walk through the three parts of this psalm. I pray that my thoughts and words in this meditation make some connection with your own heart and mind, and that we can all take a nugget of God's word into our lives this week.

So, to begin, Part 1: verses 1 & 2. We are taken back to Genesis.

Out of ocean depths, land masses rise. Volcanoes, clouds, rivers, and myriads of life-forms emerge and thrive and adapt and evolve and diversify. The earth is the Lord's. The intricate and dynamic structures, webs and relations. It is God's handiwork. All of it.

For King David, the author of his psalm, it is not just the land that belongs to God (like a division of kingdoms), but EVERYTHING in it. Not just the boundaries, but all of its fullness. All resources, all production, all harvest, all wealth, all life, every person, every being – it all belongs to God.

The Psalm takes us out of our personal kingdoms and into God's big picture.

The greatness of God is unfathomable. And we are living right in the heart of God's amazing creative energy. It is all good, because it is all God's.

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. (v1)

In fact, the apostle Paul quotes this very verse to confirm to the early Christians that they could eat anything, not just the 'kosher' foods. Nothing is unclean, says Paul, because "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (1 Cor 10: 26).

Part 2: verses 3-6.

³Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?

What of us, if God is so great? How can mere humans approach such a vast and powerful God? The question is answered by verse 4. "Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies."

Pure hands AND pure hearts. Pure actions and pure intentions. The seen and the unseen. Hands that have never worshiped idols, thoughts and emotions that have never overflowed into words which hurt others and tell lies. Such a moral standard is unreachable, unattainable, even for the most devout.

It's like an Everest-scale mountain that is impossible to even consider climbing: the climb would be technically very difficult, dangerous and inhospitable.

Just one person could 'climb the mountain of the Lord', could claim his right to stand before God. One who came to earth from God himself. A hint of Jesus in this age-old psalm of David.

But even David knew then that God was a saving God. He knew that God was a relational God. He knew that God was a God who loved to bless. Here is a hope, a chance, a glimmer of something bright that must be sought, continually pursued. The psalm says, "Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob".

David's psalm pauses now.

We have been confronted with a great, creator God. And our question of who may come face to face with such a God still has the remnants of a question-mark hanging over it.

But this is not the end of the matter.

Part 3, verses 7-10. The whisper of hope becomes a shout of hope, a rousing chorus.

With David, we imagine the ancient city of Jerusalem: the city walls and fortified gates. David may have composed this psalm for the triumphant return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. The sign of God's presence returning to his people.

"Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of **glory** enter!" (v7)

This glory was the light between the cherubim on the Ark. The glory that represented God's very presence was coming up the hill towards Jerusalem.

God is not stuck up on a lofty mountain. God himself comes to the people. God himself approaches the door.

Those outside the gates shout, "Open up, ancient gates and let the King of glory enter". Those inside the city walls reply, "Who is the King of glory?" And they reply: "The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, invincible in battle." This great God wants to be within the city. This great God does not want to stay 'out there', this great God wants to be within.

"Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter!"
Once again, the question from within: "Who is the King of glory?"
A doubt, a little uncertainty. Does this glorious King really want to come in? Do we really want this King here with us?
Once more the answer: "The Lord of Heaven's Armies – he is the King of glory".

And so the psalm celebrates the Ark of the Covenant entering into Jerusalem.

And here's the really interesting bit: According to Jewish history, this psalm was always read as part of Jewish temple worship on the first day of the week. And on such a day many years later, Jesus rode a humble donkey up the path to Jerusalem and entered through the city gates. At that very moment, we can imagine the temple priests crying out the words, "Open up, ancient gates, open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter!"

How can a mighty God enter into a city? How can we let God into our lives? His coming-in does not make him smaller or less powerful. His openness does not diminish his glory or might. But we can be sure, when the door is opened, he WILL come in.
Revelation 3: 20: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."

A psalm in three parts: A statement of God's greatness; a question of our relationship with God; and a cry to open up and welcome him in.

So, in this new year, let me encourage you to open up your gates and let God in. Open up your doors, and let God in. He is standing there and knocking.

How is God knocking on your door this year?

Open yourself to God, who comes close to you through the little ones, the asking ones, the needing ones, the loving ones, the crying ones, the least of all.

Open up and let God in. Unclench your fists, open your hands, make space in the palm of your hand to receive a gift, and make space for another's hand to rest in yours. Open your heart, let fresh blood flow in. Let old blood be renewed and re-oxygenated. Open yourself to

the creator God, who wants to be close with you. Open yourself to God, who comes close to you in humility, as one riding a donkey.

So this year, once again, with open hands and humbled hearts, let's open up and let God in.

Amen