



Anthems

3 King of Kings

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We're continuing our Anthems series where we're talking about worship with music. Today's anthem that we are going to talk about is *King of Kings*. A few weeks ago, just before Easter, we wrapped up our Kingdom of Heaven series where we talked about the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the Kingdom of God. We covered a little bit then what a kingdom is. A kingdom is simply a king's domain. It is that which a king has dominion or authority over.

Today, as we're looking at the King of Kings, we understand that it is the authority over all other authorities. We read about this in Romans 13: 1 – ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*** There is no authority that does not fall under the dominion of God himself.

Psalms 103: 18 – ***The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*** He is the king of all kings. Any king or other authority that is in place, he is over that authority.

I like this song, *King of Kings*, for a lot of reasons, but one of them is that it really covers a lot of our essential beliefs. If you've been to our membership class, Starting Point, we talk some about our essential beliefs. We have a class called *We Believe*, which covers our essential beliefs. I think we're going to put the QR code up here. If you haven't seen the recorded video and you're curious about our essential beliefs, you can go online, click the link there, or you can find the link online to *We Believe*, which is a summary of our essential beliefs. It's about an hour-long recorded class where you can see and understand and hear the core values, the core beliefs in which we have unity.

This song really summarizes our essential theology. It does so in four verses and a chorus. It's pretty incredible how much theological truth is crammed into this one song. We sing about God. We sing about the triune nature of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We sing about mankind and our condition in sin. We sing about salvation and eternity. We sing about angels. We sing about the church. All of those things. You can open up your phone, you can click the QR code and that will take you to the *We Believe* Class where you can, if you haven't seen it before, or if you have seen it and it's been a while, brush up on our essential beliefs. So, it's very extensive and condensed so that we can fit that all into a one-hour class.

Now, we're talking about music here. This is a song that we are talking about. I enjoy music. I can appreciate music mostly because there is no musical talent anywhere in any fiber of my being.

I can't create music with my voice or with an instrument, at least not in a way anyone is going to want to listen to, but I appreciate music.

Music has feelings with it, doesn't it? There are different kinds of music that elicit different feelings. It can put you in a different mood sometimes, which is why we have different music in different settings. For instance, some people like to listen to music when they workout. Athletes like to listen to certain types of music before an athletic competition because it almost elicits somewhat of an adrenaline rush in preparation for that type of competition.

Then there is music that we listen to in order to relax, calm down, like if you're sitting at home, alone, in the quiet and you play that music that helps to calm you. Kind of like spa music if you will. That's the reason I can guarantee you'll that, in a competitive arena of athleticism, you'll never hear spa music playing before the game. Nor will you go to a spa and hear hard rock, rap, or hip hop as people are trying to relax. There are different types of music that elicit different moods and different feelings. Those that have studied musical theory know that there are different keys that are played to elicit specific feelings in the listener.

Not only does music have feelings, but music has memories. There can be songs that take you back to a memory, and it could be a good or bad memory. It can take you back to a place and a time or situation where all you have to do is hear that song and you're there.

Clint Black has a song called *State of Mind*. In it he says this. "Ain't it funny how a melody can bring back a memory, take you to another place and time, completely change your state of mind. You hear that song and you're there." Music has memory.

Have you ever heard a song from your youth or years ago that you hadn't heard in a while, and this time, for whatever reason, you understand it? You hear it and you're like, "I can't believe they said that. They're a bunch of potty mouths. Then you're like, "I can't believe I sang that. I'm a potty mouth." But then you're reassured because you weren't singing those words, you were singing what you thought they were singing. But lyrics matter, especially when it comes to worship.

Again, worship is acknowledging who God is and what he has done for us. Worship is more than music, more than a day of the week, more than a place, more than a group of people, but music is one of the ways through which we worship. Because of that, we know that lyrics matter. Music has feeling but words have meaning. That's in talking about the lyrics. Words have meaning.

Who here is familiar with the Macy's Day Parade? Who here acknowledges there is no such thing as a Macy's Day Parade? Okay, there is no holiday which we celebrate called Macy's Day. We have thanksgiving day on which there is a parade sponsored by Macy's. Do you see how they've done that over the years. If you watch the parade, they say that it's the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, but we've come to know it as the Macy's Day Parade. One word makes all the difference.

How about the Pledge of Allegiance? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. If you change that one word, America, to Mexico or to Canada, or any other country, it completely

changes everything about that pledge. It's not the same pledge. Words have meaning. As we are looking at our worship with music, we know that words have meaning, therefore, it is important for us to filter the things that we are declaring through our primary source of truth, which is scripture.

Today, as we are looking at the song *King of Kings*, which is the title of this anthem, this descriptor of God, King of Kings is found several places in scripture, in a lot of different passage, but one of them is Revelation 9: 16 - ***On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.***

Now, I've said that this song kind of summarizes a lot of essential theological truths, and it does it in four verses and a chorus. And it does it in a way that we like, that's kind of fun to follow because it does it in kind of story fashion. And we like stories, don't we? We like particular types of stories like action super hero stories. And we eat it up. And that's evident by the money that these movies make at the box office and on streaming services. We love these stories, and they all have similar things in common. There's a hero with a rescue. There is evil and darkness. There's a struggle, a sacrifice. There's victory. And then there is happily ever after... unless they are setting you up for a sequel. But all these elements tend to be in all of these stories.

The interesting thing is that none of the stories are original. Over the past couple hundred years, through comic books and movies and TV shows, these stories have been told. The fact is there is one original true story on which all of these things are based. As a matter of fact, it is the story of us, the story of mankind from the beginning of creation and through to the end, a real-life story.

Frank Turek is an apologist and, with his son, Zack, wrote a book called *Hollywood Heroes*. In their book, they describe a lot of these Hollywood stories, these superhero stories and reveal how God is actually revealed through some of these. Why? Because they are all based on original, true rescue stories. As a matter of fact, I think this can be a problem for someone who has never heard the gospel of Christ, who has seen all of the Hollywood stories may hear the gospel of Christ and think, That's just another mythical Hollywood story, not realizing this one was written thousands of years ago, far before any Hollywood writer put together one of these stories.

Frank Turek says *"There is something that enthralls us about stories where human lives are put in danger, that depict a real struggle between good and evil, that show how love and dedication can ultimately overcome even the most hopeless of situations. We long for another world that we were really made for, and we are enchanted by someone who will bring us there, someone who will fight evil and bring us safely to a world where there is no pain, suffering, or struggle."*

That's why we love these stories. We eat them up at the theater and streaming. We consume them because we have an inherent love for the rescue story because we inherently have a need for rescue. We inherently have a condition that requires rescue.

Regardless of how far we get removed from the moment of sin and unrighteousness, the original sin and the fall, no matter how far we get from that, it is ingrained into us that sin condition and the death consequence of it that requires a rescue.

So, this song, *King of Kings*, tells a story, a story of the real-life struggle, the story of a tension between God's image bearing creation and the evil that is among us because of sin. It also tells of a real-life hero.

Let's get into the song, starting with Verse 1.

*In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt.*

So, in this first verse, we have the scene that get set. We have this condition, this darkness, and that we're waiting. There is an evil presence among us, and we are without hope. Also, we have this good, the ultimate good. And we read about these two opposing forces in John 10:10 – ***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...*** That's the enemy, that's Satan. He has one thing in mind and that is evil for the sake of evil. No purpose in the evil except for to destroy us through sin and death and to thwart the good that God is and the work he is trying to do. So, we have ultimate good verses ultimate evil set up in this first verse, each with contrasting purposes. Now, a hero comes running. The hero came running from a throne of endless glory to a cradle in the dirt.

John 1: 1 says, ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** The Word is Jesus. He has been eternal with the Father in heaven, and he sent him. How did he come? He came running. He knew that we needed a rescue. He came running, but he didn't make a grand entrance like the superhero that we know of on the big screen. He didn't push a button and suddenly this suit of armor covers him, with artillery all over it, and the helmet comes over with Black Sabbath playing in the background. (that's Ironman). Nor did he go to a phone booth, spin around really fast and come out wearing a cape and tights and, for whatever reason, underwear over his tights. He didn't make one of these entrances, but he came running. How? To a humble setting as a newborn baby, a cradle in the dirt, a humble, helpless newborn, to a family that didn't have any political clout, didn't have any authority, didn't have financial means. Why? Because that represented his purpose in coming as the servant savior that he was to be.

Now let's look at the chorus.

*Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings*

Now, here's some more of our rich, essential theology in this chorus. We believe that God is three in one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They're inseparable from one another, they're co-equal with one another, they're co-eternal with one another. This is an attribute of God that is hard to understand. There are distinctions yet oneness, which sounds somewhat like an oxymoron, right. Distinctions with oneness. Here is unity with diversity. Again, it's hard to understand. If that confuses you, the best thing I can say is welcome to the club because it is confusing. It's an attribute that is really incomprehensible. That's one of the things about God. We can't fully understand him, but while he is incomprehensible, he is knowable. We can't understand him, but we can know him because of his revelation in creation, through his Word, and ultimately the person of Jesus Christ. Because he came running, we can know him.

Now, to whom do we praise in this chorus. *Praise the Father, praise the Son, praise the Spirit, three in one...* We're praising God. You can't praise one without praising the others. So, who came running? Jesus did. And who is Jesus? He is God.

John 10:30 says, ***I and the father are one.*** He is the King of Kings who came running. So, why did he come running? Look at Verse two of this song.

*To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross...*

Now here comes the struggle part of our story.

*For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake, you died...*

This is a struggle like no other. Again, on one side, you have a savior and on the other the enemy. The enemy with his weapons of sin and death. Jesus is about to enter into this, taking on the consequences of sin, both spiritually and physically. Bearing the sin of all mankind, the spiritual death that was sin and separation from God, from the Father. He says, "Why have you forsaken me?" And at that moment, he bore the spiritual consequence of sin and then, of course, the physical death. This was a struggle like nothing you've ever seen in a movie before.

Maybe you have seen the scene in the Garden depicted on the screen and it's pretty powerful. We read the words of Jesus in Luke 22: 42 - ***"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."*** Did he really want to? He wanted to because he saw what was on the other side – our salvation, our rescue. But he knew this was ugly, it was grueling, it was painful, it was everything bad. And then he died. This is the scene in our story that's pretty grim. It's pretty dark. You can imagine in a movie scene where there is not much light, but darkness. And if there was music playing, it would be very low in one of those depressing keys. It's very sad. If you've ever been to a Good Friday service, it's a somber celebration. It's a somber time because this is when our savior died. It can appear for those who don't know what's coming on Sunday that the enemy has won. This is a time and

moment where many of us find ourselves, like we talked about last week, fighting battles. We are in a battle and we're looking around wondering *where is our rescuer? Where is the salvation from this moment?* It can be relational, it can be with your family. It can be at a job, with your health. Any number of battles that we might be fighting. And it's dark, isn't it?

The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 46: 1-3 - **1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.** When is he that help? Look at Verses 2 and 3. It sounds like that scene in the movie where everything is just crumbling apart. **2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.** That's the scene where it feels dark and you may be, in that moment, in a battle where it feels dark. But... But the story isn't over is it?

*And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored.*

This is the scene in the movie where the hero goes off. Fun to watch, right? Where there's that darkness and that somber music and everything and then suddenly, the hero starts using superpowers you didn't know existed, pulling weapons from places that looked, frankly, uncomfortable, taking out every enemy around and going off. You may be in the theater or sitting at home literally pumping your fists and excited about this scene. This is the moment we are singing about in Verse 3. The Lamb had conquered death. What a weapon. Our superhero, this weapon... very simple, yet the most powerful weapon known to mankind. He resurrected from the dead. And this line – The angels stood in awe... I kind of picture the angels that are watching and involved.

Here's another essential for you – angels that are created beings by God, the number is set. We don't become angels when we die. They are the agents of his work. They see this take place. They were there, watching this take place when Jesus rose, when he was resurrected.

I can imagine what some of the angels were saying to one another as they are watching it. They're like, "That just happened!" Pretty exciting scene. Have you ever been watching a movie in your living room or somewhere else where someone walks in on the scene at the end, like the battle scene and they're like, "Who's that?" You're like, "That's the hero." You're trying to watch and they're like "What's he doing?" "Well that's his superpower." "Who's the other guy?" "That's the villain." What's he doing?" "Okay, you know what? Let's just rewind two and a half hours and we're just going to start from the beginning. It would be quicker than the explaining everything that's going on here."

Have you ever watched a movie with that person? So, the angels are these created beings. This is pretty cool. The angels are not that person. They are the ones that have been there for the entire

show. They have seen our entire story play out. They were there at creation. The angels were there when mankind fell to sin. It was an angel that delivered the news to Mary that she was going to conceive and give birth to Emanuel, God with us. It was an angel that declared to the shepherds the savior had been born. It was an angel that comforted Jesus in the garden as he was praying, "Father, please take this cup from me." And it was angels that were in the empty tomb when the women showed up and they said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is risen."

These angels have been observing and been part of our whole story.

Now, have you ever watched a movie with someone that really gets involved in a movie? And I mean physically? Especially a superhero action movie? That's my wife. I'm convinced that she thinks somehow that she is helping the superhero to fight the battle. If I'm sitting next to her in the midst of the battle, she's throwing punches and kicking like she's helping the superhero. It's a dangerous seat to be in, frankly. We still watch movies together, but where I sit depends on what we're watching. If it's a romantic comedy, I'm right there with her. But if it's an action hero movie, I put her next to my daughter because I can't take hits like that at my age. And my daughter can be the same so it's like this fight is playing out between the two of them as they are watching an action hero movie.

I don't know how the angels reacted for sure, watching things play out, but I'm guessing it was a pretty neat thing for them to watch and react to. Like my wife gets physically involved... We don't know how the angels reacted, but we do know one thing about the angel's reaction to something. Luke 15: 10 says, "***there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.***" Isn't that cool? At the moment of your salvation, the angels were fist pumping, high-fiving, chest bumping. I don't know how they celebrate or how they rejoice. Maybe even like a choreographed endzone dance. I don't know how they rejoice, but that's kind of how I picture it. Why are they rejoicing? Because they just saw that someone had been restored to the Father. They were there at the moment of the fall of mankind to sin. They saw it happen. They know that took place. Then fast forward to right now, a sinner that repents, they rejoice.

Now, we have the scene set. Jesus, our hero, with his foot standing on the chest of the enemy because he has disarmed him. He has disarmed him of his most powerful weapons, which are sin and death. And we have this victory.

Let's move into Verse four where we are going to talk about the victory lap.

And the Church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
It shall not kneel, it shall not faint

By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

Here in a little bit, we are going to close by singing this song together. I want you to notice as you're singing the song... You may remember it because we've sung it often. The crescendo that takes place at the end of Verse 3 and then in Verse 4, it's loud, which is great because then I can sing out loud and no one cares. Remember, music has feeling, right? And that's a feeling that's good. It's good that the music moves us in that way. The feeling we should get when we're singing about this is victory because we have victory in Jesus. There's a hymn there some of you know. We have victory. We hear about another essential here in this last verse about the church, about the collective body of believers, the church is the vehicle by which this gospel truth of old shall not kneel or faint. That is us.

The spirit lit the flame. And we, the followers of Jesus, are going to help truth not kneel or faint. Even if we don't, the rocks will cry out that Jesus is Lord. They will declare him. But what an honor and a privilege to get to be a part of this. You see, we are in what we call the church age. Christ came running. He's our Rescuer. He suffered. He participated in the struggle, and he went through it and he died. He conquered death by resurrecting back to life. Right now, he left us, but he has left the Holy Spirit with us and we are in the church age.

In this church age, we continue to fight battles. That's why it can feel pretty dark. Christ has conquered sin and death, but you may still feel that darkness because we are still in the presence of sin and death. Maybe the coolest thing of all is that he came running once and he departed to be with the Father in heaven. But guess what? He's coming again. He's going to come running again and it ain't going to be as a baby in a cradle. It's going to be quite the scene. The Father is going to turn to him and say, "Go. Fight that final battle and go claim those that are with us. Claim our church." I picture that with Jesus in heaven standing next to the Father. And he's not sitting back, just kind of hanging out until the father gives him a prompt. He longs for us. I picture him like a caged animal, ready to go. And what a scene it's going to be when the Father says, "Go!"

You've seen the superhero movie where the superhero comes bursting through the clouds. That's not original. We know that Jesus is coming in the clouds. And guess what? At that moment, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord. He is the Almighty. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. That's the scene. You talk about a battle, you talk about, "That just happened!" And it's coming.

We read about it in Revelation 17: 14 - ***They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.*** Death is the final enemy to be defeated.

We can be free from the spiritual death that we can experience because of sin, but at that point, we will taste physical death no more. He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. He is the authority over all other authorities. And those with him are called and chosen, and faithful followers of Jesus, that's us. We're the ones standing behind him as he's taking the enemy out once and for all, destroying anything that causes pain. Destroying anything that causes suffering. Removing us from the presence of sin and ultimately removing us from physical death and into glory. We still fight battles. We can stand in victory though, because he has removed from us, if we desire, the consequences of sin.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, you will be rescued.

If you haven't done that, after we sing this last song together, the prayer team will be down front, and they would love to meet with you and talk to you about that or pray that with you.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about our condition now and what is to come when we experience that final battle, and we get that final victory. He says, "This perishable body must put on the imperishable. This mortal body must put on immortality. For when the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory."

Jesus has his foot on the chest of the enemy, he has disarmed him of his most powerful weapon of sin and death. And then frankly, in scripture, he talks trash. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings
Oh, praise forever to the King of Kings