

3. Somebody to love

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[0 : 0 0] Well friends, turn with me to Psalm 45, on page 471, I believe, if you have a church Bible. Psalm 45.

To the choir master, according to Lilies, a masculine of the sons of Korah, a love song. My heart overflows with a pleasing theme.

I address my verses to the king. My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. You are the most handsome of the sons of men.

Grace is poured upon your lips. Therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty.

In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Let your right hand teach you or display awesome deeds.

[1 : 1 3] Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. Let the people fall under you. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces, stringed instruments make you glad. Daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor.

Here, at your right hand stands the queen in gold of a fear. Hear, O daughter, and consider and incline your ear.

Forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him.

[2 : 2 2] The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people. All glorious is the princess in her chamber, with robes interwoven with gold.

In many colored robes, she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. With joy and gladness, they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

In place of your fathers shall be your sons. You will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations.

Therefore nations will praise you forever and ever. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Well, friends, perhaps you would turn with me back to Psalm 45, page 471 in the Church Bibles.

[3 : 2 8] And before we come to it, we'll have another moment of prayer. Jesus, Master, at your word, we are gathered all to hear you.

And our prayer, Lord, is that by your spirit, we would hear your voice speaking again through this psalm. Turn our eyes now to see our king and listen to him.

And by your spirit, make us worthy of his service. For we ask it in his great namesake. Amen. Somebody.

Somebody. Can anybody find me somebody to love? Not, it has to be said, the words of Shakespeare, not even C.S. Lewis.

In fact, the words of a rather tortured songwriter, not often quoted from this pulpit. And yet, it's one of the most enduring songs of the 1970s.

[4 : 35] Because how many of us, at some point in our lives, have not cried out with a similar question? Can anybody find me somebody to love?

And then, gloriously, up pops an ancient psalmist of Israel to say, Yes, I can.

And let me tell you all about him. Before we open up Psalm 45, let me present you with a little bit of a health warning. It might be that, like me, you're the sort of Christian who prefers to greet your brother with three sharp, rather English slaps on the back, rather than a lingering hug.

And if that's the case, then this psalm is inviting us to step a little out of our emotional comfort zones. Because our writer is aiming for the heart.

You see, Psalm 45 is an invitation to celebrate a royal wedding. And perhaps you aren't the sort of person to put up bunting, or organize a street party.

[5 : 48] Perhaps you found the whole jubilee thing a little crass and sentimental. But this is a wedding worth celebrating. Because the king involved is a king worth loving.

That's why you'll see the title in the Hebrew text ends, A Love Song. However cynical we are, however emotionally squeamish, Psalm 45 has finally found us somebody to love.

Somebody who deserves our unrestrained joy and honor and praise. So perhaps, like me, you're a great pessimist.

But deep down, we all long for somebody worthy of this. For the real thing. So here he is. Now let me lay my cards out on the table right away, By saying that this psalm is written, first of all, To celebrate the wedding of a real, historical king of Israel.

We don't know which one. But we do know that he stood in David's royal line, And physically governed the nation under God, According to God's covenant promise.

[7 : 08] But at the same time, The praise poured out on this anonymous historical ruler, Clearly spills over, Clearly spills over, And finds deeper fulfillment in another king.

Like all Davidic kings, The subject of this psalm is a type, Or a shadow, Of the great king, Whose reign was still to come.

And so the New Testament writers felt free to take Psalm 45, In its very fullest sense, As a love song to the Lord Jesus himself.

So what we learn will apply first, To our ancient king of Israel, With his well-deserved place in the history textbooks. But if that is true, Then how much more, Will it apply to the risen king, Who is reigning over us now, And forever.

Now as we begin, There's one more remarkable fact to bear in mind, As we delve into the love song itself. And that is, Its unlikely author. Again, We don't know precisely who he is, But we do know a fair bit, About where he came from.

[8 : 29] This is the fourth psalm we've looked at recently, Which the title ascribes to the sons of Korah. And perhaps it's time we introduce this group a little more.

My guess is that the name of this little band of musical Levites, May not mean a lot to us. But to somebody familiar with their Old Testaments, The name Korah, Had gone down in infamy.

And it was not a name, To be proud of. Korah was one of the most notorious rebels, Of the wilderness years.

A man who's plotting against Moses, The leader of God's people in his day, Was so serious, That the Lord not only destroyed him, But 250, Of his fellow conspirators.

Numbers chapter 26, Tells us that it was a big, Dramatic, Public warning, About the cost of treason.

[9 : 35] The ground opened up, And they were consumed by fire. 250 men, Gone. All of them, Except for Korah's sons.

Moses adds an odd little comment, Almost as an aside, But the sons of Korah, Did not die. And so here we are, Hundreds of years later, With a love song to the king, Written by the descendants, Of a treasonous rebel.

Men whose very existence, Was owed, To the Lord's extraordinary grace. So notice how, The song begins. This isn't flattery, Or propaganda, Or the sort of, Overblown sentimentality, We see at royal weddings today.

No, It's the praise of a heart, Overflowing with love, For God's gracious king. My heart, Overflows with a pleasing theme, I address my verses to the king, My tongue is like the pen, Of a ready scribe, And so his song, Falls into three parts, Marked out by who the psalmist, Is addressing, Who he's singing to.

He begins as he promises, By singing to the king himself. So firstly, In verses one to nine, The praiseworthy king, The praiseworthy king, You are the most handsome, Of the sons of men, Grace is poured upon your lips, Therefore God has blessed you forever.

[11 : 13] Now I suppose the question, That worries us here, Is whether our poet, Is getting a little carried away, By the occasion. Is he laying on the poetic license, A little bit thick.

Perhaps you remember, The poor men whose job it was, To paint a flattering portrait, Of fat old King Henry VIII, Of fat old King Henry VIII, We're terribly suspicious, Of spin, And flattery, And yet the next few verses, Show us, That there is clearly more, To this king, Than a bit of spin doctoring, So what is it then, That makes this king, So worthy, Of our love, Well the psalmist praises him, First for the glory, Of his personal character, And then from verse six, For the immense glory, And dignity, Of his office, As God's anointed king, Why does he deserve our love, Well firstly his personal character, His grace, And his justice, And his meek might, Demand it of us, Just look at why the psalmist, Is so convinced,

That this king, Is the real thing, Firstly his speech, Is uniquely gracious, Your lips have been anointed with grace, Is how the NIV has it, Every utterance, Every judgment he makes, Is tinged, With that gracious, Characteristic attribute, Of God's own heart, Remember the words, Of the temple guards, When they were floored, By the devastatingly, Authoritative words, Of the Lord Jesus, No one ever spoke, Like this man, Grace is poured upon his lips, And God's blessing, Is eternally poured upon him, But he is no, Precious prince, This is a king, Who rides out in majesty, To fight for his kingdom, The Davidic king,

Is a warrior king, Yes verse four, He is meek, But his meekness, His humility, Is exercised, In the cause of truth, And righteousness, He comes verse three, Not to bring peace, But girded with a sword, He is intent on justice, By the end of verse four, The sword is in his right hand, By verse five, His hand has taken out the bow, Plunging sharp arrows, Into the heart of the enemy, Into the heart of the enemy, Let your right hand display, Awesome deeds, Deeds which make him, Somebody to love, If you're his friend, But someone to fear, If you're on the wrong side, Of his justice, So if the talk of royal weddings, Has conjured up a picture, Of someone, A little bit like, Prince Charles, Then it's time to think again, Here is a king,

Who can truly be called, Both gracious, And righteous, Meek, And all conquering, The scepter of your kingdom, Is a scepter of uprightness, For you have loved, Righteousness, And hated wickedness, Therefore God, Your God, Has anointed you, Beyond your companions, Do you see how this, Ancient king, Embodies all the things, A king should be, And his noble character, Makes him so easy, To admire, Think for a moment, About what made the diamond jubilee, So special, Surely it was the genuine love, And respect, Which we feel as a nation, For the character, Of our sovereign, Our godly queen, Well just imagine, A king like this, And so it's no surprise,

[15 : 33] Is it, That these are just the things, God's true, Eternal king, Would be known for, This is what, A true king should be, Gracious and righteous, Meek, And all conquering, And the one, Who would perfectly embody, All those things, Is the one, On whose throne, This king, Is sitting, Temporarily, A throne, Worthy of, Enormous respect, And so from verse six, The poetry turns, From the glory, Of his character, To the immense, Glory and splendor, Due to him, Because of, His kingly office, Think perhaps, Of the huge respect, With which, The people of the United States, Treat their president, Simply because, Of the dignity, Of the office he holds, There's a similar idea here, Not only does his personal glory, Demand our love,

But his role, As God's anointed king, Is worthy of the greatest, Majesty and respect, So great in fact, That verse six, Begins, By giving him, The most breathtaking title, Ever bestowed, On a mortal man, Your throne, Oh God, Is forever and ever, It seems shocking, I agree, But the Hebrew, Will not let us smooth it away, He is still talking, To the king, In verse six, In fact the next verse, Makes that even more plain, Where he quite clearly, Makes a distinction, Between the king, And God himself, Therefore God, Your God, Has anointed you, And what's more, We have to remember, That at its most basic level, The psalmist is still addressing, His historical king, This real, Human king of Israel, Stood in God's place,

Governing the kingdom, On God's behalf, So staggering though it is, It wasn't inappropriate, To address him, As God, He stood under the covenant, God made with David, Which promised, The eternal continuation, Of his throne, And God had promised, That if he loved righteousness, And hated wickedness, In other words, If he loved, The things God loved, And governed justly, Then he would receive, God's eternal blessing, And so look, How lavish it is, Over the next few verses, All the anointing oil, The rich, Fragranced robes, The ivory palaces, The beautiful queen, They're all a sign, Of the enormous dignity, In which the Davidic king, Stood, Dignity worthy, Of a son, Whom God loved, And yet, The poetry,

Does seem to spill over here, Doesn't it, Into more glory, Than any one, Historical king of Israel, Could hold, One writer says, It's as if, The Old Testament language, Is bursting its banks, At this point, Just as only one king, Can truly be described like this, Without any flattery, So only one king, Could truly, Deserve that title, One true, Human king, Who is also, Truly God, And so the writer, To the Hebrews, Has no qualms, In taking Psalm 45, In just that way, To what angel, Did God ever speak like this, But of the son, He says, Your throne, O God, Is forever, And ever, The scepter of uprightness, Is the scepter of your kingdom, So there is our praiseworthy king,

Not only does his grace, And his justice, And his meek might, Demand our love, But his righteous rule, Deserves the father's, Everlasting exaltation, And our greatest respect, Well before we turn our attention, To his queen, Let me ask you, Whether you could join, In singing this psalm so far, There's no need to be, Like the embarrassed footballer, Mumbling the words, To the national anthem, Surely we can all, Sing these words, With joy, And pride, Here is a king, You can love, And praise, Without restraint, In fact, Here is a king, You must, But let me also ask you, What it is, You love to praise, The Lord Jesus for, Why do you love this king?

[20 : 42] Is it for who he is, And what he loves, For his grace, And justice, His humility, Or is it really, For what he can do for you?

It's terribly easy, To pretend, To sing, A love song, To the Lord Jesus, When in fact, We're singing it to ourselves, The truth is that often, We don't really love, These qualities, Do we?

That's why so often, These aren't the things, We look for, In our own leaders, And yet, These are the reasons, The father has set his son, Upon the throne, And our psalmist, Thinks that they are, The most lovable things, In the world, Grace, And justice, And truth, Well with the thoughts, Of the royal ladies of honor, And the beautiful queen, The psalmist, Turns briefly, To address the bride herself, There she is, At the end of verse 9, At the king's right hand, And so secondly, In verses 10 to 15, All eyes are on her, The people's princess, Hero daughter, And consider, And incline your ear, Well what advice, Would you give, To a young woman, About to marry, A king like this, Perhaps you can picture her, She's got the dress, Picked out, We won't see it, Until verse 13,

But it won't disappoint, And yet anyone, Who's married, Will tell you, That these last days, Are an anxious time, Especially I'd imagine, If you're moving, Into the royal family, She's got a new beginning, Ahead of her, Hasn't she?

But there's also, An old life, Coming to an end, She has to leave, Her old loyalties behind, And cleave, To a new love, So she needs to know, Doesn't she?

[22 : 41] That what she has to gain, Will be far more, Than she loses, And so that is just how, The psalmist encourages her, Hero daughter, And consider, And incline your ear, Take my advice, Forget your people, And your father's house, And the king, Will desire your beauty, That's an echo, Not just of the very, First marriage, In Genesis 2, But of the command, Given to every believer, Down the age, Who's found themselves, Under the new love, Of God's king, Think perhaps, Of the command, To Abraham, The first, Great hero of the faith, Leave, Leave your country, And your kindred, And your father's house, And go to the land, That I will show you, Or think of the warning, The Lord gives, His new testament bride,

His church, Belonging to me, Brings division, Father against son, Mother against daughter, A new love, Brings new loyalties, To marry means, To leave and cleave, And also to love, Honor, And obey, Our new king, Since he is your lord, Verse 11, Bow to him, But if that is the cost, To her, Just look, At what's to gain, Verse 11 again, The king will desire, Your beauty, Literally, This king will be, Enthralled by you, And look at the dignity, And the status, Which comes with, Belonging to this king, In verse 12, She's brought wedding gifts, From far and wide, Gifts from the rich, And powerful people of Tyre, So submitting to him, Means a new name,

And a new identity, And a new worth, And reputation, That this queen, Never possessed before, And the affairs, Of her new family, Matter not just, To the nation of Israel, But to all the peoples, Of the world, Far and wide, Bowing, To God's king, Is the most, Wonderful thing, In the world, And so at last, Comes the wedding itself, In verses 13 to 15, The people's princess, Transformed, Into a glorious queen, Robed in gold, And leading her virgin bridesmaids, In a long, Wedding procession, Do you see how the excitement, Mounts in verse 14, As she is led to the king, Perhaps you can imagine, The drama, The music, And the choirs, And the craning necks, As she walks down the aisle, And what's the climax, The greatest reward,

Of turning her back, On the old life, Well verse 15, It's the joy, And gladness, Of finally being united, With her king, And there is the difference, Between, Psalm 45, And the fairy tale, You see, We usually watch, A royal wedding, Safe in the knowledge, That it will never, Be me, That's what makes it, A fairy tale, But we don't read this psalm, In quite the same way, Of course none of us, Will marry an Israelite king, It's been a while, Since I've seen, A multicolored, Golden threaded wedding dress, In the tron, Although there's a few, Weddings this summer, Maybe I'll be, Pleasantly surprised, Who knows, We don't marry, An Israelite king, Like this, And yet in one sense, This bride, Truly is, The people's princess, In one very important sense,

She is just like, You and me, Because like this bride, Like Abraham, Like every believer,
Down the age, You and I, Are called to leave, Our old loyalties behind, And be united, And
be united, To Christ, And share, In the wonderful glory, That belongs to him alone, Just
like her, The message to us, Is don't look back, Bowing the knee, To the new love of king
Jesus, Means leaving the old behind, But gaining far, Far more, Now I don't know what,
Old loyalties prevent you, From bowing the knee, From fully submitting, To the Lord
Jesus, My guess is, That they aren't anything, Particularly unusual, Probably nothing,
Very different to mine, But the point, I'm sure you'll agree,

[27 : 48] Is that, A husband like this, Deserves, The undivided hearts, Of his people, He deserves,
Our full, Loving loyalty, And verse 11, Is stronger than that, Isn't it?

The challenge, To this bride, Is to honor him, As, Her lord, Not simply as a husband, But
as her sovereign king, That means he deserves, Not just our hearts, But our lives, And
obedience, And if we see that, As a chore, Then bowing the knee, Will not come easily,
But if like the psalmist, Our heart is overflowing, With the pleasing theme, Of his gracious
love, Then living under the rule, Of this king, Should be something, We celebrate, With
joy, And gladness, They are led along, As they enter, The palace of the king, Well finally,
Like any good royalist, The poet, Turns his attention, From the wedding, To the marriage
bed, And children, And so as he draws to a close,

The psalmist moves back, To address the king, And lastly, In the final two verses, He
sings a song, Of God's perpetual promise, God's perpetual promise, You see, Like it or
not, This was always going to be, A very public marriage, Because the Davidic sex life,
The marriage bed, Of Israel's king, Mattered, To everybody, Today, Perhaps, The Daily
Mail, Might speculate endlessly, About when, Will and Kate, Will have children, And really,
It's just another excuse, For gossip, But for this couple, There was far, Far more at stake,
The future, Not just of Israel, But of the whole, Kingdom of God, Was bound up, In this,
King's, Heirs, If you think, Will and Kate, Feel the pressure, Then just imagine this, Think
of the lengths, Kings have gone to,

Down the ages, To protect their line, Six, Miserable marriages, For Henry VIII, And still it
didn't work, But not this couple, For the third time, In the psalm, We're reassured, That the
reign of this king, Will last forever, And ever, Its future, The future, Of Christ's kingdom, Is
safe, In God's hands, In place of your fathers, Shall be your sons, You will make them
princes, In all the earth, I will cause your name, To be remembered, For all generations,
Therefore nations, Will praise you, Forever and ever, Well what do you make, Of this
king?

It's an important question, You see, Because, If there was any doubt left, That perpetual
promise, Makes him, Very relevant, Indeed, If this was simply, A love song, To a long
dead, Historical figure, Then we could admire it, Politely, In the way that a scholar,
Admires a precious, Old manuscript, Gently turning the pages, With cotton gloves, But the
last two verses, Will not let us do that, They tell us, That this king, Isn't a king, We can
hide from, Or admire safely, From a distance, Because at this very moment, He is sitting
on the throne, A prince, Over all the earth, Not a precious prince, But a king, Whose
arrows, Are sharp, In the hearts,

[31 : 55] Of his enemy, One who rides out, Victoriously, For truth, And meekness, And
righteousness, And one, Who someday soon, Will subdue, All opposition, Now for some
of us, That might still be, A day to dread, And yet for these, Sons of Korah, Sons of a
treasonous rebel, It was a day, To sing about, With great joy, A day when all, Former
rebels, And enemies, Who have looked on, This king, In love, Will be robed, In splendor,
And led to him, As we close, Let me ask you, Whether you've considered, Before what we
mean, When we talk about, Jesus as our king, We often sing hymns, Don't we, About
great David's, Greater son, Or the king of kings, But how often, Do we stop,

And ask, Just what that means, It's easy to leave it, As a nice bit of poetry, But every time we pray, Thy kingdom come, We're praying for the day, When this, Praise worthy king, Subdues, And conquers our world, The day when, As in verse 17, Every nation, Will praise his name, Forevermore, When we, Will bow the knee, To a real, Human king, Who is genuinely worthy, Of our love, And praise, And a king, Who is truly, God himself, That is what we have, To look forward to, As Christians, The rule of a king, Worthy of our love, What if we found, A king like this, And as Christians, We believe we have, Then what should his rule,

Over our lives, Look like now, If you have truly, Fallen in love, With this king, Then what should people, See in you, Let's remember, How love worked, On this rebel son, On our psalmist, I think if we listen, To his song, You can see love working, On his heart, And his mind, And his will, His heart, Was bursting over, With praise, To his king, To serve, A king like this, Is a joyful duty, Not a chore, Christ the king, Is one we can serve, Wholeheartedly, With valour, And honour, And pride, But the psalmist's mind, Too, Was learning, To love, The things he loves, Grace, And justice, And truth, And his will, Had been moved, Like the princess,

To bow, To his new lord, To leave behind, Old loyalties, For the surpassing worth, Of this king's delight, And so listen, To his song, To the psalmist's plea to us, Behold, Your king, Bow to him, Let's pray, Lord Jesus, We thank you that, You are our king, And we are your people, Thank you, Lord, That in your humility, You, The king of heaven, Were glorified on a cross, Instead of a throne, And crowned with thorns, Instead of honour, Thank you, Lord, That you arose victorious, And will come again, Not in weakness, But in power,

And majesty, And splendour, And that every knee, Will bow before you, Thank you, Lord, That we whom you have redeemed, Can look forward to that day, With great joy, And by your grace, Can serve you now gladly, Help us, Lord, To be good, And faithful subjects, To the glory of your name, Amen.

[36 : 27] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.