

Exposition on Psalm 47

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worshiping God and recognizing His glory and power, as demonstrated through the Cross of Christ and the ascension of Christ.

Scripture: 2 Kings 2:23, Psalm 46:1, Matthew 18:2, Matthew 27:33, Luke 23:21, Romans 11:25, 1 Corinthians 14:20

Topics: "Psalm Interpretation", "Christian Humility"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the Psalms of David, focusing on the significance of the sons of Korah in the titles, symbolizing a great Sacrament and urging listeners to understand themselves in the Scriptures. He draws parallels between the crucifixion of Christ at Calvary and the mocking of children towards Elisha, emphasizing the importance of not mocking the Cross of Christ. Augustine highlights the humility and wisdom found in childhood, urging believers to imitate humility and avoid foolishness. He encourages Christians to see themselves as sons of the Bridegroom, destined for crowns by Angels, and to embrace the humility of the Lord without shame.

Transcript

1. The title of the Psalm goes thus. To the end: for the sons of Korah: a Psalm of David himself. These sons of Korah have the title also of some other Psalms, and indicate a sweet mystery, insinuate a great Sacrament: wherein let us willingly understand ourselves, and let us acknowledge in the title us who hear, and read, and as in a glass set before us behold who we are. The sons of Korah, who are they? ..Haply the sons of the Bridegroom. For the Bridegroom was crucified in the place of Calvary. Recollect the Gospel, Matthew 27:33 where they crucified the Lord, and you will find Him crucified in the place of Calvary. Furthermore, they who deride His Cross, by devils, as by beasts, are devoured. For this also a certain Scripture signified. When God's Prophet Elisha was going up, children called after him mocking, Go up thou bald head, Go up thou bald head: but he, not so much in cruelty as in mystery, made those children to be devoured by bears out of the wood. 2 Kings 2:23-24 If those children had not been devoured, would they have lived even till now? Or could they not, being born mortal, have been taken off by a fever? But so in them had no mystery been shown, whereby posterity might be put in fear. Let none then mock the Cross of Christ. The Jews were possessed by devils, and devoured; for in the place of Calvary, crucifying Christ, and lifting on the Cross, they said as it were with childish sense, not understanding what they said, Go up, thou bald head. For what is, Go up? Crucify Him, Crucify Him. Luke 23:21 For childhood is set before us to imitate humility, and childhood is set before us to beware of foolishness. To imitate humility, childhood was set before us by the Lord, when He called children to Him,

Matthew 18:2 and because they were kept from Him, He said, Suffer them to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 19:14 The example of childhood is set before us to beware of foolishness by the Apostle, Brethren, be not children in understanding: and again he proposes it to imitate, Howbeit in malice be ye children, that in understanding ye may be men. 1 Corinthians 14:20 For the sons of Korah the Psalm is sung; for Christians then is it sung. Let us hear it as sons of the Bridegroom, whom senseless children crucified in the place of Calvary. For they earned to be devoured by beasts; we to be crowned by Angels. For we acknowledge the humility of our Lord, and of it are not ashamed. We are not ashamed of Him called in mystery the bald (Calvus), from the place of Calvary. For on the very Cross whereon He was insulted, He permitted not our forehead to be bald; for with His own Cross He marked it. Finally, that you may know that these things are said to us, see what is said.

2. O clap your hands, all you nations Psalm 46:1. Were the people of the Jews all the nations? No, but blindness in part is happened to Israel, that senseless children might cry, Calve, Calve; and so the Lord might be crucified in the place of Calvary, that by His Blood shed He might redeem the Gentiles, and that might be fulfilled which says the Apostle, Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. Romans 11:25 Let them insult, then, the vain, and foolish, and senseless, and say, Calve, Calve; but you redeemed by His Blood which was shed in the place of Calvary, say, O clap your hands, all you nations; because to you has come down the Grace of God. O clap your hands. What is O clap? Rejoice. But wherefore with the hands? Because with good works. Do not rejoice with the mouth while idle with the hands. If you rejoice, clap your hands. The hands of the nations let Him see, who joys has deigned to give them. What is, the hands of the nations? The acts of them doing good works. O clap your hands, all you nations: shout unto God with the voice of triumph. Both with voice and with hands. If with the voice only it is not well, because the hands are slow; if only with the hands it is not well, because the tongue is mute. Agree together must the hands and tongue. Let this confess, these work. Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

3. For the Lord Most High is terrible Psalm 46:2. The Most High in descending made like one ludicrous, by ascending into Heaven is made terrible. A great King over all the earth. Not only over the Jews; for over them also He is King. For of them also the Apostles believed and of them many thousands of men sold their goods, and laid the price at the Apostles' feet, Acts 4:34 and in them was fulfilled what in the title of the Cross was written, The King of the Jews. Matthew 27:37 For He is King also of the Jews. But of the Jews is little. O clap your hands, all you nations: for God is the King of all the earth. For it suffices not Him to have under Him one nation: therefore such great price gave He out of His side, as to buy the whole world.

4. He has subdued the people under us, and the nations under our feet Psalm 46:3. Which subdued, and to whom? Who are they that speak? Haply Jews? Surely, if Apostles; surely, if Saints. For under these God has subdued the people and the nations, that today are they honoured among the nations, who by their own citizens earned to be slain: as their Lord was slain by His citizens, and is honoured among the nations; was crucified by His own, is adored by aliens, but those by a price made His own. For therefore bought He us, that aliens from Him we might not be. Do you think then these are the words of Apostles, He has subdued the people under us, and the nations under our feet? I know not. Strange that Apostles should speak so proudly, as to rejoice that the nations were put under their feet, that is, Christians under the feet of Apostles. For they rejoice that we are with them under the feet of Him who died for us. For under Paul's feet ran they, who would be of Paul, to whom He said, Was Paul crucified for you? 1 Corinthians 1:13 What then here, what are we to understand? He has subdued the people under us, and

the nations under our feet. All pertaining to Christ's inheritance are among all the nations, and all not pertaining to Christ's inheritance are among all the nations: and you see so exalted in Christ's Name is Christ's Church, that all not yet believing in Christ lie under the feet of Christians. For what numbers now run to the Church; not yet being Christians, they ask aid of the Church; to be succoured by us temporally they are willing, though eternally to reign with us as yet they are unwilling. When all seek aid of the Church, even they who are not yet in the Church, has He not subdued the people under us, and the nations under our feet?

5. He has chosen an inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom He loved Psalm 46:4. A certain beauty of Jacob He has chosen for our inheritance. Esau and Jacob were two brothers; in their mother's womb both struggled, and by this struggle their mother's bowels were shaken; and while they two were yet therein, the younger was elected and preferred to the elder, and it was said, Two peoples are in your womb, and the elder shall serve the younger. Genesis 25:23 Among all nations is the elder, among all nations the younger; but the younger is in good Christians, elect, godly, faithful; the elder in the proud, unworthy, sinful, stubborn, defending rather than confessing their sins: as was also the very people of the Jews, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness. Romans 10:3 But for that it is said, The elder shall serve the younger; it is manifest that under the godly are subdued the ungodly, under the humble are subdued the proud. Esau was born first, and Jacob was born last; but he who was last born, was preferred to the first-born, who through gluttony lost his birthright. So you have it written, Genesis 25:30-34 He longed for the pottage, and his brother said to him, If you will that I give it you, give me your birthright. He loved more that which carnally he desired, than that which spiritually by being born first he had earned: and he laid aside his birthright, that he might eat lentils. But lentils we find to be the food of the Egyptians, for there it abounds in Egypt. Whence is so magnified the lentil of Alexandria, that it comes even to our country, as if here grew no lentil. Therefore by desiring Egyptian food he lost his birthright. So also the people of the Jews, of whom it is said, in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt. Acts 7:39 They desired in a manner the lentil, and lost their birthright.

6. God is gone up with jubilation Psalm 46:5. Even He our God, the Lord Christ, is gone up with jubilation; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Is gone up: whither, save where we know? Whither the Jews followed Him not, even with their eyes. For exalted on the Cross they mocked Him, ascending into Heaven they did not see Him. God has gone up with jubilation. What is jubilation, but admiration of joy which cannot be expressed in words? As the disciples in joy admired, seeing Him go into Heaven, whom they had mourned dead; truly for the joy, words sufficed not: remained to jubilate what none could express. There was also the voice of the trumpet, the voice of Angels. For it is said, Lift up your voice like a trumpet. Angels preached the ascension of the Lord: they saw the Disciples, their Lord ascending, tarrying, admiring, confounded, nothing speaking, but in heart jubilant: and now was the sound of the trumpet in the clear voice of the Angels, You men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This is Jesus. Acts 1:11 As if they knew not that it was the same Jesus. Had they not just before seen Him before them? Had they not heard Him speaking with them? Nay, they not only saw the figure of Him present, but handled also His limbs. Of themselves then knew they not, that it was the same Jesus? But they being by very admiration, from joy of jubilation, as it were transported in mind, the Angels said, that same is Jesus. As though they said, If you believe Him, this is that same Jesus, whom crucified, your feet stumbled, whom dead and buried, you thought your hope lost. Lo, this is the same Jesus. He has gone up before you, He shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven. His Body is removed indeed from your eyes, but God is not separated from your hearts: see Him going up, believe in Him absent, hope for Him coming; but yet through His secret Mercy, feel Him present. For He who ascended into Heaven that

He might be removed from your eyes, promised unto you, saying, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:20 Justly then the Apostle so addressed us, The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing. Philippians 4:5-6 Christ sits above the Heavens; the Heavens are far off, He who there sits is near....

7. Sing praises to our God, sing praises Psalm 46:6. Whom as Man mocked they, who from God were alienated. Sing praises to our God. For He is not Man only, but God. Man of the seed of David, Romans 1:3 God the Lord of David, of the Jews having flesh. Whose (says the Apostle) are the fathers, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came. Romans 9:5 Of the Jews then is Christ, but according to the flesh. But who is this Christ who is of the Jews according to the flesh? Who is over all, God blessed for ever. God before the flesh, God in the flesh, God with the flesh. Nor only God before the flesh, but God before the earth whence flesh was made; nor only God before the earth whereof flesh was made, but even God before the Heaven which was first made; God before the day which was first made; God before Angels; the same Christ is God: for In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

8. For God is the King of all the earth Psalm 46:7. What? And before was He not God of all the earth? Is He not God of both heaven and earth, since by Him surely were all things made? Who can say that He is not his God? But not all men acknowledged Him their God; and where He was acknowledged, there only, so to say, He was God. In Judah is God known. Not yet was it said to the sons of Korah, O clap your hands, all you nations. For that God known in Judah, is King of all the earth: now by all He is acknowledged, for that is fulfilled which Isaiah says, He is your God who has delivered you, the God of the whole earth shall He be called. Isaiah 54:5 Sing ye praises with understanding. He teaches us and warns us to sing praises with understanding, not to seek the sound of the ear, but the light of the heart. The Gentiles, whence you were called that you might be Christians, adored gods made with hands, and sang praises to them, but not with understanding. If they had sung with understanding, they had not adored stones. When a man sensible sang to a stone insensible, did he sing with understanding? But now, brethren, we see not with our eyes Whom we adore, and yet correctly we adore. Much more is God commended to us, that with our eyes we see Him not. If with our eyes we saw Him, haply we might despise. For even Christ seen, the Jews despised; unseen, the Gentiles adored.

9. God shall reign over all nations Psalm 46:8. Who reigned over one nation, shall reign (says He) over all nations. When this was said, God reigned over one nation. It was a prophecy, the thing was not yet shown. Thanks be to God, we now see fulfilled what before was prophesied. A written promise God sent unto us before the time, the time fulfilled He has repaid us. God shall reign over all nations, is a promise. God sits upon His Holy Seat. What then was promised to come, now being fulfilled, is acknowledged and held. God sits upon His Holy Seat. What is His Holy Seat? Haply says one, The Heavens, and he understands well. For Christ has gone up, Acts 1:2 as we know, with the Body, wherein He was crucified, and sits at the right hand of the Father; thence we expect Him to come to judge the quick and the dead. 2 Timothy 4:1 God sits upon His Holy Seat. The Heavens are His Holy Seat. Will you also be His Seat? Think not that you can not be; prepare for Him a place in your heart. He comes, and willingly sits. The same Christ is surely the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God: 1 Corinthians 1:24 and what says the Scripture of Wisdom Herself? The soul of the righteous is the seat of Wisdom. Wisdom 7:27 If then the soul of the righteous is the seat of Wisdom, be your soul righteous, and you shall be a royal seat of Wisdom. And truly, brethren, all men who live well, who act well, converse in godly charity, does not God sit in them, and Himself command? Your soul obeys God sitting in it, and itself commands the members.

For your soul commands your members, that so may move the foot, the hand, the eye, the ear, and itself commands the members as its servants, but yet itself serves its Lord sitting within. It cannot well rule its inferior, unless its superior it have not disdained to serve.

10. The princes of the peoples are gathered together unto the God of Abraham Psalm 46:9. The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Exodus 3:6 True it is, God said this, and thereupon the Jews prided themselves, and said, We are Abraham's children; John 8:33 priding themselves in their father's name, carrying his flesh, not holding his faith; by seed cleaving to Him, in manners degenerating. But the Lord, what said He to them so priding themselves? If you are Abraham's children, do the works of Abraham. John 8:39 Again...The princes of the peoples: the princes of the nations: not the princes of one people, but the princes of all people have gathered together unto the God of Abraham. Of these princes was that Centurion too, of whom but now when the Gospel was read ye heard. For he was a Centurion having honour and power among men, he was a prince among the princes of the peoples. Christ coming to him, he sent his friends to meet Him, nay unto Christ truly passing over to him he sent his friends, and asked that He would heal his servant who was dangerously sick. And when the Lord would come, he sent to Him this message: I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but say in a word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers. Luke 7:6-7 See how he kept his rank! First he mentioned that he was under another, and afterwards that another was under him. I am under authority, and I am in authority; both under some I am, and over some I am....As though he said, If I being set under authority command those who are under me, You who is set under no man's authority, canst not Thou command Your creature, since all things were made by You, and without You was nothing made. Say, then, said he, in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof....Admiring at his faith, Jesus reprobates the Jews' misbelief. For sound to themselves they seemed, whereas they were dangerously sick, when their Physician not knowing they slew. Therefore when He reprobated, and repudiated their pride what said he? I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, not belonging to the kindred of Israel: many shall come to whom He said, O clap your hands, all you nations; and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. Abraham begot them not of his own flesh; yet shall they come and sit down with him in the kingdom of heaven, and be his sons. Whereby his sons? Not as born of his flesh, but by following his faith. But the children of the kingdom, that is, the Jews, shall be cast into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 8:12 They shall be condemned to outer darkness who are born of the flesh of Abraham, and they shall sit down with him in the kingdom of heaven, who have imitated Abraham's faith.

11. And what they who belonged to the God of Abraham? For the mighty gods of the earth are greatly lifted up. They who were gods, the people of God, the vineyard of God, whereof it is said, Judge between Me and My vineyard, Isaiah 5:3 shall go into outer darkness, shall not sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, are not gathered unto the God of Abraham. Wherefore? For the mighty gods of the earth; they who were mighty gods of the earth, presuming upon earth. What earth? Themselves; for every man is earth. For to man was it said, Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return. Genesis 3:19 But man ought to presume upon God, and thence to hope for help, not from himself. For the earth rains not upon itself, nor shines for itself; but as the earth from heaven expects rain and light, so man from God ought to expect mercy and truth. They then, the mighty gods of the earth, were greatly lifted up, that is, greatly prided themselves: they thought no physician necessary for themselves, and therefore remained in their sickness, and by their sickness were brought down even to death. The natural branches were broken off that the humble wild olive tree might be grafted in. Romans 11:17 Hold we fast then, brethren, humility,

charity, godliness: since we are called, on their proving reprobate, even by their example let us fear to pride ourselves.

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