

God's Appointed King

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[0 : 00] I'm more grateful still for God's Word, which is a sure and steady foundation no matter what happens in our lives, isn't it? So as we turn to God's Word this morning, let's pray together.

Lord God, we thank you so much that our times are in your hands. We thank you that those are the greatest hands, the most trustworthy and loving hands.

They are the hands of power and they are the hands that care. Lord, we pray that as we come to hear from you this morning, that we would have soft hearts and open ears.

Would we know that we come to talk about great things, things that determine causes of lives, Lord. And so we want to take you seriously. Please will you help us to do that?

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We live in increasingly frightening times. Do you think that's a fair thing to say?

[1 : 08] On the one hand, you have things like claims of massive election fraud in countries where otherwise we think things are pretty stable. And we've got politics and news reporting that seems less and less interested in real facts and truth.

And there's war in the Middle East. And there's war in the Middle East. War of that this week. And then there's war on our doorstep in Europe. And then if you look on the Internet, that doesn't help, does it?

Some pretty crazy conspiracy stuff out there. If you believe everything you read there, then apparently the world is ruled by lizard men wearing human skin. There's that.

Or if you believe everything you read there, then anything with a barcode, that's the mark of the beast. And you've got to be careful about that. So if you believe all of that stuff, then, you know, put the phone down.

Too much. On the other hand, some of that stuff will be real. If we think that there are no hidden agendas in the world, if we think that there are no unseen forces and no groups that come together to manipulate events, then we need to wake up.

[2 : 30] Just have one conversation with somebody who works in the intelligence services. They will tell you, yes, that is a real thing. How are we to read that? You know, apart from the obvious explanation that humanity has problems like greed and hatred and poverty, what's going on?

Aren't we supposed to be more enlightened than ever before? And all of that kind of breeds an anxiety, doesn't it? And that rises up in us. Where do we take that?

And the mistrust that it breeds. What do we do with that? Where do we go for stability and assurance when the world is just going crazy out there?

Well, Psalm 2 has a very simple answer for us. Our anchor is the fact that God's appointed king is on the throne. And when we find out what kind of king he is, then we have a reason for confidence. God's king is on the throne. Let's have a look at the text. If you haven't got your Bible open at Psalm 2, please do open it, find it, read along. Looking at verse 1.

[3 : 42] Why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together. There it is. Conspiracy, panic, uproar.

Actually, it's nothing new, is it? It's always been there. But Psalm 2 tells us it's vain. It's a futile fight. This stuff is basically just pointless noise in the end. And then we learn how to read this. Because if we read on, it says, The rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

So the meaning and the explanation for all of this chaos is that basically, people are in rebellion against God. Because they think by doing that, they will be free.

But it's a false freedom. Verse 3 sounds great, doesn't it? Throw off the shackles. But if you believe that getting away from under God's rule is the thing that will make you truly free, then you're

believing a lie.

[4 : 53] In fact, you're believing the same lie that Satan sold to Adam and Eve right back at the beginning, aren't you? Don't listen to God's commands.

And they were freed, weren't they? Yes. But all they were freed from was paradise. God has appointed a king. Literally, the words here, Let us break off their chains, throw off their shackles, really means let us cast their yoke from us.

Now, if you know your Bibles, you'll immediately be thinking of another place where somebody speaks of a yoke. It's Matthew 11, verses 28 to 30.

Here are the words of Jesus. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. See, all we do, if we reject God's law, is to reject that.

[6 : 07] Peace, rest for our souls, the law of love. And of course, if it's freedom from paradise and rest and love that we're fighting for, then that is false freedom.

Jesus calls that rebellion sin. And every human being is guilty of that sin. When we put ourselves in Jesus' place, when we make ourselves king instead of him, that's treason, isn't it?

That's the word for doing that, treason. And there's a death sentence that goes with treason. And as long as we are in rebellion against the Lord Jesus, we are therefore spiritually dead.

That sin, that human sin, results in another conspiracy, doesn't it? It all comes to a head in another conspiracy between the leaders and the people around AD 33.

Our best efforts to get rid of God's king culminate at the cross. Here's what it says in Acts chapter 4, verses 25 to 28.

[7 : 21] It says, Peter and John describing what has happened. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David.

It's the author of Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant, Jesus. That's where rebellion against God takes you.

Throw off the shackles of oppressive religion. It sounds very, very civil rights and progressive, doesn't it? Don't be fooled. A call to freedom from the rule of King Jesus will just lead you into slavery under a much worse master.

It's not a call to freedom. It's a call to rebellion. And it's everywhere. It's everywhere from that whole idea of just be true to yourself and no one and nothing else.

[8 : 31] All the way through liberation theology, every tiny act of rebellion against good authority that God has put over us. School, parents, work, government, most of all God.

It's there deep in us, isn't it? Verses four and five. The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them.

in his wrath. God laughs at those efforts because they're vain. How do we know they're vain? Those efforts to depose Jesus.

How do we know that they don't work? Because Jesus rose again. That's how we know. See, the ultimate defeat of every plotting power, the ones you can't see, the ones you can't change, and the ones you can see, the ones you see every day, you know, the crew at the office, the mummy mafia, the bullion school playground, whoever it is.

Ultimately, they are all defeated at the resurrection. That is the ultimate victory of God's anointed king. The victory of justice over evil.

[9 : 45] That's the resurrection. God has appointed a king. Here is God's short and simple response to the rebels in verse 6. I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.

Now, in this moment, it's like God has rolled back the curtain of heaven so we can see what's going on there. Or, it's like he's turned us to the last page of history so we know how the story ends.

It's a huge spoiler, but he does it because he knows that we need to see this. What is it? It's Jesus on the throne. This is why all the plotting and the turmoil to overthrow God ultimately will end in defeat.

God says, I have put my king on the throne. And we know from Genesis that when God says something, it happens. And we know from Revelation, the end of history, when we turn there, that we see Jesus on the throne.

if the maker of the universe puts someone on the throne and they can't be killed and they're to be raised again, then thinking that we can kill him and put ourselves there is ridiculous, isn't it?
[11 : 04] God has appointed a king. But maybe you look around and you think, do you know what? It doesn't look to me like Jesus is on the throne.

What I'm living now does not feel like freedom or victory. And sometimes when we choose to follow Jesus, it does feel like that, doesn't it?

It feels restrictive. It feels like defeat or suffering. It doesn't feel like freedom or victory. So how can something feel like defeat, suffering, restriction, and still be freedom and victory?

How can that be? I'm going to tell you the story of Henry Box Brown. In 1849, after 33 years of slavery, Henry Box Brown shipped himself in a cargo box from Richmond, Virginia, where he was a slave, to the abolitionist zone in Philadelphia.

It was a 350-mile journey. He could barely breathe through those air holes that you can see in his crate. His crate was 60 centimeters square. He got there.

[12 : 25] He spent the remainder of his 50 years living as a free man. That's how. That's how freedom and victory can still feel like suffering and restriction.

There is no question that this man lived in freedom and victory, is there? And there is no question that that journey felt like suffering and defeat and restriction while he was there.

I wonder when, it's a moment for reflection, you feel the chaos and upheaval of the world the most. Where in your life is that feeling the strongest?

and then what does it look like for you in that place? Instead of looking at what's going on in the world and in your life, what does it look like instead for you to look up?

To see what Stephen saw while he was being stoned? Jesus on the throne. Just take 30 seconds. Close your eyes if you want to. Think about those two questions.

[13 : 38] A temptation when the world is going mad around us is to try and grab the reins, isn't it?

We need to trust that under Jesus' kingship, there is real freedom and victory. We need to fix our eyes on him, don't we? Who is this king?

Well, I've already given you the spoiler. But the original hearers of the psalm wouldn't have known, would they? So this would be the question for them. Who is this king?

Not David, who wrote this psalm, or any of the kings who were crowned and had this psalm sung about them. Because, as you can read in the pages of the Bible, that whole experiment didn't work, did it?

None of them could fulfill this. So, verse 7 to 9, we just need to know that there's a different speaker now. Somebody else takes the microphone, as it were, and he says this, I will proclaim the Lord's decree.

[15 : 04] You said to me, you are my son. Today I have become your father. This is the one who's on the throne speaking. And he reveals who he is and what he'll do.

He says, I am the one who is God's son and heir. And that's what we see at Jesus' baptism, isn't it? And his transfiguration. Do you remember those two stories? The remarkable thing that combines them both, that links them both, is the voice from heaven, which says, this is my son, in whom I am well pleased.

Listen to him. If you were to turn to Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 2. If I can find it.

I can't, so I'll have to do it from memory. Paul says there, in these latter days, God has spoken to us through his son.

Hebrews chapter 1, verse 2. And then if you were to skip down to verse 5, what you would find is this. For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son.

[16 : 15] Today I have become your father. Who is the son? Jesus reveals the king, and the king is Jesus.

And to be someone's son, in ancient Near Eastern tradition, is something a little bit different from how we think of it today. Because we're individualists, we just think, well, who knows what that person's like.

Just because they're the son of someone else doesn't really mean anything. If you were to read the Bible with ancient Near Eastern eyes, and you heard someone say, that is my son, that means that person is identified with you totally.

Same genes, same occupation, same address, same accent, same home, same inheritance, same history, same destiny.

So when we say that Jesus is God's son, we are saying, he is equal with God. Charles is king, so William will be king. That's the equivalent. Jesus will be king, just as God is king.

[17 : 25] But when the father speaks, he doesn't just say who Jesus is, he says, what he will do. So now it's the father speaking. Verse 8, ask me, ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

You will break them with a rod of iron, you will dash them to pieces like pottery. The first thing that God the father says to Jesus on the throne is, ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance. In other words, the treasure that God the father will pass over to Jesus the son is us. The first conversation between God the father and Jesus the son, enthroned as king, is, those dear people, I give them to you for your inheritance, for always.

Isn't that amazing? We are the inheritance. We are the wealth of God's kingdom. We are his most precious treasure. People from every place, every tribe, nation, and tongue, as the Bible says, who trust that Jesus is the king, they are his treasure.

Doesn't that make us valuable? But without making us arrogant? That's the kind of king we can look to.

[18 : 48] The kind of king who says, in John chapter 10, the father has given them to me and nothing will snatch them away from me.

Nothing can take them from my hand. That's the king we want to look to when it's conspiracy and craziness outside, isn't it? And then there's verse nine.

You will break them with a rod of iron. You will dash them to pieces like pottery. And that rod is the same word in Hebrew as the word for the shepherd's staff in Psalm 23.

And again, Augustine helps us understand this. He writes a lot on the Psalms. He says that what Jesus shatters with that rod is our earthly desires, what he calls the sordid doings of our animal self, everything encrusted and ingrained in the clay-born sinners.

In other words, Jesus is given the scepter of authority and he uses it to break us and remake us. Just like the potter breaks up the clay and makes new pots from it.

[19 : 58] Because what do you need to break a heart of stone? An iron rod. Thank you. Thank God it's in Jesus' hands. This section, the voice of Jesus breaks through directly in the Old Testament.

That's quite unusual, isn't it? If you know your Old Testament. Because he wants to make his message plain. He takes the mic and he says, I am the sun. I am the air.

And I claim you, my people, as my inheritance. And Augustine says, our job is obvious when Jesus does something like this.

It's to do exactly what the psalmist does. It's to do exactly what everybody who sung this psalm was doing. Which is to proclaim with Jesus his kingship in this world.

And the good news that that is for everybody. And he does that in the form of a song. Isn't that amazing? Something else to reflect on.

[21 : 03] Where could you proclaim God's decree? With Jesus this week. And if that sounds a little bit soapbox scary, I can identify with that. Think about it like this instead.

To whom could you sing the song that calls people back to God's appointed king this week? Just take a few seconds and think about that.

There's a very clear application in this third section of the psalm, isn't there?

David turns to the listeners as it were and he says, here's what you've got to do with this, guys.

Verse 10. Therefore, you kings, be wise. Be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. It says, if you're wise, you will acknowledge that Jesus is king, dear listener.

[22 : 12] So the first thing that this newly appointed king uses his power to do, whether you think it's David speaking or Jesus at this point, is not to lay about him with the scepter and smash his enemies, destroy the rebels and claim his victory.

It is to sing a song calling us back to him as we were just thinking about. A psalm to call us back to himself as king.

And again, we see the choice of ways, don't we? If you were here last week, Psalm 1, there is a choice. There is the way of wisdom and there is the other way that leads to destruction.

Verse 12. Kiss the son or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction. We didn't say much about the anger in verses 4 and 5, did we?

But it's unmissable. God is angry with those who disobey and disrespect him. He is angry with those who break his rule of peace and his law of love.

[23 : 23] Those who put themselves in the throne on the place of Jesus. And so, friends, the question from this psalm which determines whether we are going to go towards destruction or blessedness, which is what verse 12 calls it, is not have you been good?

Is not were you brought up in a Christian household? Is not do you come to church? Is not any of those things.

The question is have you personally submitted to Jesus as king and taken refuge in him? That's the question, isn't it?

And under that rule there is no injustice. Under that rule there will be no oppression, no uproar, no upheaval, no conspiracy, none of that. And today there's an invitation to rejoice in that.

Celebrate the rule of Jesus. Find refuge in him, the king. And someone told us last week what that looks like, doesn't it? We're like a tree planted by streams of water, never dropping leaves, bearing fruit in season.

[24 : 38] Why would we not choose that? We're invited to kiss the sun and that kiss, verse 12, speaks of two things.

Firstly, reverence. You know, the way that you used to go to a king in the old days and kiss his hand or a queen in order to acknowledge their authority, reverence.

But it also speaks of intimacy, doesn't it? You have to be close to somebody to be able to kiss them. And that is the relationship that we are being called into with God's appointed king, one of reverence and intimacy.

Kiss the sun. And the psalm finishes with this line, blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Happy are those whose shelter is King Jesus. Don't miss that refuge, friends. I want to tell you the story of a man called Pierre Tremont.

[25 : 50] He was a French architect, explorer, cartographer, and he travelled extensively in North Africa mostly, all different kinds of places, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan.

And in the mid-19th century he went through the Nubian desert and as he was travelling through the Nubian desert he saw a row of palms about 2,000 yards away he thought with what looked like water shimmering between them.

So as you can imagine in the desert, especially in the mid-19th century, that's amazing. And he made for it. And then he stopped. Because you know what, he remembered all the things he'd been told about mirages and tricks being played on you, not being able to trust your senses, so he dismissed it, said no, I'm not falling for it.

And he passed by and he passed on into the desert. And of course you've already guessed it, the refuge, the oasis was real.

And he'd missed it. He'd missed the refuge, fooled by his own wisdom, thought he knew better. And apparently that's quite common.

[27 : 09] He's not alone in that. And it tends to happen for three reasons apparently. First of all, extreme thirst. People are so thirsty they think I can't trust my senses anymore, even if it's telling me that there's water there.

And secondly, belief system bias. You've always been taught to think and you've grown up believing that there is no such thing as an oasis in the desert.

And you're so far down the path of that belief that when you see a real one you just dismiss it. Well thirdly, previous experience. Well, you know, I've never found a refuge in the desert before.

Therefore, there isn't one. I wonder if that's you. Are you so thirsty for living water that when it's presented to you, you don't believe it's really there?

Or are you so far down the path of thinking all of this is just hokey, myth, that when the truth comes along you don't have a box to put it in? Has all your previous experience led you to believe that there is just desert?

[28 : 21] There is no divine refuge so that you can't see it. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Don't miss the refuge of God's appointed king, friends. Find that living water. Take that eternal rest. When we hear that we should follow Jesus as our ruler and that that involves going one way, which means of course, by definition, not going another way, we think limitation, restriction, oppression, that's the way that our souls are formed.

And the truth is that the weight of freedom has always been narrow, hasn't it? The path we walk with Jesus is the narrow path back to Eden, back to oasis, back to refuge, back to paradise. Follow him. Don't walk past the oasis because you want to be king or queen of your own desert, friends. Jesus is king and that means refuge and rejoicing for all who come to him. Amen. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you that Jesus is on the throne. We thank you, Lord, that he has spoken plainly about who he is and how he loves us.
[29 : 59] We pray, Lord, that he would be our refuge. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Thank you.