

Psalm 110:1-7

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[0 : 00] Again, the scripture text is Psalm 110, verses 1-7, on page 509 of the Blue Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies.

Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments, from the womb of the morning. The dew of your youth will be yours. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses.

He will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way. Therefore, he will lift up his head. This is the word of the Lord.

[1 : 05] Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and Christmas greetings to you, especially those of you who were birthed and raised in this church and now today return from college campuses or workplaces.

It's wonderful to have you here, as well as those who have come into town and are visiting family, even as a lot of our church family has gone to other corners of the world.

For four consecutive Sundays this Advent, we have been singing and sermonizing on songs.

Biblical songs. The word psalm itself. A song or something of praise.

Each Sunday, a song celebrating the Savior, Jesus. Heaven and earth's priestly king born to us on Christmas morn.

[2 : 27] I don't know where I would be 17 years in to this work at Holy Trinity without song.

The giftedness of musical composers is something to be cherished by all who know their worth. The splendid artistry of those, even in our midst, who can take command of Christmas words, texts written down, and set them to scores for musicians, notes that find life in instrumental ways.

That aspect of church life has been nothing short of a sustaining, soul-nourishing strength for me, my wife, over 17 years.

17 now Christmas seasons in Hyde Park. David, king of ancient Israel, was one who possessed just such a gift.

If you've had some exposure to the Bible, you may know something of that name and his military might or his adventurous life.

[4 : 14] But did you know that he wanted to be remembered first and foremost as the sweet psalmist of Israel?

The king. A songwriter. It fits. Because the portrait that the Bible paints of David has him bounding onto the pages of Scripture as one, quote, skilled in playing the lyre.

A stringed instrument, I'm guessing. It shows him writing music to celebrate the ark's advance into a holy city.

It reveals him actually to be the great organizer within the cultic worshiping community of Israel. The one over all musicians.

And so when the scrolls are found along the Dead Sea, it does not surprise me that there is a notation in one of the margins that ascribes to David some 3,600 hymns along with another 450 songs that come under his name.

[5 : 37] Indeed, the biblical Psalter, the book of the Psalms, there are no fewer than 73 of them that come to us under his name, including, take a look, Psalm 110, which I have chosen for our Christmas song this year.

Now, more often than not, composers choose a text written by somebody else. And they set somebody else's words to music.

At this time of year, you think of Handel and all of those, the myriad of splendid biblical texts that he then composes music around concerning the Messiah.

Yet, when you and I normally go to the Psalms, we think that these are not only songs composed for musicians by the author, but texts written by him as well.

Do we not often think, I read the law of Moses if I want to hear God talking to me. I read the prophets if I want to hear God talking to me, but I open the Psalms when I need to talk to God.

[7 : 00] Our words toward God. And yet, and here's the first surprise of Psalm 110, David does what is ordinarily done by composers.

He takes the words of someone else and sets them to music. Take a look at verse 1.

A Psalm of David. The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

Don't be mistaken to think that that opening header, a Psalm of David, is something the English translators dumped in above the Hebrew text.

No, it's part of the text. It's in the original tongue. You are knowing that what you have here is a Psalm of David, but notice, not one that he wrote.

[8 : 07] It is texts which comes from the voice of Yahweh, the Lord, as he spoke to Adonai, David's Lord.

In other words, in this Psalm, David, King of Israel, sweet psalmist of Israel, is taking a text of a conversation that took place between the Lord, all caps in your text, Yahweh, that name of God that the Jewish scribes adopted of the God of the covenant when they didn't want to write out His whole name lest they take it in vain.

Yahweh is speaking. Yahweh is speaking. These are His words, His text, and they are the words that He proclaimed to Adonai, or Master, Lord, a word often used in human relationships where there's an element of positional subordination in play.

Sarah says to Abraham, you are my Lord, my Adonai, not that they are unequal in any way, but positionally, she served Him in that way.

Yahweh, words given to Adonai. The surprise of verse 1 then is this, these words belong not to David, but to another.

[9 : 39] it indicates that King David was fortunate enough to overhear a conversation that took place in the heavenly throne room of God between Yahweh and Adonai and he ran home that day and copied them down and put it to musical score.

It reminds me of my childhood come Christmas. My parents would often entertain and so other family members would arrive into town and the adults wanted conversation into the late hours and sooner or later as the little kids they would tell us to scurry on off to bed and so up the stairs I went and into my covers I tucked and I could overhear them slightly from my bedroom in the living room below and I recall getting out quietly lest they hear my feet above them on the ceiling and almost sliding my way to the top of the stairs creaning my head and turning my ear to catch the conversation going on between the big people downstairs

David has been in a sense lifted to a conversation above to one in which Yahweh is host and speaker and Adonai is guest guest and receiver what is the content of what he overheard what of Yahweh's conversation with Adonai well first whatever it is it is something promised with prophetic overtones I had a wonderful time in the text this week and interestingly the very first word that arises in the text after that opening of psalm of David is the word that is translated in English says says the

Lord to Adonai this is not normal terminology for just a speech a word I'd like to talk with you this word is used only when it's endowed with this prophetic use that God himself is the one proclaiming something in other words this psalm is a declaration this is a proclamation David over here something that is prophetically put forward by the very mouth of God this is no ordinary conversation over late night coffee and notice what Yahweh promises to Adonai first you will rule in the midst of your enemies do you see verse 2 the

Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter rule in the midst of your enemies it's an imperative even within that context a declaration from God that Adonai is to rule rule govern but notice it isn't just governance in the sense of one who is normally elected to office under a constituency and see that puts them there govern in the midst of your enemies literally in the interior of those who are

against you and believe me if this is Yahweh speaking to Adonai that is his own Lord then the enemies referred to here are the enemies of Yahweh they are God's enemies God proclaims that there will be one someday who comes forth with his scepter or his staff with a primary intention of ruling governing not just those who are willing those who are unwilling those who pull against those who dig in under oh these are spiritual forces powers principalities that would undo the very will of [14 : 33] God I know these forces I've seen them over years at work even in my own life to resist to say God if you want me you're going to pull a toboggan uphill in wet!

snow! Yahweh says that the master the Lord Adonai will come with a staff from Zion and rule notice this very idea this enormous picture of a triumphant warrior who is actually entering into the enemy's gates and ruling from their own city hall is reprised in the text in verses 5 and 6 it's reprised at the end so that those of us who are singing this song might realize this is the fundamental emphasis of the word that was spoken on that day look at verses 5 and 6 the Lord is at your right hand he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath he will execute judgment among the nations filling them with corpses he will scatter!

chiefs over the wide earth now I don't know if you noticed the singing today one of the things I loved about the musical selections today is they strip any notion you had of sentimentality right out of Christmas now you may long for what you'll hear Christmas Eve but on this the fourth Sunday of Advent we had the music the composition of Christmas in connection with a divine warrior who rules who scatters who pierces the word there in verse five on the reprise well one of the words there in his wrath or in his anger is literally in his nose this the one who comes is breathing hard what an enormous picture a prophetic promise of a triumphant warrior arrayed in battle dress fully capable of entering enemy territory and ruling in their midst not from afar such as the promise that Yahweh made to Adonai you shall rule in the midst of your enemies verse two but then as if he divides humanity into two groups verse three not only will he rule in the midst of his enemies he will also receive the voluntary service of his own people take a look your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power in holy garments from the womb of the morning and the dew of your youth will be yours this promise this prophetic word is that while those who are unruly will fall under his voice there is a whole other subset who willingly voluntarily receive his reign and give themselves to him fully and notice the poetic imagery these are those like those who come from the womb in the morning this youthful new resurrected like life new life in the morning where the dew is still upon the grass

I think even back in the book of judges where they are preparing to go into the promised land and it indicates that the people gave themselves fully and voluntarily to the work that there was a host an army that belonged to Adonai who themselves would be arrayed not only in garments that are pure and holy but in battle dress ready to do his bidding in this world and he will receive their service for it will be free it will come willingly voluntarily under no compulsion like a bride down an aisle one who's been tutored mentored under the arm of her father and now being transferred into the arm of a husband and where he goes his voluntary people go and how he dresses his voluntary people dress they will give themselves to him freely they will be eager to do it they will be an agreeable people they will be a willing people they will be a joyful people they will be what

[20 : 17] I one day was not resistance to all that his rule would require so here's the other portrait not only is there an enormous portrait of a triumphant ruler but there is an immense portrait of a resplendent people who are arrayed in their best literally coming from all over that they might be enlisted with him I read this week Isaiah 60 and I commend it to you for it is a text which speaks of a light dawning in a dark place and it speaks of people willingly voluntarily joyfully beginning to take up the cause of Adonai gone are the days of their resistance gone are the days of their rebellion for today was the day of their salvation indeed this text promises that that very thing happens your people will offer themselves freely

David hears this from the top of the stairs there is one who will come will rule in the midst of his enemies there is one who will come who will receive the voluntary service of his own people in verse four this one will arrive!

in a manner of Melchizedek the priest the Lord has sworn will not change his mind you that is the Adonai to whom he's referring are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek again you see the way that the psalm opened by way of prophetic command and declaration here it's carried forward by promise and by oath that is unchangeable God will do this you will rule you will be received and the one who comes will come in the manner and the likeness of Melchizedek the priest now if you're

not familiar with the scriptures and I know that many of us are beginning just now to look at these consistently in our life you need to know a couple of things first the English translation of the order of Melchizedek could be better stated this is not order in the sense of a bloodline descent there wasn't an order of

Melchizedek that carried forward from Melchizedek to son and a priesthood in that way and it's not some kind of fraternal line of succession you know how you can become a member of an order or a secret society of sorts that elects their offices as if this one would be duly elected within their society and carry forward the order of Melchizedek no no rather the order of Melchizedek would be more rightly stated the manner of Melchizedek or the likeness in which Melchizedek came in other words that God's kingly priest is open to Melchizedek by way of analogy so to come after the order of Melchizedek is to bear some likeness to Melchizedek to come after the order of

Melchizedek is to come along under the scene in similar ways as Melchizedek did and so therefore you have to ask well who is Melchizedek and how did he come he's a shadowy Old Testament figure he's a vapor on the pages of holy writ he's gone before you knew he was there but you'll find him in scripturated in Genesis 14 turn over and take a look at his cameo sketch from Melchizedek arrives in Genesis 14 verse 15 and he's gone by the time verse 21 is done he arrives in the scriptures directly after a moment when

[25 : 17] Abram Israel's father of faith rescued his family member Lot from the hand of tribal kings who had gone to war against the kind of city state ruler of the town in which Lot lived namely Sodom so here was Lot dwelling in Sodom under Sodom's king and four others took up arms against them and Lot himself was carried off as booty and Abram went and did some battle and got his family home and at that moment we read verse 15 and Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine he was priest of

God most high and he blessed him and said blessed be Abram by God most high possessor of heaven and earth and blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand and Abram gave him a tenth of everything and he's gone in our psalm God Yahweh has said that Adonai will be a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek now we know that Melchizedek comes into the text with no stated origins simply he's called by name king of righteousness melech Hebrew for king zadik righteousness we don't know who named him but he is king of righteousness and notice he's king of a particular topographical region called

Salem peace you don't know anything else about his origins other than that he is king righteousness and from peace second he appears only once in priestly service and disappears from the pages of the Bible this is long before Moses will arrive and a priesthood will actually even be established third by way of priestly service notice in Genesis 14 he set bread and wine before Abram in other words he gave provision to the father of faith as that father of faith was involved in the work of delivering his family fourth he blessed

Abram he announced God's approval upon him and wonderfully through verse 20 there at the end he received tribute from Abram 10% of all that Abram had recovered he gave to this mysterious priest Melchizedek the implication is this to arrive in the manner and likeness of Melchizedek is to arrive on the scene with a sense of mystery God promises prophetically that the Adonai who will rule over the enemies and receive the voluntary service of his own will somehow be shrouded in a sense of mystery concerning his own origin no one will be quite sure where he comes from other than the knowledge that wherever he goes he's associated with kingship and righteousness and peace to arrive in the manner and likeness of Melchizedek will be able to complete in a single act of priestly service that is known only in terms of offering bread and wine for those who are following hard after

God and then having done so to disappear to arrive in the manner and likeness of Melchizedek is to pronounce blessed upon those who have faith and to tell them they have God's approval before you go to arrive in the manner and likeness of Melchizedek is to recognize that although you stand before the father of faith as Melchizedek stood before Abram the father of all faithful that even though you stand before the stature of one like Abram you nevertheless outrank him and in readiness receive from him a tithe of his own hard fought earnings and kingdom work for David king of Israel in Psalm 110 the implications would be grand here is one that is so majestic in priestly service that the father of faith falls before here is one that

[30 : 56] David now learns that even though he has been appointed king over all people must be king before can you imagine the moment when it fell upon David as he heard the conversation the

implication of Psalm 110 God was bringing one into the world who must be king of kings for David was king and lord of all lords what a majestic image of a high priest here he comes with gems and stones upon his breast the voluntary service of those who were there David in Psalm 110 saw nothing less than a kingly priest clearly in later times the itinerant preacher

Jesus of Nazareth would wrestle hold of this Psalm and he seemed to employ it whenever he wanted to use it most it seems to me he must have used it more than a few times in other words he knew this one worked wherever he went because at least on three occasions in the first three gospels he lays hold of this Psalm to stymie the religious leaders of his own day regarding the kind of Messiah that they should be looking for they wanted one who was the son of David and he grabbed this to indicate well whoever it is he's not merely David's son but David's lord and David's king it won't surprise you sitting as we are in a Christian worship service to learn that the followers of Jesus expressed this psalm to be fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth for them the apostolic band Jesus was the one promised in Psalm 110 for them they grabbed this psalm to indicate that he is the one who rules over all enemies of God he is the one who receives all the free offerings of his people he is the one who comes in the manner of the priest that completes his work and goes his way giving blessing the apostle Peter in Acts 2 will grab Psalm 1 to say that Jesus supersedes David that

Jesus was the king of kings like David that Jesus in other words is greater than all of God's appointed monarchs Paul the apostle will grab hold of Psalm 110 in 1st Corinthians 15 to use it to show that Jesus is greater than all of God's enemies he will quote the part where Yahweh is at work putting all the enemies under Jesus feet in other words that Jesus is greater than all of God's nemesis the writer to the Hebrews will use Psalm 110 at least three times first in the first chapter to say that Jesus is superior to angels angels were the ministers of God they were the messengers! of God they were the ones who carried speech for God in other words the writer to the Hebrews will say and to which of his angels did he ever say I'm going to!

[35 : 16] In other words Jesus is greater than all of God's messengers all of God's prophets all of God's preachers and in Hebrews 5 and in Hebrews 7 the writer will go on to use Psalm 110 again to prove that Jesus is the one who came in a manner and likeness of Melchizedek that Jesus is greater than the mysterious and ancient priest namely he's the fulfillment of it all the New Testament apostolic claim is complete the link between Jesus and Psalm 110 he's superior to all of God's monarchs he's greater than all of God's nemesis he's clearer and more trustworthy than all of God's messengers!

He is the one who offers priestly provision in the tradition of the ancient priest Melchizedek and there there we come in my mind to the greatest surprise of all that this king of kings arrayed in battle garb this lord of all lords dressed to subdue his enemy this one who is capable of overthrowing spiritual forces and powers at work in the world and even in you and me this one to whom people all over the world will run in voluntary service to enlist that they might join him in his fight that they might pay tribute to him of all they earn this one who is greater than all is this one in a manger laid this one of humble birth this one in weakness absolutely completely dependent on the sustenance of his mother this one king of kings lord of lords how does one capture the significance of this strange starting place in

Bethlehem it's not that the Christmas story is merely incredible it is more from a human standpoint and from my own wisdom this is inconceivable give me a thousand years to meditate and compose music concerning one who rules for God give me a millennium to find the precise way of communicating a world of voluntary service to him give me ten thousand ten thousand years to speak of one who would be dressed in the array of a priest that would actually be able to bring me into his presence faultless with great joy and I would never in all those years have considered once that he's in Bethlehem don't give me this sentimental straw ah they laid them on straw that's not what's the nice soft material today not that

I've been on a farm I've been on a bale that's that's bad stuff that's worse than any itchy blanket God has overthrown the wisdom of the world and bringing his son to you and to me on a manger bed kingly priest the arrival coming born on Christmas morn no wonder no wonder composers will continue to put words to text lovely child holy child gentle mild undefiled infant king fairest king gifts will bring and anthems sing

Rainer Rilke meditating on Mary holding Jesus even as three foreign rulers bring gifts to him wrote see the God who rumbled over nations makes himself mild and in thee comes into the world hast

thou imagined him greater what is greatness right through all measures that he crosses goes his straight path even a star has no such path see then these kings are great and they drag before thy lap treasures that they hold to be the greatest and thou art perhaps astonished at this gift but look into the folds of thy shawl how even now he has exceeded all what

[42 : 05] David heard what the apostles said what we do bend our knee willingly to the one born in weakness take all of your long stubborn road and fall before the babe in Bethlehem offer ourselves freely voluntarily lest you offer yourself unwillingly sing songs of praises joyfully write some words personally

I close with these Yahweh's king put down in text long before Christmas day declared Adonai master lord rightly seated with God on high this promised king from Zion comes with staff to rule and sheep to lead by force alone unruly fall while newborn youth come freely by oath alone an unbending mind will Yahweh's king ascend his throne yet priest also and in manner he who in ancient shadow

Abram did see kingly priest then he shall be in weakness came in humble birth in manger laid this king of kings enormity and lord of lords immensity yes kingly priest is bread and wine a babe is he to him our souls salute to him our bodies given to him in manger come on bended knee our heavenly father this kingly priest who comes on the pages of scripture long before christmas may each of us here give ourselves freely to him as we find him in weakness born at christmas in jesus name i pray amen