

## Not to Worry, God's Kingdom Prevails

[Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar,] “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. . . . It will itself endure forever” (Daniel 2:44).

**Scripture:** Daniel 2:31-45

**Song:** “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

Leadership changes threatened the future of a local outreach ministry. The 11-year labor of love was in danger of coming to an end. Volunteers who were invested in the work wondered what would become of their efforts to offer hope and encouragement to hurting women in their community. The path forward was cloudy at best. And while the volunteers knew that it was God's work to sustain or redirect, it did not keep them from restless, flailing efforts to control the situation.

Yes, ministries we care about may sometimes falter. And yes, nations still battle and destroy one another. But in today's Scripture, Daniel's prophecy to King Nebuchadnezzar offers a powerful reminder that the kingdom of God doesn't rise and fall on our efforts. God's story is much bigger than we are.

God has plans and purposes beyond what our human minds can imagine. His kingdom is in no danger. It “will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44), and His people will dwell in it with Him for eternity. Though things may look bleak today, our great King reigns forever!

**Father,** I believe Your Word is true and trustworthy. Give me the grace to trust You when uncertainty surrounds me. In Jesus' name, amen.

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January 20–26. **Lynn Trogdon** lives in North Carolina with her husband. She serves in a local women's ministry and finds hope in the Word of God.

## Receive God's Loving Gifts

**Giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light** (Colossians 1:12).

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:11-20

**Song:** "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

On the bedroom mantel, a lovely box of chocolates sat unopened for months, its bow still knotted. There had been a missed date and a disappointed heart. A young woman felt betrayed and heartbroken. After an argument, the gift was cast aside. Thankfully, over time, forgiveness mended their hearts, and my parents enjoyed a fruitful 'til-death-do-us-part marriage.

Paul's message reminds us that we have the gift of a glorious inheritance reserved for us in Heaven. However, when life hurts, my heart can quickly turn away from the One who loves me. In my pain, I reject His blessings. Once I simmered with anger for three months when someone dear to me was suffering. My anger shoved out of sight my gratitude for the inheritance God has stored up for me in Heaven. Thankfully, God didn't let me stay in that dark place.

When darkness looms large and finding a sliver of light is difficult, we can safely stand on the promise of God, who has already rescued us "from the dominion of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Jesus welcomes us to share in His glorious kingdom of light, where we find praying friends, God's heavenly hope, and "redemption, the forgiveness of sin" (v. 14). Glory to God!

**Father,** thank You for inviting me into Your eternal kingdom of light. Help me hold out my hands to receive and fully enjoy the inheritance You offer. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Confident in Christ

**Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight** (Colossians 1:21-22).

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:21-29

**Song:** "In Christ Alone"

"By myself, Daddy," the toddler called out as she ran down the dock. A waterlogged diaper bumped her knees as she insisted on jumping into the water alone. She dropped into murky depths and kicked frantically to the surface as her father lifted her to safety. Her mind was filled with confidence and delight. She knew her dad was there and that she belonged to him.

Our minds reveal our disposition toward and our relationship to Christ. If we don't yet know Him as our Savior, our minds will be in opposition to God, not trusting Him or looking to Him as our Father. If we *do* know Christ, our minds will be filled with confidence in God's love, His care, and His faithfulness, and we will trust His Word.

God makes a way for us to go from being His enemies to becoming His children. That way is through salvation by grace through faith. When we come to know Christ, He renews our minds, and the truth of His Word becomes clear to us. Then our hope of glory leads us to praise Jesus, our all in all!

**Father,** thank You for making me Your child, renewing my mind, and causing me to know I belong to You. I will live in confidence today, knowing You are right here with me. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Celebrating Our Future Now

**On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name** (Zechariah 14:9).

**Scripture:** Zechariah 14:8-11, 16-21

**Song:** “What a Day That Will Be”

Here in North America, winter follows a time of celebration. Long, colder months linger between the holidays and springtime. For some, too many gray days may even lead to seasonal depression, and life may begin to feel like a wasteland.

As God’s people we know that we live in the expanse of time between Eden’s perfection and Heaven’s. During this long season of our sojourn in this fallen world, we need hope and courage to hold on, a reason to celebrate even on the darkest days. In today’s verses, the prophet Zechariah reveals a reason to celebrate: a day is coming when Christ will return to earth and establish His righteous rule. On that day, everyone will celebrate and worship the King, the Lord Almighty.

Even as we look to the future, we can celebrate Christ’s righteous rule in our lives today. As we come to Him with thankful hearts, we are filled with rejoicing (Psalm 9:2), and our joy can flow like living water to those around us. Our celebration is grounded in the secure hope of God’s promise. Our faith is uplifted by the vision of our all-powerful Lord Jesus standing among His people once again. On that day there will be shared joy, resounding praise, and unending worship. May we keep that future day in mind as we live *this* day.

**Father,** I celebrate the joy of belonging to You and the promise of Your Son’s return. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Welcome to the Party!

**You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God** (Hebrews 12:22).

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:18-29

**Song:** “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

“It’s so gray,” I whispered, running my fingers through my hair.

“Be glad you still have hair,” said my balding hairdresser. Sometimes it’s hard to accept our circumstances. Eyes focused on our earthly experience may see only what we fear and dread: “darkness, gloom and storm” (Hebrews 12:18). . . or gray hairs and wrinkles. But when we remove the fear-magnifying glass from ourselves and look through eyes of faith, we can see what Christ offers.

Through Christ, we have come into an inheritance that includes an eternal celebration in Christ’s presence. In that heavenly future, great numbers of angels will be joyfully assembled. All who belong to Christ will be gathered together, having been made whole and perfect. Jesus, our mediator, will be there with us, His blood having atoned for our sin.

Maybe you’re a minister speaking God’s Word to many. Praise God you’re allowed to be His voice! You may be a nursery worker wiping frightened toddlers’ tears. Praise God for the compassionate hand and heart of Jesus reaching them through you! Or you might be a brand-new believer among His people, feeling small, untrained, and insignificant. Praise God, you’re a new part of His body (1 Corinthians 12:27). Let’s all rejoice together, even now, and praise Christ our King!

**Father,** I gratefully receive Your welcoming invitation to join the celebration of Your heavenly assembly! In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Freedom from Want and Worry

**[Jesus said,] “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”** (Matthew 6:33).

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:25-34

**Song:** “There’s Something About That Name”

In 2023, a new-to-me book by A. W. Tozer directed my thoughts to Christ. Life’s storms and burdens had become heavy. Depression and anxiety threatened . . . until I began looking to Jesus first. For three months, I enjoyed His peace. But then, before coffee one morning, I tapped my phone screen. A new text message made my mind whirl with concerns, emotions, and frustrations. Focusing on Jesus became difficult, and my time with Him was not the priority it had been. Worry prevailed as my Bible lay unopened.

Matthew’s Gospel recounts Jesus’ words calling us to razor-sharp focus. Daily seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness above all else leads us to trust in His provision and purposes. All the things that we are pursuing and worrying over lose their power to distress us when Jesus reigns in our minds.

Our circumstances may not change when we seek God’s kingdom first and foremost, but our hearts will change and align with His truth, bringing peace in a way that defies explanation. The transforming work of the Holy Spirit guides us into freedom from want and worry. With our spiritual gaze turned on Jesus and His kingdom, our stressed brains can stop spinning, and our tense muscles can relax. Our Lord’s sufficient grace will provide all we need.

**Father,** as I focus on Your kingdom first today, thank You for Your sufficient provision and perfect peace. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## A Legacy of Praise

**One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts** (Psalm 145:4).

**Scripture:** Psalm 145:1-10, 17-21

**Song:** “How Great Thou Art”

Swedish minister Karl Boberg (1859–1940) wrote a poem after a dangerous thunderstorm rolled away and bright sunshine and singing birds emerged once again. Translated into three languages, it became the beloved hymn “How Great Thou Art.” The beauty of this hymn reminds me of my friend Susan, who invited another friend and me to be her “posse” as she cared for her dying husband and then faced her own terminal cancer diagnosis. She initiated weekly prayer and Bible study time. Laughter and tears mingled as we supported one another. “I won’t let this kill my joy,” she said often. On our last visit, tears welled up. “Look at that beautiful sunshine,” she said, shifting our minds from sadness to the warmth and light of God’s creation.

The suffering and storms in our lives can lead to a profound legacy of praise. Psalm 145 is a rich exercise in the kind of praise that transforms hearts and minds. The practice of praise leads to lips that proclaim God’s glory, hearts that love more deeply, and minds that meditate on the truth and wisdom of God’s Word.

Ours is a life-giving legacy of praise as we celebrate God’s abundant goodness and faithfulness. Sing joyfully! Do it often! Make it bold! Exalt our King!

**Father**, lead me into moments of praise and worship throughout this day. Help me keep my eyes on You, and teach me to dwell on Your truth and beauty. In Jesus’ name, amen.