

## The First Advent Prophecy Triumphal Arches Of The King.

Text: Psalm 24

Suggested Hymns:

2, 1, 603, 18, 609

1) The Triumphal Arch Of The World

2) The Triumphal Arch Of The Church

3) The Triumphal Arch Of Each Welcoming Heart

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 24, *A Psalm of David.* <sup>1</sup> *The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.* <sup>2</sup> *For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.* <sup>3</sup> *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?*

<sup>4</sup> *He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.* <sup>5</sup> *He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.* <sup>6</sup> *This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.*

<sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* <sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.*

<sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* <sup>10</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We have concluded another twelve months with thanksgiving, and it is fitting that we should begin the new church-year with confidence and praise. We read in Zechariah 9:9, <sup>9</sup> *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.* The people rejoiced at Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

*The King of Glory and His Kingdom* is described in Psalm 24.

There were triumphal arches in ancient times. They were ornamental with statues and figures of bronze, and spanned important roadways, or lent charm to forbidding city gates. Many still remain in North Africa, Italy, Syria, France, and Spain. They are silent reminders of the glory, and power of a past age.

When a victorious general returned to Rome, the people went out to meet him. Through the triumphal arch passed the civil magistrates, the Senate, trumpeters, carriages laden with spoils, flute-players, sacrificial animals, priests, captives in chains, the attendants of the emperor, and the conqueror himself in flowing robes, crowned with laurel and riding in a chariot, followed by his family, intimate friends, horsemen, and soldiers.

On the Sacred Way, facing the Forum, stands the Arch of Titus, built of Pentelic marble, imported from Greece, commemorating the triumph of Titus, who-conquered rebellious Jerusalem forty years after the crucifixion of Christ.

The relief work shows among other things the spoils of the Temple, the seven-armed candlestick and the table with show-bread. The psalm before us is a triumphal arch to a far greater King, which shall remain long after the arch of Titus has crumbled away. Let us consider the First Advent prophecy, the *Triumphal Arches of the King*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Triumphal Arch Of The World.**

All Creation Proclaims the Glory of God. These are majestic words: <sup>1</sup> *The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.* <sup>2</sup> *For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.*

No inscription on any arch of antiquity ever equalled these words. No monument erected by the hands of men can even faintly approach the handiwork of God. The Great Pyramid of Ghizeh is but a dot on the desert. The mightiest ships are but nutshells on the heaving bosom of the sea.

The Empire Building in New York is but a toy beside the cathedral spires of Zion National Park. The Panama Canal is but a scratch on the surface compared with the Grand Canyon.

No artist's brush can reproduce the silvery halo of circling mists that sometimes crown the head of Mount Whitney in the morning light or catch the sunset glow that lingers in the tips of the giant evergreen trees.

The mysteries of the mineral kingdom, the wonders of plant and animal life, and the world that they dwell in, all proclaim the glory of God. Listen to Psalm 139:14, *<sup>14</sup> I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*

And when we lift up our eyes to the heavens, and see the wide expanse of blue vaulted over us, twinkling with numerous jewels of gold, we are reminded of Psalm 8:3–4, *<sup>3</sup> When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, <sup>4</sup> What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?*

When we read in Psalm 19:1, *<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork,* we must agree that the entire created universe is one great triumphal arch of God.

We certainly agree with Revelation 4:11, *<sup>11</sup> "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."*

Christ Is the King of Creation. The 24th Psalm is easily recognised as a Messianic psalm, as a hymn of the Messiah and His kingdom. It prepared the believers of the Old Testament for His coming and still inspires us with the proper regard for our King.

When David says, "*The earth is the LORD's,*" he is proclaiming the glory not only of the Father, but of the Son as well. He is equal to God.<sup>2</sup> He is one with the Father.<sup>3</sup> He has all power.<sup>4</sup> He knows all things.<sup>5</sup> He upholds all things.<sup>6</sup>

All the miracles of Jesus therefore are but inscriptions on the triumphal arch of a far greater achievement, the creation and preservation of the universe. We may buy a parcel of land and build a fence around it, we may till the soil and harvest its produce and develop its natural resources, yet the real title remains vested in Another, *The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.*

The mountains and rivers, forests and mines, seasons and years, yes, our own bodies and souls, belong to Him, to our Lord Jesus Christ; for by Him and for Him all things were created.<sup>7</sup>

Let us remember this when we approach the manger cradle to see the newborn King. It was Jesus who called light out of darkness and commanded order to come out of an earth without form, just as He later opened the eyes of the blind and told the raging storm to be still.

See the great triumphal arch of the universe bending over that lowly stable, with the overpowering inscription: *“King of kings and Lord of lords,”*<sup>8</sup> *“God manifested in the flesh.”*<sup>9</sup>

## 2. The Triumphal Arch Of The Church.

The Church Proclaims the Glory of God. Our text says, <sup>3</sup> *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?*

The hill of the Lord is Mount Zion, and His holy place is the Temple. Both are synonyms of the Church of God. The Church, the congregation of all believers, is the creation of God, and in particular of the Holy Spirit, as described in the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.

This is described for us in Ephesians 2:21–22, <sup>21</sup> *in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,* <sup>22</sup> *in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

There was a time when the place where the Temple was to stand was a threshing-floor, and since the days of Titus the last visible Temple has been destroyed; but God has maintained His spiritual Zion in the Church of the “New Testament.”

This is described in our text, <sup>4</sup> *He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.* <sup>5</sup> *He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.* <sup>6</sup> *This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.*

Clean hands, a pure heart, blessing from the Lord, righteousness, salvation,<sup>10</sup> a generation that seeks God, and gives God the glory.<sup>11</sup> It is often

scattered, but gathered again. The Lord knows them.<sup>12</sup> No man shall pluck them out of His hand.<sup>13</sup> He has caused the tiny mustard-seed to grow.<sup>14</sup>

With infinite patience and care God has preserved and expanded His spiritual temple from nation to nation and people to people, until the great triumphal arch of the Christian Church has proclaimed the love and the mercy and the truth of God to the ends of the earth.

Christ Is the Head of the Church. The glory in the Church belongs to the Son in like measure with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Christ built the Church.<sup>15</sup> He is its Foundation,<sup>16</sup> and its chief Corner-stone.<sup>17</sup>

He loved the Church, gave Himself for it, cleansed it, and presented it to Himself a glorious Church.<sup>18</sup> He is the Head of the Church.<sup>19</sup> It is by virtue of His sacrifice alone that any sinner can enter, or remain in, the Church.

Our text says, “*Who may stand in His holy place?*” We know that by nature not one of us has “clean hands,” much less a “pure heart.” Not one of us could stand on his own goodness in the Church, much less before the judgement-seat of God. But where there is repentance, there is hope; and where there is faith, there is plenteous forgiveness.

Christ has freely brought us righteousness from the God of our salvation. He fulfilled the Law, bore our guilt, atoned for our transgressions. Across the great triumphal arch of the Church is written the message of redeeming love as written in 1 John 1:7, *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*<sup>20</sup>

As long as men and women and children believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Head and Protector of the Church, His Kingdom of Grace will continue, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The beauty of its marble shall not be defaced, and the strength of its bronze shall not pass away.

### **3. The Triumphal Arch Of Each Welcoming Heart.**

Each Believing Heart Proclaims the Glory of God. Our text says, <sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* <sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle.*

*<sup>9</sup> Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.*

The final triumph of God in the lives of people will depend on the conversion of the individual heart. Individual believers make up the Church. If the King of Glory is to be properly welcomed by the Church, He must find that welcome in each believing grateful heart. That is the appeal of our text, “*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.*”

God has prepared salvation for all. He loves the world, cares for each immortal soul, values each one of us, small and great, more highly than the created universe, the earth and the fullness thereof.<sup>21</sup>

Before Him there is no difference in men, so He justifies us all freely by grace.<sup>22</sup> While sinners have the power to deny and reject His goodness, we read in 2 Peter 3:9 that *<sup>9</sup> The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* And when one sinner repents and seeks His face in spirit and in truth, as did Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the penitent thief, the greatest, most beautiful triumphal arch of God stands erected in that conquered heart.

Christ Is the Lord of the Heart. The immediate occasion for the 24th Psalm perhaps was the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the Holy City after an absence of twenty years.

This was a happy occasion, almost as happy as the one pictured in the Gospel lesson for today.<sup>23</sup> But the deeper meaning of the psalm becomes apparent when we remember that it is one of the many prophecies by which the Holy Spirit taught the people of the Old Covenant to look forward to the coming of the King, the Messiah, the Victor in the battle with sin and death, the Saviour of those who believe.

Our text says, *<sup>8</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.*

A thousand years later on Palm Sunday the Son of God and of Man entered Jerusalem in triumph, and His disciples sang with exuberant joy: “*Hosanna to*

***the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’  
Hosanna in the highest!’<sup>24</sup>***

And today, the first Sunday in Advent, the first Sunday of devout preparation for the holy joys of Christmas-time, Christ Jesus, the King of Creation, the Head of the Church, the Lord of your heart,<sup>25</sup> is coming to you again.

Will you welcome Him?<sup>26</sup> Will you let Him in?<sup>27</sup> Will you share His love and victory?<sup>28</sup> If so, give Him your heart that it may be a sanctified, glorious, triumphal arch of your God and King.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>29</sup>

Fling wide the portals of your heart;  
Make it a temple set apart  
From earthly use for heaven’s employ,  
Adorned with prayer and love and joy. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 21

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:6

<sup>3</sup> John 10:30

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 28:18

<sup>5</sup> John 21:17

<sup>6</sup> Heb. 1:3

<sup>7</sup> Col. 1:16; John 1:3

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. 6:15

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. 3:16

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 6:11

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 14:7; 1 Pet. 2: 9

<sup>12</sup> 2 Tim. 2:19

<sup>13</sup> John 10:28

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 13:32

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 16:18

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. 3:11

<sup>17</sup> Eph. 2:20

<sup>18</sup> Eph. 5:25—27

<sup>19</sup> Eph. 1:22; 5:23

<sup>20</sup> 1 John 2:1-2; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 5:9

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 16:26

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 3:22—24

<sup>23</sup> Matt 21:1-9

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 21:9

<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor. 5:15

<sup>26</sup> Hymn 18

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<sup>27</sup> Revelation 3:20

<sup>28</sup> Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:11-12

<sup>29</sup> Hymn 18 v 4