



MY GOD, THE KING

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Psalm 145

A VERSE TO REMEMBER

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Ps. 145:13)

Daily Bible Readings

M	Jan. 20	Dan. 2:31-45	The Kingdoms of This World
T	Jan. 21	Col. 1:11-20	The Kingdom of God's Son
W	Jan. 22	Col. 1:21-29	Christ, the Hope of Glory
Th	Jan. 23	Zech. 14:8-11, 16-21	The Lord Reigns over the Earth
F	Jan. 24	Heb. 12:18-29	An Unshakable Kingdom
Sa	Jan. 25	Matt. 6:25-34	Seek First God's Kingdom

STEPPING INTO THE WORD

In *The Horse and His Boy*, the fifth of the Narnia books, C. S. Lewis introduces us to Shasta, who was born a prince, abducted as a baby, and raised in a foreign land. Shasta later encounters his birth father, King Lune, and learns he is heir to the kingdom. He turns to his twin, Corin, younger by only twenty minutes, and apologizes: "I never dreamed my turning up was going to chisel you out of your kingdom."

Corin replies, "Hurrah! Hurrah! . . . I'll always be a Prince. It's Princes have all the fun."

King Lune affirms the high calling of being a king: "For this is what it means to be a King: to be first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat, and when there's hunger in the land (as must be now and then in bad years), to wear finer clothes and laugh louder over a scantier meal than any man in your land."¹

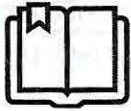
C. S. Lewis presents a picture of kingly behavior that focuses on valor and sacrifice for the sake of the people in the kingdom. Lewis was undoubtedly influenced by the kingship ideals presented in biblical passages like Psalm 145, where God is portrayed as a good, gracious, merciful, compassionate, kind, and just king. This king is near to us, and he is glorious because of both his majesty and loving character.

Throughout human history, very few people have experienced kings like this. Today, the royalty we see in the news

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 192-193.

fulfill mostly ceremonial roles, so we have much to learn about the ways the biblical writers viewed an ideal king. To grow in our trust for God, and to appreciate Jesus as the One who inaugurates a new kingdom, we need to reframe the possibilities for the reign of a king who is gracious and merciful.

Jesus, King of Kings, we praise you that the glory of your kingdom comes from your goodness, compassion, kindness, and justice, as well as your power. Amen.



SCRIPTURE

Psalm 145:1, 10–21

145:1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

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- ¹⁰All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
- ¹¹They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
- ¹²to make known to all people your mighty deeds
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words
and gracious in all his deeds.

- ¹⁴The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
- ¹⁶You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
- ¹⁷The LORD is just in all his ways
and kind in all his doings.
- ¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
- ¹⁹He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
- ²⁰The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
- ²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Note: Find Scripture Notes for this reading on the final page of the lesson.

SEEING AND TELLING

Psalm 145 is an acrostic poem, with alternate lines beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This acrostic form occurs elsewhere in the Bible, including Psalms 9 and 10 together (see lesson Six) and also Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 119. The acrostic format makes memorizing easier, and we can imagine how encouraging this upbeat and joyful Psalm 145 has been to Jews and Christians over many centuries. In verse one, God is identified as king, and the verses of the psalm describe this king who cares deeply for those who live in the kingdom. This king is worthy of our praise.

Unlike many other psalms, Psalm 145 does not focus on specific historical actions by God. Instead, the psalm centers on God's character and the actions that consistently flow out of who God is. These are actions that God will always do because they are a natural outworking of God's being (Ps. 145:8–9, 14–20). The psalm toggles back and forth between statements about God's character and verses about the praise of the whole creation for this wonderful God and King. In verses 1 and 2, the psalm focuses on personal praise of God. In verses 4 to 7, each generation tells the next how wonderful and reliable God is. In verses 10 to 12, all of God's works—everything God created including humans and the whole creation—make known God's glory, power, mighty deeds, and splendor. Psalm 19:1–4 presents a similar statement of the ways the heavens speak about God. In the final verse, the psalm returns to personal praise of God alongside "all flesh" (Ps. 145:21). The psalm describes a natural cycle of experiencing God at work: seeing and experiencing God's goodness bubbles forth in telling, describing, and teaching others about our experiences of God.

God's goodness and faithfulness, as portrayed in Psalm 145, include many components, including care for those who are "falling" physically or metaphorically and those bent over with stress, pain, or disability (v. 14). In ancient Israel, most people were subsistence farmers, herders, or both, so securing sufficient food was a real cause for concern (vv. 15–16). While many of us don't face the real possibility of starvation, we should not lose sight of this reality around us and throughout the world. We mirror God's generosity as we share our resources (Acts 2:45; 2 Cor. 8). God fulfills our desires, hears our cries, saves us, and watches over us (vv. 19, 20). Psalm 145 sets out God's consistent

actions as proof of God's unwavering character and as a call to praise.

? List the ways Psalm 145 portrays God's care for human beings and the creation.

AN INVITATION TO TRUST

The king and kingdom language of the Old and New Testaments is off-putting for some people. Those who have lived under selfish and immoral rulers can find it hard to reshape their picture of a king. Some find it hard to connect with the implied male identity of God as king. We know that God transcends gender; after all, both men and women were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26, 27). Yet, the Bible asks us to think of God as a king, a sovereign. By definition, kings have been male.

To see the beauty of Psalm 145 and to appreciate the kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurates, we have to acknowledge our reservations around male-only kingship and set them aside, however challenging it is. God has the characteristics of the very best king we could ever imagine; we can trust this God even if we dislike king and kingdom language. Psalm 145 calls us to praise God publicly for God's gracious kindness in so many areas, including the gifts from the earth that keep us alive. This praise comes from recognizing that the very essence of God's both-female-and-male nature is grace, compassion, and steadfast love toward all.

The sequence in verses 18 to 20 is profoundly comforting. It foreshadows Jesus's life on earth and the Holy Spirit's presence with us today: God is near to us when we call; God hears our cry and saves us; God watches over all who love him; God will destroy the evil that makes so much of human life challenging and overwhelming. God has shown compassion and kindness for us in so many ways, as we see so clearly in the Gospel stories and our own lives. God continues to be near through the gift of the Holy Spirit. In addition, we don't have to worry that evil will triumph. One day, God will completely eliminate evil and pain.

Psalm 145 presents a picture of the psalm writer, others in the Jewish community, and all of creation who cannot hold in their wonder at such a caring, protective, and faithful God. They, and we, are compelled to praise. Psalm 145 is also a profound invitation to trust in the wonderful God described here. It is impossible to give assent to everything in the psalm and then return to daily life trusting only in our own competence and hard work for

success or relying on the capitalistic, consumeristic culture we live in to give us good things. Acknowledging the character and kind acts of this God elicits trust that God alone takes care of us and provides for us.



Where are you tempted to place your trust? What helps you trust God?

STEPPING INTO THE WORLD

Many Christians today acknowledge that “head knowledge” about God is often easier than knowing God in our hearts and showing God’s love in our daily lives. Christian leaders often propose various spiritual practices that help move our faith from our head into our whole being, including meditating on the Bible in addition to analyzing it, praying silently as well as using words, and seeking to experience God’s presence in all of life. These practices can be very helpful in drawing us near to God with our whole being.

Psalm 145 presents a picture of a faithful, loving, and supportive ruler who will never fail us. The direct instruction in the psalm moves us from recognizing who God is into praising and proclaiming about God. The psalm also encourages us to trust in this God of steadfast love. Trust is an essential part of moving faith from “head knowledge” into our entire being.

Psalm 145 tells us that God is our provider. If we trust that God will give us what we need, we experience less stress, pressure, and anxiety about our life today and in our future. Our whole beings can relax. We grow in experiencing the freedom to work hard without compulsiveness, and our lives will increasingly fill with gratitude. Trusting in God’s provision soothes us, body, soul, and mind.

The psalm also tells us that God is compassionate to those in need, to anyone who is vulnerable in any way. Trusting in God’s compassion toward us and toward those we love will help us grow in experiencing peace when we consider the enormous challenges faced by those we love. If we trust that God is compassionate, our prayers and actions will increasingly come from a place of confidence instead of desperation. We will also grow in self-acceptance and compassion for ourselves because we trust in a God who is compassionate to all, even to us.

The loving God portrayed in Psalm 145 is ruler of all nations. At the right time, this sovereign God will destroy evil. Trusting

in God's power as well as goodness, we can pray confidently for God's hand at work in the world, and we can wait patiently for God's justice to unfold at the right time. We are not alone when we hear about scary and evil things happening around us. Trusting in God's nearness helps us move peacefully through our world, knowing with our whole being that God is good.

? In what ways is trusting God difficult for you? Which of God's characteristics are most helpful for you to remember when you are trying to trust God?

SCRIPTURE NOTES

The following notes from the Uniform Series provide additional information about today's Scripture.

1. Psalm 145 includes David's explanation of why he rejoices in God's sovereignty. God's goodness and faithfulness are constant, making trusting God the only option that makes sense in this world (vv. 3–7).
2. Psalm 145 focuses on God's general actions that consistently flow out of who God is: actions that God will always do, because they are a natural outworking of God's character (vv. 8–9, 14–20).
3. David mirrors Luke's emphasis on witness/testimony (lesson 7) (vv. 4–12), describing the natural cycle of experiencing God at work: seeing and experiencing bubbles forth into telling, describing, and teaching about our experiences of God.
4. Most people of ancient Israel were subsistence farmers/herders, so sufficient food was a real concern (vv. 14–16). While many of us don't face the real possibility of starvation, we should not lose sight of this reality around us and throughout the world. God's generosity and provision works through us as we share resources (Acts 2:45; 2 Cor. 8).
5. Reading Psalm 145:18 with James 4:8 and 10, we see that dishonesty—with others or ourselves—is a significant obstacle to our dynamic experience of God's presence with us and God's working through us and on our behalf. To fully experience God, we must be honest with ourselves and others.