

Pentecost 6 / July 5, 2026

Psalm 145:8

"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

The Lord is Gracious and Merciful

Psalm 145 begins with David, extolling the Lord as His God and King. David was the most famous king of Israel. The Lord made him king in place of Saul, because in David, He saw a man after His own heart, a man who would do His will. Saul was replaced as king, because of His disobedience. The Lord affirmed David's kingship, despite his sins which were many, because David did two things of tantamount importance. He worshipped no god but the Lord and when the Lord told him to do something, he did it! David knew that 'king' was an honorary title when it referred to him and his descendants. The Lord was the true King of Israel. When Isaiah, in prophetic rapture, was brought into the Lord's heavenly throne room, he exclaimed, *"My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"* David and his descendants were princes, the Lord of hosts was the King.

David and his descendants are often referred to in the Old Testament as princes, in case anyone forgot who the King really is. David and his descendants were representatives of the King, the Lord of hosts. They were entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining justice. The Lord is a God of justice. David and his descendants were responsible for maintaining the worship of the Lord in accordance with the first commandment, *"You shall have no other gods before me."* David and his descendants as princes of Israel were to care for Israel as the sheep of the Lord's pasture. In their rule David and his descendants were to express the most important qualities the Lord revealed to Israel; His grace, His mercy and His steadfast love. All of the kings were princes preparing for the coming of the true King of Israel in the flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. In Him the grace, mercy and steadfast love of God are offered for all to receive, given to all who believe.

David and his descendants didn't always express these most important qualities of the Lord in their personal lives or in their rule. David's personal life was marred by sin. The lives of most of the kings who came after him were polluted by the worst sin of all, idolatry. Nevertheless, the Lord was forgiving, gracious and merciful towards them. Even when the Lord brought the kingship to an end, He did not extinguish the line of David or forget His promise to Him. The Lord promised David

that his house would endure forever and that one of his descendants would rule over a divine kingdom that would not end. Despite David's sins, the sins and idolatry of his descendants, the Lord would give one of his descendants according to the flesh who would do what neither David or any of his descendants had done or could do, be perfectly obedient to the Lord and express in His life, death and resurrection the fullness of God's grace, mercy and steadfast love. That descendant is Jesus Christ, son of David according to the flesh, Son of God from eternity.

God expresses His grace, mercy and steadfast love daily in countless ways in the creation. In verse nine David sings, *"The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made."* God shows His mercy daily by opening His hands and satisfying the desires of every living creature. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the evil and the good. He blesses those who bless His name. He blesses those who use His name for a curse. He gives the fullest expression of His grace, mercy and steadfast love through David's greatest descendant, His eternally begotten Son Jesus Christ. He is God from eternity, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born in time through the virgin Mary. Jesus is the one descendant of David to whom the title 'king' truly belongs. In Jesus, God takes away our sins. Through Jesus, God heals us of their wounds. For the sake of Jesus, God blesses us with the fulness of His grace, mercy and steadfast love in forgiveness and eternal life. In Jesus the Lord truly is gracious and merciful.

This psalm tells us important things about the Lord. It says He is near to those who call upon Him. The peoples among whom Israel lived did not have such assurance from the things they worshipped as gods. In their belief system, the gods were far away and were occupied with their own pursuits. To say the gods were in the heavens meant they were far away and looking away from their devotees. In the book of Kings, the prophets of the popular fertility god Baal, danced and shouted from morning to evening in an attempt to attract the attention of their god. He made no response. They cut themselves thinking that the aroma of their blood would stimulate their god to action. It had no effect. There was no one to answer, because there is no God but the Lord, but that was how they understood their gods.

Israel had an entirely different understanding of God based upon His love and self-revelation through the prophets. The Lord was in the heavens meant He was ever watchful. The Lord was in the heavens meant He was present everywhere, close at hand an ever-present help. God was in the heavens meant His presence overshadowed them. His eyes were always watchful over them, because He loved

them. After the prophets of Baal gave up, Elijah prayed to the Lord. He answered immediately, visibly and decisively. Whether we realize it or not, whether we always sense it or not, the Lord is watchful over us. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him. Jesus told the disciples that He knows our needs and works to meet them, even before we bring them to Him in prayer. The Lord is gracious and merciful, full of steadfast love and kindness for all people, especially for those who hold to Him in their hearts in faith and faithfulness.

The chief reason we know the Lord is near to us is, because He has given His eternally begotten Son to share in our humanity and make His dwelling among us. Jesus, King David's great descendant according to His physical descent, shares in our humanity. He who is God Most High came down to earth to participate in our humanity, sharing all things except for our sinfulness; experiencing the full effects of our sinfulness in the things He suffered and especially in His death. Because He shared fully in our humanness, we know that He is sympathetic to our needs and present to help at all times, especially in times of trouble. Sympathy has a bad reputation, like a greeting card full of platitudes and empty of true caring. Sympathy is spoken of derisively, as if it is the dismissal of suffering in others. Yet the word sympathy literally means to share in suffering, to suffer with another. In the letter to the Hebrews Jesus is spoken of as sympathizing with our sufferings. Jesus didn't mail a card saying how sorry he feels for us and hopes we will feel better soon. Jesus shared in our sufferings. God doesn't speak empty words in addressing human suffering. In Jesus, God joins us in our sufferings at the deepest level. Not simply so we would have company in our misery, but so that we would receive grace to help in time of need, receive strength to endure and ultimately share in Christ's victory over sin, suffering and death through His resurrection. The Lord is near in Christ Jesus. He is named Immanuel, which means God is with us, so we would know He is near, hears our cries and saves us by forgiving and healing us. In Jesus the Lord is gracious and merciful. He offers steadfast love for all to receive. He gives it abundantly to all who receive Him as Saviour and King.

The Lord gave King David a kingdom and a promise that one of his descendants would reign over a kingdom that would endure forever. Clearly this didn't refer to a sinful human being, but to a descendant who would be free from sin and who would triumph over sin as both God and a human being. The kingdom passed out of David's hands with his death. The kingdom passed out of the hands of his descendants six centuries later when the Lord sent his descendant Zedekiah into

exile and allowed the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Dauids' earthly kingdom was cut off because of disobedience and idol worship, but the Lord's kingdom endured. In this psalm King David sang, *"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations."* The Lord's kingdom is the people in whom He reigns as king through faith and who live with Him in faithfulness. David's kingdom fell, because of the unfaithfulness of his descendants. Nevertheless, the Lord continued to reign in the hearts of the faithful in Israel. The Lord's kingdom is His righteous reign in the hearts of those who cling to Him in faith, believing in David's greatest descendant, God's eternally begotten Son Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

A thousand years after King David's reign the angel Gabriel visited a woman in the village of Nazareth saying, *"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob and of His kingdom there will be no end."* The Lord had not forgotten His promise to David. David's kingdom would rise again in an everlasting kingdom with the birth of Jesus. God's kingdom which endures forever, would be extended throughout the earth with the coming of Jesus. Jesus came to raise up the fallen children of Israel. Jesus came to bring life to the nations by calling all people to Himself as their Saviour and King. In our gospel this morning Jesus calls, *"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."* He who is full of grace and mercy calls you to Himself today that He might reign in your hearts; now through faith, fully and forever in His resurrection.

Jesus calls us to Himself through the gospel by which He frees us from the shackles of sin which bind us. Jesus empowers us with the Holy Spirit that we may confess our sins, receive forgiveness and walk in the freedom of the children of God. Jesus treats us not as our sins deserve but with mercy, grace, gentleness and compassion. Jesus nourishes our faith with His body and blood in His Holy Supper. He calls us to take Him into our hearts through faith, to hear His word and learn the love of God from Him. He calls that in Him we may find rest for our souls. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. We know, because He has given Jesus to share our humanity, to be our Saviour and to reign in our hearts as King. God in His grace keep us in this faith until the day of Christ Jesus. Amen.