

Messiah's manifesto

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[0:00] The Psalms are songs, and we're looking at some Psalms as we come up towards Easter. We began with Psalm 1, and it was a song of blessing.

! Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

It's sort of the gateway into the Psalms, and it says the blessing is through the Word, is through attending to God's Word, listening to God's Word, obeying God's Word, taking on board God's Word.

And the person who does this is like something beginning with tea. Let's see if anybody can remember from last time. A tree. Thank you very much. It's like a tree planted by streams of water, and it's a very admirable blessing.

The next Psalm, Psalm 2, is also a hugely significant Psalm. And I want to introduce it by telling you, in a sense, it's not about you or me.

[1:14] And this may come as a big disappointment to some of us this morning, because you might have come along to church thinking, I want something that God addresses specifically to me because I have a big problem or I have a situation.

And you might be saying, what could be more important than my situation? What is going on in my life? It might be to do with your well-being.

Say, you know, I'm in pain, I am in distress for some reason. It might be to do with approval.

Perhaps you feel rejected. Perhaps you feel that nobody is on your side.

Perhaps it's to do with your prosperity. Perhaps you've had a car accident and all sorts of things that lost some money. And you think, that is what is number one thing on the agenda this morning. I want to hear about that. And I want to say, there's actually somebody more important than you.

God says, there's somebody actually more important than you. And this Psalm is about this person.

[2:18] It's about his well-being. It's about the approval that he has from the people around. It's about whether he prospers in his purposes or not.

And the person that this Psalm is about is not you. It is about the Lord and his Messiah. His King. His Agent.

The one whom he has sent to sort things out in this world. And that's what this Psalm is about. It is about whether multitudes of people offer him approval and honour and service.

And that's where you and I come into it. Because that's where the rubber hits the road with us. Are we in that place of offering him honour, approval, service?

That's the bit that includes me. But that's not basically what it's about. It's about somebody else. So I just mention that so that you can adjust mentally to what this is all about. Let me just say a few words about the poetic nature.

[3:22] It's a song. It's a poem. So something that's just for interest. Hebrew poetry is not like, certainly not like English poetry.

It's not Latin. Latin poetry has got a sort of a beat to it. Hebrew poetry has a bit of that. English poetry tends to rhyme, doesn't it? It's time to make a rhyme.

You see, that was poetry there. I did that on the spot. In Hebrew poetry, you get certain ways of repeating things. So it might say, A-A-B-B-C-C.

And then in this psalm, it says something like C-C, something like B-B, something like A-A. So it's sort of the same thing in reverse. So it says, why do the nations conspire? And then it says the same thing in reverse.

Imagine vain things, the people. I've just given you a very clunky translation from Hebrew. So A-A-B-B-C-C. And then something like C, something like B, something like A.

[4:22] Same thought in reverse. And sometimes it just has the same thing in the same order. A-A-B-B. And something like A, something like B, like that.

So it says, serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice with trembling. The word says, I think, something like spinning round. But anyway, serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice with trembling.

Same thing, slightly different words twice. That's how Hebrew poetry works. And you can look out for that as we go through it. That was just for interest. This bit is really important.

This psalm is quoted multiple times in the New Testament.

The New Testament writers go back to this multiple times. They say, this is really important for Christianity and for Christian faith. So the psalm said, you are my son.

[5:22] It says that in verse 7. And today I have become your father. You are my son. That was what's quoted at the baptism of Jesus. This is my son, whom I love. With him I am well pleased.

This is what's quoted at his transfiguration. This is my son. Listen to him. This is what's quoted when Paul preaches to the Jewish people in Acts 13.

And he says, this Jesus I'm telling you about. This Jesus of Nazareth I'm telling you about was crucified. He was buried. He was raised from the dead.

He has ascended into heaven. And that's what it says in this psalm. You are my son. Today I have become your father. And in the book of Acts, when they're praying about the persecution, and thank you for the prayers for persecuted believers.

That's a good and right thing for us to pray about. They come together to pray about the opposition. And they pray to the Lord. Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

[6:33] You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand.

The rulers gather together against the Lord and his anointed one. And indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate did meet together with the Gentiles and the people in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

And they say this is exactly fulfilled in the death of Jesus. The psalm says that the Messiah will rule with a rod of iron.

That is quoted three times in the book of Revelation, twice about Jesus and strangely once about his people. So I just stopped to say this psalm is a psalm about Jesus Christ.

And the portrayal of Jesus Christ is, well, it is what it is. It is the one who rules and reigns. It is the one who smashes the nations with an iron rod.

[7:47] And I just stopped to say, reality check, is this your understanding of Jesus? Because this isn't how Jesus is sometimes portrayed.

Sometimes Jesus is portrayed as being almost, I exaggerate slightly, but almost just a sort of wafting love gas which sort of fills the room.

And that's all Jesus is. I just felt his love. Now, I'm not saying Jesus doesn't show love. I'm not saying that. And I'm not saying his love isn't amazing.

But I am saying that the love, the person who does this amazing loving, is this same person who rules the nations with a rod of iron. He is a strong person.

And as well as a desirable person, he is a frightening person. He is a person to be honored and respected. So I ask if this is our understanding of Jesus, there is more to Jesus than that he reigns and rules, but not less.

[9:01] Don't take that away. Whatever else you want to have along with that, don't take that bit away. So that was introduction, initial comments. We're going to go through the text.

The text has got lots of people speaking. So the one in heaven speaks. I've installed my king. The Messiah speaks.

I will proclaim the decree of the Lord, etc. So I think if we look at the speeches, so number one, the writer asks why the nations speak as they do.

Number two, God reacts. First of all, without speech and then with speech. Messiah speaks. And then the writer calls to the kings.

So it's speeches. And we'll just go through that. And I'm not really going to do any more than that this morning. Okay, that's what we're going to do. Are you happy with that? Okay, up for that. Let's look at this wonderful, wonderful psalm.

[10:01] The writer, first of all, asks why the nations speak as they do. Why? Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

Anointed one means Messiah. Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters. So why do the nations rage? Why do the nations rage and the peoples, I've got a different translation, plot an empty thing.

In vain means empty. You know, it's pointless, useless, empty. Why are they so busy thinking about this? And the kings of the earth, it says, they take their stand.

It's sort of like forming up in formation. They take their stand against the Lord and his anointed. And it says they gather together.

[11:12] The words are sort of setting something in a foundation, something like that. They're sort of laying a basis for their opposition to the Lord and his anointed.

So here are the people. Here are the kings of the earth. And they're against the Lord and his Messiah. There's his Messiah. Let us break their chains.

Let us cast away their cords. That's what they're saying. They're the chains which they think they're chained by. And here is the picture then of a turbulent world.

Nations raging, conspiring. Rebellious against the Lord, their maker.

Now, the Hindus are wrong to think there's multiple gods and you choose which one you like and they all have different departments. There is one God. And he is our maker.

[12:22] And imagine what it is to sort of line yourself up in formation and get your act together to defy your maker.

They're rebellious against the Lord, their maker. And what we have here in these few words is a description of what you might call cosmic treason.

that a whole race of people made by their God, made in the image of their God, say no to their God and use the resources that he has given them to line themselves up, to sort of adopt a military formation, to challenge him and to defy him.

And it says, against the Lord and his anointed one.

It isn't even to say against his ways or against his words. It says against him. And I think that that means something.

[13:38] It's that the very presence of God is felt by them to be oppressive. His very person is seen as restrictive.

A scene as something which diminishes humanity. Just get away from me. His very presence is seen as unwelcome. I don't want him in my life.

I don't want him anywhere near me. Whoops. His very presence is seen as oppressive. And here is a picture of human sin.

The human condition. It's a very unflattering picture, isn't it? You know, we like to think of human beings as being spiritually minded and open. And, you know, not too bad.

This picture is of a race which are obnoxious and defiant. And all this is wrong. And this is the picture that the psalm gives us.

[14:48] In the time that the psalm was written, it would have a much more concrete expression. There really was a king in a palace, in a city, King David.

And he really did have enemies that would fight him and they would actually line up against him to defy him. So it would have expressed itself in political and military violence.

David did have enemies. For us, it's a little bit different, isn't it? I mean, there is a state-sponsored aspect of this.

There is a government aspect. There are some governments that do exactly this and say it is illegal to worship this God. If you worship this God, we will demote you.

We will remove benefits from you. You won't be able to go to university. Perhaps we might even imprison you and torture you. So this still happens in that way.

[15:48] Violently. It happens non-violently. Unspoken thoughts. In our society, the sort of way it would be thought of, God's view on sexual ethics.

He says that our gender is given to us. He says that the place for sexual activity is within marriage between one man and one woman, two unlike creatures.

And he says that's how I've designed this, and it is felt, is it not, to be oppressive and restrictive. God's view on the givenness of life.

We've been put in a certain place. We've been given a certain makeup. And people resist that. Family life. God says this is the way to do it. And our society says, no, actually, we can improve on that. God's providence.

[16:53] What God has done with you in your life. You know how much IQ he's given you. Whether you're very tall or not very tall. God's given you these things.

And I think people can quite possibly say, God got that wrong. And go through life sort of shaking their fists at God. It's all the same thing, isn't it?

Or God's challenge to my own kingship over my life and my kingship over other people's lives. And God says, you're not the king.

I'm the king. These kings, you see, set themselves against the Lord and his anointed. And that is still what human sin is.

And you may well find that you've got a bit of that lurking around in you to confess and repent of. Well, what is God's reaction to this?

[17:52] Verse 4. The one enthroned in heaven. So I've put a chair there. I'm not going to try anything more pictorial than that.

The one who sits in heaven laughs. The word is like the word Isaac. Isaac means he laughs.

Yeah. The one in heaven, Isaacs. He thinks this is, in a sense, is laughable. Which, of course, it is, isn't it?

For the creature, the little creatures like us, to think that there's any mileage in standing up to God and defying him and beating him and trying to get one over on him.

And God says, this is so ridiculous. He laughs. And it says, so there's a parallelism, a parallel thing.

[18:59] The one sitting in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs. The Master scoffs at them. How ridiculous.

How ridiculous. You little human beings. You think that you can oppose me? You think you can get rid of me?

It's stupid. Now, we notice that God is not frustrated as we would be. We get frustrated if we don't get our own way, don't we?

We get annoyed. We get cross if we don't get what we want. God is not cross in that sense. He's not frustrated. He thinks it is laughable. For human beings to try and change the way that he does things, for human beings to try and get rid of him as ruler, for human beings to oppose him and think they can have any success in doing that, it's laughable.

And God says, I'll tell you what my solution to this is. I'll tell you what my counter-attack is, my counter-proposal. You are sort of agitating against me.

[20:20] And it says in verse 5, he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath. And he says, this is what I've done.

And there's a sort of emphasis. I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill. God's answer is to put his king in charge.

I anoint my king in Zion. Let me just have a little... I've got the word anointed there somehow.

But anyway, I put... I anoint my king in Zion, my holy hill. Let me just try and say a little bit about the holy hill.

There's heaven. There's earth. And there's an interface, a portal between them. And that's what the holy hill is. That's what Jerusalem is meant to be thought of.

[21:22] It's a sort of hill with a city and a temple. Of course, in the days of David, the temple hadn't yet been built. But it's a sort of interface between heaven and earth.

And God says, that's where I'm going to put my king. I've installed my king on Zion, my holy hill. And he's anointed. So I put some oil there because that's what they did with kings.

They anointed them. And God does this in his wrath. And the anointed one, as I think I said already, is the Messiah.

Messiah means anointed one. In the Greek version, it would be Christ, Christos. So these all mean the same thing. The Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. And the anointed one, presumably who wrote this, was King David.

But of course, the things said here are far bigger than David. And there comes a son of David who can sort of fill this description.

[22:24] It's a little bit like if you get a jacket from the charity shop and it's actually too big for you. And so you walk around with the arms dangling down like that.

And it's, you know, you can wear it. At a pinch, you could go out in it. But actually, you need somebody far bigger to fill it properly. And this psalm is like this big jacket.

David can fit into it. But it really needs somebody far bigger to fill it properly. And that's Jesus. We need a forever son on a forever throne.

And that's Jesus. Look at verse 7. This is the next person to speak, which is Messiah himself, who says, I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.

He said to me, You are my son. Today I have become your father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance. So the Messiah says, I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.

[23:38] So there's quite strong words there. I'm going to set this down as an important set of words. Now the other day I went and made a will, actually, because my will was about 20 years out of date.

And although that's just a sheet of A4, it's important words. And the solicitor sort of got me to sign them, made sure the words were right, put a copy in his safe, photographed it, photocopied it, and everything.

Those words are important. And these words are the same. When it says proclaim, there's perhaps the idea of declaring or inscribing.

These words, you know, just look at them, photocopy them, put them in the safe, keep coming back to them. These are important words. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord.

That's the Lord's decree. And what he said is, you are my son. Today I have become your father. The word for becoming father, actually, you can have a female.

[24:49] A female can use that as well. So I have become your parent. I have brought you to birth. Something like that. I have born you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

You will rule them with an iron scepter and dash them to pieces like pottery. Ask of me, I shall give the nations as inheritance, as a possession, the ends of the earth.

Break them with a staff of iron. There's an iron staff. Like vessels of clay, you shall shatter them. And it's a powerful statement, isn't it?

What does God write down and say, just make sure you've got those words right, keep them in the safe, because that's really an important set of words. It is, you are my son.

Today I have become your father. Ask of me, and all the nations are yours. All the nations are yours.

[25:53] All the Chinese are yours. All the Europeans are yours. All the Asian people are yours. All the people in Muslim countries are yours.

All of them. All of them. All of them. Ask of me, I give you all the nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth are yours. Your possession.

It's a huge statement. And you have authority over them, and as and when you so wish, if they are opposing you, you have the right to smash them as with a rod of iron, to rule them, to enforce your rule, to smash them like clay, like pottery.

It's a powerful statement, isn't it? A frightening statement. And we might say, Lord, you can do this. Please don't do it yet.

Please give us a chance before you do that. Because it's for certain that one day he will do that in the fullness of it.

[27:07] He will, there will be a day when he says to the nations, enough of your objection, enough of your contradiction, enough of this. You will worship me.

And every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, not voluntarily, but under compulsion. There will be such a day.

Now, before that, give us a chance, Lord, and we'll see some of that in a moment. Messiah speaks about what the Lord says to him.

You are my son. Today I have become your father. So let's just think about these words for a minute. When it says son, what is the meaning of that? You are my son.

Today I have become your father. Now, the New Testament will tell us that there is a depth to these words of the Holy Trinity, of the Trinitarian essential, essential, meaning of the essence, an eternal relationship between the father and the son.

[28:16] And I would say that you could read that back into it, but I don't think you could read it out of this in the first place. I think that's just not saying, I don't think David would have understood it to have been saying that here.

Son and father, an intimately connected ruler, a ruler connected to heaven in a very intimate way. It certainly says that. That's the promise to King David.

Your line will be like this. I will be Solomon will be my son, I will be his father.

That's how closely the David king thing works. I am father to this king, he is my son.

It's definitely that. And I'm interested in the context here. It says, you are my son, today I have become your father, you will inherit the nations.

[29:24] So I think inheriting is a big thing here. The son inherits. Now in my will, the provision is that my wife inherits.

But then after her, my three children would get a third each. Now then, this inheritance says the son gets everything the father has.

New Testament, Jesus will say the father loves me and shows me everything he does. And the New Testament will say he has given everything to the son.

There's nothing that the father has not given to the son. So certainly inheriting large scale and in the New Testament becomes eye-wateringly large.

Secondly, who is this talking about? Well, as I think we've already said, it's talking about Jesus. Jesus. This helps us know and understand who Jesus is.

[30:32] How great he is. How great. Question three, why does he have to say ask? Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance. I think there's something rather special here.

If you're a dad, I'm guessing you like to be asked. Is that right? Nightmare scenario.

Dad, please can I borrow the car? You would certainly like to be asked. But you wouldn't say no. At least, you probably wouldn't say no.

You might be back by, etc. But it's a father-child thing, in this case, a father-son thing, to be asked. Fathers like to be asked by their children.

Jesus is said here to ask his father. And he does, doesn't he? He says, glorify me with the glory I had with you before the world was made.

[31:41] Jesus lived in a relationship of asking his father. Do you not think I could ask my father and he'd send me X thousand angels to deliver me? It's a father-son thing of asking.

And isn't it an amazing thing that Christians enter into that same relationship? I would say it is a distinctively family thing, Christian prayer, where distinctively it begins our father who is in heaven. Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, or whatever it is. There's something distinctively Christian about asking the father.

And it's Christian because this is the wonderful relationship and privilege of the son, to ask his father and we're brought into that.

Isn't prayer amazing? We can ask our father as Jesus did. Now there is a call now to the kings. Verse 10, therefore, therefore you kings, or perhaps now you kings, be wise, be instructed you judges of the earth, rulers, judges, serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling.

[33:14] There's some kings who are serving the Lord with fear. When I looked up the word rejoice, I got something like spin round, but I'm not, I don't know whether that's, you can imagine people rejoicing and being animated but it puts it with trembling.

Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling, rejoice the Lord is king. Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way.

Because the son is capable of anger and it just makes sense to make friends with him. He says it's just a matter of intelligence, isn't it?

What he says, be wise, be warned, be instructed, it just makes sense. If this God is so powerful, if we are so much on the wrong side of him, it makes sense to get right with him.

That's what Christianity is. And he is, the son, it says, can destroy you if his wrath flares up in a moment or in a little, just a little bit of his wrath would make us into toast.

[34:40] It's just sensible to turn to him. And this blessing at the end, blessed are all who take refuge in him.

God is so, it is a matter of wisdom. Given the full picture, it makes sense to come to the Messiah and make friends with him.

His anger is real, to be feared, and avoided. Now, there's lots of reasons that people become Christians, Christians, and God is prepared to accept us.

We come all sorts of routes, and God says, as long as you got here, that's the main thing. But sometimes it's worth looking back and saying, actually, there were more reasons than I realised to become a Christian.

So you might have become a Christian because you found peace. That's brilliant. But I invite you to look back and say, actually, there's other reasons as well.

[35:50] I was a sinner. I deserved God's wrath. And that is what Jesus saves me from. What people might not realise is their biggest problem is not the here and now.

The biggest problem is what's going to happen on the last day when the king takes his rod of iron and smashes his enemies to pieces. And to avoid that is the ultimate reason to become a Christian. And maybe you haven't realised that, but it's something to be really grateful for. You saved me from that, Lord, even though I didn't realise that was the problem. And the kings are invited to serve the Lord with fear.

fear. Serve is the word for servant, to be a servant, to serve, to do things for him, to do the things he tells us to do. That's what our life is, to serve him.

And the fear is the respect that he deserves. It's a deep respect and the Bible is not shy about using the word fear for that.

[37:02] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. You ought to realise how great he is. and rejoice with trembling. And so here's something about attitude and obedience and respect and action.

And there's something about appreciation, to rejoice with trembling. To rejoice with trembling is to say something like this, I never deserved this mercy.

Just what I have escaped from, I hardly realised how bad my position was and now he's brought me here to this position of being part of his family and being blessed so that I can call him father.

This is just so brilliant, I can hardly begin to express it. I rejoice with trembling. And this promise to, of blessing of all who take refuge in him.

Taking refuge in him is a thing, isn't it? Because what it's saying is, he's the one I offended, he's the one I insulted, and my whole previous instinct was to go away from him, to avoid him, and even more so now I realise how I have offended him, I'm actually to turn round and take refuge in him.

[38:33] To go back to the one whom I have offended, a little bit like the prodigal son, do you remember who messed everything up with his dad? Messed everything up with his dad, and in the end he thought, this just

won't do.

I need to go back to the person I've offended, and to say to him, father, I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me as one of your hired servants.

Remember the father who has been on the lookout for his son coming back and he does what no dignified Middle Eastern gentleman does, he runs to his son and wraps his arms around him and says, yeah, you can take refuge in me, yeah.

blessed are those who take refuge in him. So to conclude, this is the call to the rebellious kings and to all of us.

This is the big perspective on your life and mine. It's not really about me and my moods and my feelings, it's about first and foremost the Lord and his anointed, their rule over this world.

[39:49] This psalm addresses the fact of cosmic rebellion and cosmic treason and says, now is the opportunity, now is the day, it just makes sense there is wisdom in getting right with him and living in service for him and to say, that's blessing.

Isn't that right? Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.