

God's King

Psalm 2:1-12

Halifax: 14 June 2020

Introduction:

As most of you know, for a long time I have made it a practice to give you Psalm of Focus that ties in with our regular sermon series.

- As we have gone through Mark, we began with Psalm 85, then Psalm 145, then Psalm 70, then Psalm 67, then Psalm 93, then Psalm 24, and most recently, Psalm 131.
- You will recall that I chose it because it is a Psalm about being humble as God's servant.
 - We took this Psalm up when we came to the confession of the Twelve that Jesus was the Christ—
 - It was then that He began to teach them about service in His kingdom—that as the Christ, He did not come to be served and honoured, but to be rejected and delivered up to be crucified.
 - He emphasised to them again and again that the way of greatness in His kingdom was the way of service to others—especially the lowly.
 - During this time, Jesus was on His way with His disciples to Jerusalem for the last time because, as He told them, there He would be crucified.

Now we have come to a new section in Mark in which Jesus arrives at Jerusalem.

- In this section, He presents Himself as God's King who will judge His adversaries.
 - First, there is the triumphal entry, then the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple, then the challenge of His authority by His adversaries and His assertion of His authority by the parable of the vinedressers, by answering their questions and asking them about Psalm 110, and finally by announcing the coming judgment of Jerusalem and of the whole world by Him.
- The contrast with the previous section is striking.
 - There He emphasised His coming suffering and humiliation—here He emphasises His authority and judgment.

The Psalm of Focus I have selected for us to sing in connection with this part of Mark is Psalm 2.

- It is a Psalm that warns us to revere God's anointed King who will judge the nations.
 - It has four distinct stanzas of three verses each.
 - The first stanza shows us the world's folly in opposing God and His anointed.
 - The second stanza is God the Father's response to this opposition.
 - The third stanza is God the Son's declaration that He is God's King who has been commissioned to put down this opposition.
 - The fourth stanza is God the Spirit's call to wisdom.

Psalm 2 is a very important Psalm.

- I am inclined to agree with those who see it, along with Psalm 1, as an introduction to the entire Psalter....
 - Psalm 1 showing us the blessing of the righteous and the Psalm 2 showing us the Messiah who establishes righteousness.

Please give me your attention now as I read this Psalm to you.

Psalm 2:1-12: Why do the nations rage, and the people plot 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 bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” ⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. ⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: ⁶ “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” ⁷ “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, today I have begotten You. ⁸

Ask of Me, and I will give *You* The nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ” ¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

May the Lord add His blessing the reading of His holy Word.

As I mentioned to you in the introduction, there are four stanzas in this Psalm, each with three verses.

- We will consider each in turn.

I. The first stanza shows us the world’s folly in opposing God and His Anointed.

A. It begins with a question of astonishment...

- **V. 1-2: Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed...**
 - How insane is that? To war against the LORD (Yahweh) and His Christ?
- 1. What quarrel do *we* have with *Him*?
 - a. How has God wronged us? What grounds do we have to rage against Him?
 - He created us and put us in a beautiful world with paradise-like beauty and opportunity and we committed treason—
 - not merely against a king (which would be bad enough), but against our Creator who is the LORD of all, the self-existing one who is moral and gracious and good.
 - We are like a woman that cheats on her husband and then becomes enraged and bitter toward him when she is the one who has done wrong.

- We've got no legitimate reason to be angry with our Maker.
- b. This is all the more the case in that we rise up against His Anointed.
- Remember that the word *Anointed* is the Hebrew word that is translated *Messiah* or *Christ*.
 - Why would anyone set themselves against the one God sent to save the world?
2. And what do we hope to accomplish by plotting against Him?
- Does anyone imagine that they will somehow be able to overthrow God Almighty?
 - What plans will they use to outsmart Him?
 - With weapons will they employ to attack Him?
- B. The nations are described as full of agitation, restlessness, and anger against God.
1. This is what we see so much of in the world today.
- Ironically, when you look beneath the surface, you often find that atheists are full of rage against God—even though they do not believe He exists—they are angry with Him—they are angry with how He manages the world.
 - They have chosen not to believe in Him because they want Him to go away.
 - You find that when their scientific arguments fail, they look for new ones, grabbing at whatever they can find to justify their unbelief.
 - But sadly, you also find underlying bitterness toward God in church members.
 - Sadly, it often rears its ugly head when they are struggling—they charge God with unfairness and injustice.
 - Some have deep bitterness that prevents them from trusting in Christ in more than a superficial way.
 - They are too bitter to entrust their souls to Him—they refuse to trust Him and will perish in their sins.
2. You see that specific mention is made of kings and rulers taking counsel together against the LORD.
- As leaders, they are supposed to uphold God's ways, but instead we often see them overturning His ways—leading in rebellion against Him.
 - They gain confidence by banding together to oppose the ways of God. There is a kind of confederacy about doing so.
 - Yes, even church leaders and ministers will do this.
 - Look at how many churches reject the Lord's Day, how many worship in ways not appointed by God, replacing worship with entertainment, how many embrace sexual perversion even in the name of the gospel...
 - They set themselves against God and His Anointed!
 - Though this passage speaks of the Gentiles, it is frequently applied to church leaders in the New Testament who attempted to destroy Christ.
 - It is not just secular rulers, but Christian rulers who are guilty of this folly and this wickedness.

- Of course it is not just the leaders who are guilty of setting aside God's commandments to do their own thing.
 - Too often, we find false security in following the rebellion of our leaders along with our friends and companions who are not following God.
 - Like children, we will see other believers rejecting the Lord's Day and it will embolden us to do the same... all the more if our leaders do it.
 - You often hear children arguing that their friends all do this or that as if that makes it okay to rebel against God.
 - All that rebellion is to war with Him.
- C. Verse 3 explains that their goal is to escape from His commandments and ordinances.
- In their rebellion, they say of God and His Anointed, **"Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us."**
1. Instead of looking at their Creator's commandments as life-giving, they look at them as that which cramps them and ruins their lives.
 - They miss the reality that the way God calls us to live is beautiful and just—it is good and leads to happiness.
 - They look at His call to honesty as what will ruin their business... and His call to chastity as that which will cramp their sexual expression, when in fact it enhances it.
 - They do not see the Sabbath as made for man—a day of great blessing and enrichment, but they look at man as if He was made for the Sabbath.
 2. To reject His ways is to reject Him as God.
 - It is to commit treason against the Most High who is a God of love and wisdom.
 - What madness it is to attempt to overthrow Him as God.

II. The second stanza describes God the Father's response to this mad opposition.

- You can see His majesty here.
 - He is not threatened by a world in opposition.
 - He is not wringing His hands and trying to decide what to do.
 - He has the matter in complete control. His plans were formed before the world was made.
- A. First of all, you see (of course!), that He is not afraid of them. Not in the least.
1. Verse 4 tells us that He laughs at them and holds them in derision.
 - The stupidity of trying to overthrow God.
 - It is laughable.
 - They are like deranged sailors trying to attack their own ship while out at sea—they very thing that holds them up.
 - They are like the same sailors, then attacking the vessel that come to save them—they are against God and His Anointed.

- They are also like a two-year-old boy trying to push over the CN tower with his bare hands—pushing with all his might and striking with his fists.
 - It brings a smile to your face to see his exertions.
- 2. It ought to bring great comfort to you when you see how undaunted the LORD is as the world rages and schemes against Him.
 - They will make no progress.
 - You do not need to be uneasy because God is not uneasy.
 - You can rest because He is at rest—He is in perfect control.
- He laughs at their very futile efforts to overthrow Him.
 - But their efforts are not only silly and futile—they are also wicked in the extreme.
- B. His majesty and control are further seen in punishing those who strive against Him.
 - Verse 5 says: **Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure...**
 1. When God *speaks in His wrath*, He not only passes a sentence against us—He also brings the sentence to pass—for He is God.
 - When He says, “Let there be light,” light begins to shine; when He says (**Matt 25:41**): “**Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...**” off we go.
 - He is that powerful—all He needs to do is speak the word.
 2. God’s anger is expressed in many ways...
 - He drove the whole human race out of the garden of paradise when we rebelled... He cursed us with division in our families... and He sentenced us to sorrow and hardship in providing for our own living.
 - He appointed death for us so that we return to the dust from which we were made—the ultimate humiliation...
 - And after death, He has appointed the judgment where, apart from Christ, we will be sentenced to eternal misery.
 3. Our wickedness in contending against our Maker is great indeed.
 - It is far more wicked than we ever admit.
 - It is part of our rebellion to minimise what we have done—to justify it and to excuse it.
 - On the Day of Judgment, all of our arguments and distortions will be exposed for what they are—*we* will be exposed for what we are.
 - Then we will not only have the horror of God’s punishment, but also a sense of how wicked we truly are—that awful feeling that comes when you are exposed to yourself in what you had been denying.
 - If you are in Christ, this revelation will actually make you very happy—because you will see how merciful and gracious your Saviour is!

- But if you are not in Christ, it will be devastating.

TRANS> The world is unable to reach God directly with their attacks.

- They can't attack Him, but what about the world itself that they have ruined? That we all have ruined by our rebellion?
- What will God do about that?
- He tells us in verse 6.

C. God has taken action to set up a King to rule for Him in this world—to take it back for Him!

- In verse 6 He says, **“Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”**

1. Notice how He refers to this king as “My King.”

- This King uniquely belongs to Him.
 - He has already been referred to in verse 2 as “His Anointed.”
- Of course we know who God's King is because He has come.
 - We know that God's Anointed King is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - He is the One that God sent from heaven to rule this world in righteousness.
 - He establishes the world in righteousness.

2. This is God's answer for a world gone insane in rebellion.

- Jesus Christ came not only to do the will of God as an individual, but also to establish righteousness in the world.
 - He came to rule in righteousness that the world might be saved—that this world of sin might become a world of righteousness for God.

3. He is said to have come to God's holy hill of Zion because in later prophecies, the LORD promised that the Messiah would come to Zion.

- As we move along in Mark, we see Him at Zion, the city of God, riding in as the Lord's anointed on a donkey.
- He is David's Son, God's King, God's Son who comes to take the throne of David forever and to fulfill all righteousness for His elect from every nation.

TRANS> Not only will the raging enemies of God in this world be unsuccessful in reaching the most high God (of course they will),

- But the rebellion that they lead in the world will be entirely put down by God's King.

III. The third stanza is the Son of God's declaration that He is God's King who is commissioned to put down all opposition.

- Here the Son speaks...

A. He begins by telling us that He will declare what God has decreed about Him.

1. This is an essential part of His work that continues to this day.

- He has been busy declaring that He is God's anointed King who comes to bring salvation to the world from the time of fall.
- 2. He declared this to the patriarchs, promising that through their seed a Son would be born to them who would bring the blessing of salvation to the whole world.
 - Moses and all the prophets continued to testify to this hope and soon it was revealed that a Son would be given to David who would reign forever and redeem the nations, establishing a new covenant.
- 3. And then He Himself came and proclaimed the decree through John who introduced Him as the one through whom the promised kingdom had come, who baptised Him so that the Father declared Him to be His Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit in a visible way...
 - And then Jesus Himself went about proclaiming that the kingdom has come by preaching it and by doing signs and wonders to verify it
 - Then he was crucified and raised again with power commissioning His disciples to go into all the world and preach salvation through His name until the end of the age.
 - Through His appointed ministers, He continues to proclaim the decree until this day and will do so until He returns.

B. Psalm 2 focuses on the Father's commissioning of Him to be King.

1. First, He tells us that (v. 7), **"The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You."**
 - The begetting here does not refer to His birth in the manger, and certainly not to His eternal begetting which has no beginning.
 - It refers rather to the day when the Father, having received His offering for the sins of His people on the cross, raised Him from the dead to sit on His right hand as King forever.
 - Peter declares this great day when Jesus was begotten as God's King at Pentecost with these words from Acts 2:32-36:
 - **"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, ³⁵ till I make Your enemies Your footstool." ' ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."**
 - Jesus could not officially take His throne as Mediator until He had finished the work that the Father appointed for Him to do on the cross.
 - He had no means by which to secure our pardon until He had shed His own blood to atone for our sin.
 - It was after that that He was begotten as God's king to save His people from all nations.
2. Verse 8 tells us that it is decreed that He should be the king of the whole earth.

- He will be given the nations through His own intercession (His prayers) as God's king:
 - The Father says: **Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.**
 - No part of the earth is excluded.
 - God's king, His Son, will take dominion of every inch and that means that righteousness will be established in every place.
 - God's king will establish God's kingdom where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Instead of raging against God and taking counsel against Him to cast away His dominion, His glorious ways will prevail.
3. The Father has assured His Son that He will have success in subduing all things to the Father.
- In verse 9 He says, concerning the nations in their rebellion: **"You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."**
 - The world will be fully established in perfect righteousness.
 - That will be the end result.
 - Those who have come to Him in faith to obtain this kingdom by forgiveness of sin and by His gracious promise of eternal life will fill the earth as God originally intended—as a people of righteousness who serve Him...
 - And all those who continue in their rebellion will be cast into the pit with the Devil and his angels where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.
 - This is what the Father has promised to the Son.
- C. Because this is His decree, we can be sure that it will be accomplished.
1. Righteousness will be established by Christ.
 - We must not forget that it is only through Christ that it will come.
 - In these crazy days of restless clamour among the rulers and princes of this world, we must continue looking to Christ.
 - I despair when I see Christians getting caught up in social justice—invariably they forget Christ and jump on some kind of scheme of this world.
 2. See that you don't do this, my brothers and sisters.
 - We must preach Christ and Him crucified.
 - It is reconciliation with God that we need, not human schemes of social reform and revolution.
 - Not some political movement, but the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are baptised and have made vows in His name.
 3. Yes, this message will not be popular with the world.

- The world is at war with God.
- So many of the world's revolutions have brought in not less but more injustice than the regimes they were trying to replace.
 - It is only in Christ that we or anyone else will find righteousness and rest.
 - Without Him, our world only moves from one way to another of warring against the Lord and His Anointed, of casting off what they deem to be His bonds and cords.

IV. The final stanza is counsel for us from the Holy Spirit to kiss the Son.

- We have seen the Father's response the world's raging against Him...
 - We have seen the Son's destiny to establish righteousness in all the earth...
 - And now we see the Spirit's call to us to participate in the kingdom of the Son.
- A. He calls all the rulers and judges to take the path of wisdom.
- Verse 10 says: **Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.**
1. It is a call to stop and think about what they are doing—the folly of it—setting themselves against the LORD and against His Anointed.
 - What cause do they have to war against God and the one He has sent to save the world?
 - What will they accomplish in holding on to their rage against Him?
 - Nothing but frustration, and in the end, crushing and casting into the fires of hell to live forever in the remorse of knowing how wrong they were, how wicked they were, to oppose the gracious Lord of glory.
 2. What kindness there is in this plea!
 - Simply a call to consider the folly of what your bitterness and rage against God.
 - If our leaders are called to consider, how much more ought we who follow them.
- B. The Holy Spirit instructs us here to (v. 11) “**serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.**”
1. This is beautiful—fear and trembling may not seem to go with rejoicing, but with God they do!
 - As those who come to the living God who requires the blood of His Son to receive us, we come before Him with fear and trembling because we recognise His majesty, His holiness, and His wrath against sin...
 - But at the same time we recognise that His majesty, holiness, and wrath against sin are all marvellous virtues.
 - We are in awe of Him as in His inaccessible, inexhaustible glory.
 - With Him, there is no such thing as boredom.

- Our rejoicing is that this majestic, holy being who is so angry with the sin of this world has received us.
 - He has made a way for our full acceptance.
 - He has sent His Son to be our King and He has atoned for our sin and He gives us His Spirit to transform us and at last perfect us to stand before Him forever with eternal praise.
 - 2. It is possible for us to serve Him with fear and rejoicing because He has made it possible.
- C. The Spirit counsels you to kiss the Son...
1. That means to accept Him as your king—as the king God sent to save His people.
 - Put away your rage, your bitterness, the hurts that you nurse and hold on to.
 - You gain nothing by holding on to these things—let them go and kiss the Son.
 - What do you hope to accomplish by resisting Him?
 2. Kiss the Son lest He be angry with you and you perish in the way.
 - That is all that can happen to you if you hold on to your bitterness.
 - You don't have to be some great sinner to stir up His wrath against you...
 - You perish in the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.
 - It is enough that you resist His call to come to Him to be reconciled to His Father... truly, what could be worse than to neglect so great a salvation?
 3. How blessed you will be if only you will come to Him believing.
 - That is what the Spirit says to you. "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."
 - The Son has come to make things right in a world that has gone wrong.
 - That means that He has come to restore us to His Father.
 - That is His mission.
 - You are in if you will kiss the Son and receive Him as your Saviour that He might bring you to the Father.
 - You are out if you continue to join the world in their resistance to God and to His anointed.
 - Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.