

“The Judge of All the Earth”
Psalm 82
(Preached at Trinity, October 2, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Exodus 5:1-2 KJV** - "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. ² And Pharaoh said, Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."
 - A. As we read these words we are struck by the blatant arrogance of Pharaoh. Who would dare speak in this manner? Who would dare utter:
"Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice?"
 - B. Yet, this is precisely what the kings of the earth do. Are there any who follow the living God?
Psalm 2:1-3 KJV - "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."
2. In their vanity they set themselves up as the ultimate judges and rule in whatever way best fits their own agenda.
 - A. They often pass down judgments that are both unjust and ungodly.
 - B. Is there anything more unjust than murdering a baby in its mother's womb? Consider the Terri Shaivo case. Is there anything more unjust than withholding food and water from an individual so that she dies, all for the convenience of her husband? Our court system not only permitted this. They commanded it.
3. **Psalm 82** presents God as the God who rules and overrules all the kings of the earth. And while they rule with injustice, God's justice is perfect.
Genesis 18:24-25 KJV - "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein? ²⁵ That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"
4. **Psalm 82**, like **Romans 13** both establishes the authority of the civil magistrates, and sets the limit. God grants all authority and governs all authority.
5. There is no indication here as to the context of this psalm. One thing is clear though. Asaph looked around him and saw great corruption among the rulers of Israel and so he takes this opportunity to admonish them. This is an example to us that not all hymns are directed to the praise of God. At times they are meant to admonish us.
Colossians 3:16 KJV - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

6. We'll examine **Psalm 82** under three divisions
- I. God's control over all the rulers of the earth – **Verse 1**
 - II. God's command for all rulers to judge justly – **Verse 2-4**
 - III. God's condemnation of all unjust rulers – **Verses 5-8**
- I. God's control over all the rulers of the earth – **Verse 1**
 "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods."
- A. God is presented here as standing in the midst of the rulers of the earth
 1. The word translated "gods" is אֱלֹהִים - Most often it is a name that refers to God.
 - a. Here it implies the rulers of the earth. In this sense Satan is referred to as the "god of this world" in 2 Cor. 4:4
 The NASB translates it "rulers" here (the only time in the 2606 occurrences).
 - b. The word "gods" gives it particular meaning, though. It points to the power and might of the magistrates.
 When they exercised their power justly they were acting under the authority of God.
Romans 13:4 KJV - "For he is the minister of God to thee for good."
Ephesians 5:22 KJV - "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."
Ephesians 6:5 KJV - "Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;"
 J.J. Stewart Perone: "They were sons of the Highest, called by His name, bearing His image, exercising His authority, charged to execute His will, and they ought to have been in their measure His living representatives."
 - c. But when they acted in self-interest the expression simply speaks of men acting in the pride and vanity of their own heart elevating themselves as God.
 - King Herod demonstrated this heart
Acts 12:21-23 KJV - "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. ²² And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* ²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."
 - Nebuchadnezzar as a symbol of Satan displays this perfectly
Isaiah 14:13-14 KJV - "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."
 - d. It is a warning to all called to authority

2. The word for “congregation” refers to an assembly
ESV translates it “council”
The picture is a grand gathering of all the kings and judges of the earth
 3. **Psalm 2** envisions a great council of men gathered together to determine how they will break away from God’s rule
Psalm 2:2-3 KJV - "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."
- B. But notice God stands in the midst of them as their Judge
1. First, God stands in their midst as their Ruler
 - a. The word for “judge” is שָׁפַט shaphat – It means to rule or govern as a law giver.
 - b. God rules over all men. He raises up and brings down. They can do nothing beyond His sovereign control
 - c. God is sovereign over the hearts of men
God rules over the wills of men
 - d. God moves men according to His good pleasure
Proverbs 19:21 – “*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*”
 2. Second, God stands in their midst as their Judge
 - a. God observes. He notes.
 - b. All will stand before Him to give account
They may have power upon the earth, but God sits upon the High Throne of Heaven as the Judge of all the Earth.
- II. God’s command for all rulers to judge justly – **Verse 2-4**
- A. The implication here is that they are judging unjustly
1. God commands them not to show preference to the wicked
Psalm 82:2 KJV - "How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?"
 2. **Verses 3-4** - God gives particular regard to the afflicted, the fatherless, the widow
Psalm 68:5 – “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.”
Psalm 146:9 – “The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.”
 3. God will harshly judge those who take advantage of those who are helpless.
Exodus 22:22-24 – “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.”
Deuteronomy 27:19 – “Cursed *be* he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.”

- B. It is consistent with our fallen nature to show favor to some while neglecting others
1. James warned of this
James 2:2-9 KJV - "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; ³ And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: ⁴ Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? ⁵ Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? ⁶ But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? ⁷ Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? ⁸ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: ⁹ But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."
 2. May we be of those who look at all men with mercy and kindness. May we remember what we truly are.

III. God's condemnation of all unjust rulers – **Verses 5-8**

- A. When a nation's leaders become corrupt everything becomes disjointed
1. The leaders lose all ability to reason
Psalm 82:5 KJV - "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness"
 2. When a government refuses to acknowledge God and govern according to the responsibilities God has set before them they will ultimately fall to the three curses in this verse: ignorance, ineptitude, and ultimately chaos.
 3. True wisdom comes from God. Without it we walk in darkness
 Have we reached this point in our own land?
 4. When this happens the very foundations of society falls apart
Psalm 82:5 KJV - "all the foundations of the earth are out of course."
 Could this be why we can't even decide what marriage looks like any more? We can't figure out why a family is important. We don't understand why it is a bad thing to enable healthy able-bodied men not to work. We can't see that it's a bad thing to spend our nation into a \$16 trillion debt. We aren't even clear as to the definition of life.
- B. God raises leaders up
Psalm 82:6 KJV - "I have said, Ye are gods"
1. All authority comes from God and we must submit our selves to them
Exodus 22:28 KJV - "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."
 2. Remember, the word is אֱלֹהִים - here it is pointing to the judges and rulers of Israel.

3. God gives them their power but their authority must not be abused
 - a. They receive their power *from* God but will be answerable *to* God
 - b. All leaders must remember they are but men and their lives are frail. They may stand as gods but they will die like men – and they will stand before God
Psalm 82:7 KJV - "ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes"
3. Think of the many powerful leaders in history
 Alexander the Great, Cesar Augustus, Genghis Kahn, Queen Elizabeth I, Napoleon, Adolf Hitler – They have all died and they have met God
- C. All will stand before God and He will judge all with perfect justice
Psalm 82:8 KJV - " Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."
 1. Who is this mighty God that Asaph is calling forth? Who is this one who will judge the earth?
 Is it none other than the King of kings?
 2. Is not the earth His by right and inheritance.
Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Conclusion:

1. This should speak loudly to all who are given authority upon the earth
 - a. To teachers we read:
James 3:1 NAS - "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment."
 - b. To pastors we read:
Hebrews 13:17 KJV - "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
 - c. To parents:
Ephesians 6:4 KJV - "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."
 - d. To all of us
Luke 12:48 KJV - "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
2 Corinthians 5:10 KJV - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."

2. Job was a ruler in his day.
Job 1:1 KJV - "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Listen to how he judged and ruled uprightly
Job 29:12-17 KJV - " Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him. ¹³ The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. ¹⁴ I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. ¹⁵ I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. ¹⁶ I was a father to the poor: and the cause *which* I knew not I searched out. ¹⁷ And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth."
3. Oh that we might live righteously before men, to love justice and flee from all iniquity.
4. And one more thing we must never forget. We have a duty to pray for our leaders.
1 Timothy 2:1-3 KJV - "exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; ² For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. ³ For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;"
5. And one thing is certain. We serve a King who rules with absolute justice and equity.
Isaiah 9:6-7 KJV - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."