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Peace, Sun Prairie
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Advent 1

Psalm 24
Watch for the King!

*Grace and peace to you from him who is,
and who was, and who is to come. Amen.*

Dear friends in Christ,

The day long awaited by millions finally came. Crowds watched with excitement. But there was a warning: those who were not ready, could not safely see it. But for those who were ready and watching, they took in breathtaking sights of the solar eclipse this past August.

On this first Sunday in Advent, we are getting ready for a long-expected, big day, the biggest of them all—the day whose coming will affect every person who has ever lived.

There is also a warning. For those unprepared, it will be a day of woe and everlasting ruin. But for

those who are ready and watching, the long expected arrival will bring breathtaking sights of joy: the glorious coming of the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Let us listen to and believe God's Word that the Holy Spirit would lead us to **Watch for the King** with joy and eagerness.

People could watch for the solar eclipse this past summer, because it was announced ahead of time. It is similar with the glorious coming of Christ our King.

God has not given us the exact day or hour of Jesus' return, yet we know it *will* happen. There can be no doubt that day will come because God has told us many times and in many places in His Word, like in today's Psalm: **Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty-- he is the King of glory.**

Written a thousand years before Jesus' birth, these verses speak of the arrival of the promised

Savior King who is none other than the Lord himself who would come to help His people.

Born of Mary, and yet the eternal Son of God, Jesus is the **LORD Almighty** who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is the one true God who made and owns all things. We know this from the words the angel spoke to the shepherds: **A Savior has been born to you; He is Christ *the Lord*.**

That Jesus is the promised King we know from what the angel said to Mary: **The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David... His kingdom will never end.** Truly Jesus is the **King of Glory**, as John's gospel testifies: **The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only.**

God said the Savior King would come, and so He did, just as God said. In the same way He tells us Christ, **the King of Glory** will come again on the last day, not as a little child, but on the clouds of heaven as King of kings; not to be born, but to raise the dead and judge all people.

Jesus will come again, because God has promised it. Therefore, we need to **Watch for the King!**

To safely see the eclipse this past summer and not be harmed, you needed those special glasses made for viewing the eclipse.

To be safe when Jesus our King comes, we need something. **Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?** Answer: **He who has clean hands and a pure heart.**

To live in joy with the glorious Lord we need **Clean hands.** This of course is not talking about washing up before a meal, but our life needs to be **clean** and free from sin. As in **hands** that never pushed or shoved a brother, sister or classmate, **hands** free of free of gossip by using clicking on or scrolling through hurtful social media. **Hands** that instead have always been ready to help others and share, loving neighbor as self.

Even if our outward actions were all perfect, which of course they're not, but even if they were, this would still condemn us: **Who has... a pure heart.**

To stand in the Lord's true holy place of heaven we need **pure hearts.** **Hearts** that have never given

into the temptation of pornography or any other form of lust for someone who is not your spouse.

Pure hearts that never coveted, never wanting something that belongs to someone else whether money, toys, time, beauty. **Hearts pure** and free from pride and selfishness, instead filled with love and dedication for God, not just for a little while on Sunday mornings, but in everything we think, say and do.

So we have a terrifying problem! We lack such totally **pure hearts** and absolutely **clean** and holy lives!

Won't we have to hide our eyes in shame and terror when Christ comes at the last day, expecting heaven's gates to be shut on us forever? That is what every single sin of **hand** and **heart** deserves after all.

But that is *not* what our Psalm tells God's believing people to expect! Instead we hear this: **Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors.** If even the **gates** are to "lift up their

heads,” how much more so the people to whom the **King** comes?!

So rather than hide our faces when Jesus comes again, we can lift up our heads unafraid, filled with joy and excitement to welcome our **King**!

But how can that be? Because of these wonderful words: **Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.**

We probably often think of a king as a powerful ruler sitting off somewhere on a throne, taking his ease in a luxurious palace. But in the ancient world, one of the chief jobs of the king, was to protect his people and fight their battles. For example, think of how even before he was crowned, King David was in the front lines fighting for his people against Goliath.

It's no different with Jesus, the **King of Glory**. It's the whole reason He came into the world the first time, to fight for his people and rescue them from their enemies.

Jesus came to fight and win, where we had lost. We lacked **pure hearts** and perfectly **clean hands**.

So our Savior King was born in our place with a pure and sinless heart, just as the angel said: **So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.**

And **holy** and pure is how Jesus stayed as he tackled every temptation and came out victorious. His heart was free from evil thoughts, free from jealousy, lust and pride. His holy hands were quick to reach out in love and generosity, to heal the sick and comfort the hurting.

And then in the most amazing display of love, Jesus let his **clean hands** be bound as he was arrested. He held them out to be nailed to a cross, where all the dirt of our sinful thoughts and actions and the punishment they deserved came crushing down on his **pure** and blameless heart. Our King saved us, letting the hell and death we earned strike Him instead of us!

But three days later, Jesus proved there is no one more **mighty in battle** than Christ **the Lord**. He battled death itself and left death defeated as He rose in victory!

And this mighty victorious King Jesus shares his victory over sin and death with you and me, and

with all who have been brought to trust in His saving love for sinners.

With his victorious holy life and innocent death, Jesus cleanses our guilty hearts from every impure heart and washes our dirty and sinful hands from every selfish action. He washes us clean from it all, from everything, just as His Word promises: **the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.**

Remember how our second lesson spoke of how on account of Jesus' saving work, God even washes us clean on the inside where we could never scrub—personally cleansing your heart and conscience through the gospel promise of your baptism: **baptism... now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ...**

We need **clean hands and a pure heart** to live in joy with God forever. In Jesus, we have them! His holiness covers us. His blood makes us pure and holy in God's sight.

This how we **watch for the King.** We **watch** as we look to His Word where He announces His saving

forgiveness to comfort our hearts. We **watch** as we listen to His promise to be with us always to . We **watch** as we cling to Christ alone to save us. And as we **watch**, we will also look to thank and honor him in all we do.

Because God has promised it, we can know we will watch Jesus' coming on the clouds of heaven with uplifted heads and hearts. For that is the day our glorious King will bring us the fullness of the victory He won for us—the end of all pain, sorrow, grief, shame, disappointment; the end of all sickness and death in his endless kingdom of joy and peace. The gates of that perfect life stand opened by Jesus, and with our Savior King we enter in.

Trusting his promises in Word and Sacrament, **Watch for the King**, and with your own eyes you will see the breathtaking sights of His glorious, eternal day. Amen.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Amen.