

Freedom out of Kingdom

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[0 : 00] We're reading from Psalm chapter 2. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst the bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage. And the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

[1 : 09] Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest you be angry and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Last week we talked about man's desire for blessedness, as Simon has said.

We actually don't know what blessedness is. I mean, if you're not there, you never know what actually blessedness is. I mean, I'm not sure whether you've eaten durian before.

I don't think many of you have eaten durian. So, I mean, a lot of people thought that durian was a very, what is it, yucky food.

It just tastes like vomit. They say, oh, it smells like vomit. But unless you have eaten it, you never know what good taste is. I can assure you that.

[2 : 16] And that is something that reminds us that when we talk about blessedness, we don't actually know what that is because we're never there.

What we are seeking is we want to avoid suffering. We don't know what sufferings are. We know what poverty is. We know what hunger is, what sickness is. And we want to avoid those.

And that's as best as we can do as human beings. We don't actually know what more than that is there that we can have. And so, last week we talked about Gautama Buddha.

He was trying to solve that problem of suffering. And he thought that suffering was caused by a person's craving. A craving causes suffering, which is true in that way.

Today I want to talk about another philosopher, Karl Marx. Karl Marx, he was one about 200 years ago now. And Karl Marx thought that suffering was caused by inequality of power in the world.

[3 : 27] Karl Marx was a highly intelligent man. His father was a Jewish lawyer. And when Karl Marx was six years old, his father changed their religion from Judaism to Christianity because his father needed to adopt Christianity to be allowed to work as a lawyer in the country where they live, in Prussia.

I think it's called, pronounce it Prussia or Prussia. That is part of German at that time. Now, growing up in a Lutheran church, I suppose there would be resentment to the fact that they needed to change religion.

Karl Marx had enough of religion. He said, religion is the opinion of the people. As he could think that people, a lot of people were using opinion at that time.

So after you inhaled opinion, you will become drowsy and you become unconscious of your pain. And so for a short period of time, an hour or so, you are just out of the world and forget about the suffering.

And so to Karl Marx, religion does not solve any problem. It just sort of covers it up for a while. And at times, religion also makes people suffer more because they demand or it demands these followers to do something that is difficult or not pleasant.

[4 : 54] And so about 150 years ago, he published this Communist Manifesto. So his longing was to create a better world, a world in which there is no suffering.

So the basic problem, as he saw, was that there were two major classes of people in the world, the honours class and the working class, or the landlords, or the tenants.

So a class of people who own things and a class of people who work for those who own things. And during his time, most of the honours would be kings and rulers.

And those rulers, because they got the power, so they can exploit the workers to squeeze all the profits out of them. So the rich were getting richer.

The poor remained poor forever. So in the Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx encouraged the workers to work together to topple the honours.

[5 : 55] He also saw that this cannot sustain because how can life, during that, somebody has to do something. And so he encouraged people to do that. While during his time, he didn't actually get acceptance.

He was kicked out of many countries. Because all the rulers were like his ideas. But eventually, after his death, in 1917 in Russia, the working class successfully toppled the ruling class.

And then the Communist movement started to gain momentum in many countries. So as the revolutions progressed, honours, the workers started to redefine the honours.

So they are no longer just land honours. It could be all sorts of honours. So when, for example, when communism reached Cambodia in 1974, honours, the workers were so jealous that they killed all the educated people, including anyone who wore glasses.

So apparently, if you own knowledge, you can also oppress people. So anyone who, in particular, anyone who just worked just by talking, like teachers or clergy or businessmen, and they don't actually do, didn't do any physical work.

[7 : 20] So they were all killed, these people. So under the communist ideology, in less than five years, Cambodia was plunged from a poor country under the oppression of their former king into a lawless and stone-edged country.

Because they destroyed all the intelligent, educated people, destroyed all the machines they used for farming. They just back to using manual things to do things.

Because the whole country has gone crazy under the ideology of communism. And during that five years, out of the eight million people in Cambodia, two million people died.

One quarter is incredible. In many countries, after the workers were free from the honours of oppression, they tortured and killed anyone who were considered to be honours.

Because it is estimated that about 200 million people died in the war because of the communist movement. So communism has been abandoned by most countries, except in some countries where the communist leaders become the new honours.

[8 : 34] These countries still hold on to communism because it maintains the power of the ruling party. But they don't actually practice it anymore.

While Guatemala Buddha's goal is for an individual to get to a state of low suffering, Karl Marx's goal was for a community, a community to get to a state of low suffering. Karl Marx believed that the whole world would adopt communism and live in paradise.

However, the world soon found that communism led to more suffering. Where had Karl Marx gone wrong? While Buddha left God out of the picture of his ideal, Karl Marx went all out against God.

He considered the idea of God to be oppressive. He thought that by freeing people from the fear of God, they would be free to create their own paradise. If Karl Marx had lived in Cambodia during the time of communism, he himself would have been killed as well as one of those who own knowledge.

In real life, Karl Marx was like a scoffer. He didn't actually do anything physically. He just sat there, gave up his idea. If you read history, his house was quite unkempt.

[9 : 53] He would be sitting there doing nothing, even though things are not tidy. The wife is the one who worked. He didn't care about those children. He would get drunk if he was not doing anything else.

So there's his life. His ideal, he did not actually translate into the change of his own life.

And so the communist experience showed that political and economic freedom does not necessarily bring a better living condition. Because people are selfish. We have ideals, but we do not want to, we can't change ourselves, not to mention about the world.

So we will use any freedom when we are not under oppression. We will use freedom for our own wishes. And when there's no fear of God, as communism will remove God, there will be no respect to authority and human life.

And that's why a communist country, they rely on secret police to maintain their power. They know that nobody actually respected them because they didn't respect any other authority either.

[11:12] So Karmak's idea was not new. So those who felt that they were oppressed have tried to topple the oppressors since history began. So in our reading today, Psalm 2 talks about God's plan for his creation in the world's attempts to gain freedom from God.

Men wanted to be free from the kingdom of God. They did not know that the real freedom can only be found in the kingdom of God.

It's like blessedness. If you have never been there, we don't know what it is. And if you never tasted the freedom that is in the kingdom of God, we only know about our own little experience of what freedom is.

Psalm 2 is divided into four parts. And each part has got three verses. Part 1 describes how the world views God. Part 2 describes what God has planned to do. Part 3 tells us the one who is ultimately sovereign.

Part 4 is a call to repentance and blessing. So I will just read to you again part 1 from verses 1 to 3.

[12:24] Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst their bones apart and cast away their court from us.

Why do the nations make noise? What do people and their rulers hope to achieve? Though they want to be free from the oppression of God. Why do people think that God's rule is oppressive? Because God's rule requires them to do what they do not like doing. I think we can understand this by thinking about our childhood.

Most children would feel that their parents were oppressive in some stage of their life as they grew up. They wish that their parents would give them freedom to do what they like to do.

It's only when we become more mature, sometimes only when we have our own children, that we begin to understand a bit or appreciate what our parents did to us.

[13:37] I mean, our good parents. And because we can never become God ourselves, so I think we can never fully appreciate God's action.

We can, many a times, we can only trust that God knows what he's doing and God is good and he will do what is good for us as well.

In the history, we can see that the Israelites did the same thing. After they were free from the oppression of Egyptians, they preferred to be their own rulers, to replace the God who rescued them with a golden calf just in front of the mountain of God.

Why golden calf? Because golden calf let them live in the wild way they want. And when they settled in the promised land, a land thrown with milk and honey, would they be careful to live under God's rule?

No. They choose to worship foreign gods. Again, because those gods let them do what they like. And also, they wanted a king to rule over them like the nations around them.

[14:50] So we all like to have rulers who are after our own hearts and not after God's heart. The rulers of the world would also like to declare independence from God and the king whom God has chosen because they do not want to lose their position and power.

And we can see that during Jesus' time, the Pharisees and the priests, they were against Jesus because they saw that Jesus was attracting more followers.

And so these rulers, they can think that God's rule is oppressive, but they do not think that their own rules are oppressive as well. They want to cut the cord like a dog wants to break the leash from his good master.

The dog thought that he can navigate the streets better than his master. So we will come to part two, that is verses four to six.

He who sits in the heavens laugh. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

[16:09] How would you respond to a young boy who wants to declare independence from his parents? Or a man who leads blood transfusions to save his life, cutting off the transfusion lines so that he could walk out of the hospital?

Such acts reveal a person's ignorance, foolishness, and willful rebellion. In some two, the rebellious act is planned and led by kings.

It is a willful act. Such a decision is lovable. It is lovable because so-called intelligent rulers carefully devise ways to cut themselves off from God, and they think they have achieved something great for themselves and humanity.

They ban the preaching of gospel in their countries. They ban scripture, teaching, and prayer in schools. They remove the sanctity of marriage.

They take away the value of human life. They reduce parents' right to discipline their children, or in the name of freedom from oppression. At the same time, they oppress those who want to follow God's ways.

[17 : 23] God is not going to re-courcer his ways with the foolish and rebellious rulers. He simply said, I have appointed my king on Zion, my holy hill. You do not try to explain to a child how electricity works.

You simply tell him in a stern voice not to touch the electricity outwards, because they are not. You can't explain things that when people don't understand, or not at that level to understand.

We will go to part three now, verses seven to nine. I will tell the decree, the Lord said to me, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a porter's vessel.

Why does God need to set up a king? Isn't God a king himself as God? Why is there a need? I think there are at least two reasons.

[18 : 33] One, because God is spirit. He's providing us a king with a human body, whom we can relate to. Number two, from someone, we know that we have fallen short of God's glory, because we have thought, talked, and done things which are unrighteous, and we have no interest in God's law.

He has provided the righteous man in Jesus Christ. We can become right with God through his life and death. After we reconcile with God, how do we live?

Do we still live as individuals doing our own things? No. No. We become God's people and new creation. Those who are in Christ now live in his kingdom.

God has set up his king to establish his kingdom. So, in Psalm 1, God is leading us into righteousness. In Psalm 2, God is leading us into his kingdom as a community.

And we don't live as a Christian just on our own, by myself, at home. That is not God's plan. You stop at Psalm 1.

[19 : 48] God's plan is more than that. There's Psalm 2. And that is the church. That is the community. And that is the living up of that righteous life. And that's why there's a king, because we can't do it on our own.

And we need a king to lead us and rule over us and guide us and also lead us to live a life that is holy. So, who is worthy for God to annoy as the king of his choice?

Only the righteous man in Psalm 1 who fulfills the rules of God is worthy to be God's anointed ruler. God has provided his son, Jesus Christ, live out a life of righteousness.

He is therefore worthy to be God's chosen king. He is also therefore worthy to judge sinners. He is the king. He is going to be judging us.

And he is worthy to judge us, not only because he is God's son, because he has lived a life of righteousness himself. We have no excuse in front of him. And after his death and resurrection, Jesus declared that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[20 : 58] At that time, he formally informed the world that he is the king whom God has set up in Psalm 2. We go to the last three verses, verses 10 to 12.

Now, therefore, O kings, be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who took refuge in him.

Knowing that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ, what should the rulers of the world do? They can keep ignoring him or rejecting him.

They can keep cutting themselves off from God and live for eternal destruction. God's command to the rulers is to serve this ultimate king with fear and rejoice in him with trembling.

[22 : 04] Who are the kings and rulers of our world now? So in a democratic society, we can be considered our own kings. So if we don't have a king, then we are the king, the kings or the rulers.

Why should we serve Jesus Christ and not our own purposes? Because he's the only king who is worthy for us to live and die for. And why serve him with fear?

Because we need to fear before we take anything seriously. The fear is not only about fearing God, but also about fearing ourselves. We can only make judgments based on our own limited knowledge and wisdom.

I fear that I would hold on to my judgment and reject wiser advice. I'm often amazed by the way patients insisting on their own wills, refusing to accept sound medical advice.

The less we know about something, the more we think that we know it all. isn't it the same? I mean, when I was in medical school, I thought I knew everything before I graduated.

[23 : 20] But as I work in it, the longer I know that, the longer I know that I don't know anything about medicine or a little. It's so easy for us to think that we know everything.

and not only with God, we're relating to people. We know how people live, how they think. All these are very, I mean, this is how we live.

And that's why I fear. I fear that I would be so, I don't know that I'm, when I'm foolish, I don't know that I'm foolish. That is what I fear the most.

And so, fearing God and fearing our own tifulness and foolishness. And why rejoice in Him?

Because I know that despite my stubbornness and foolishness, Jesus the King has loved me and died for me. Because there's now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

[24 : 22] why trembling? Because we need to take things, because we tend to take things for granted, we need to keep reminding ourselves that we are saved by His grace and we need His grace day by day to keep ourselves humble.

It is so easy for us to take what is familiar for granted. We can become careless to those who are most familiar to us. And we tend to take people for granted when we get to know them better.

And the same thing we can do towards God. And that's why the trembling that we want to know that we don't become proud in our thought about God.

When our practice changed our building policy this year from Bob Building for Private Building, I was amazed that no patient whom I have been Bob Building for the past 10 years thanked me for that.

Everyone was complaining about needing to pay for my service now. When things are free, like God's grace, it's so easy for us to take it for granted.

[25 : 39] and I and I and so that word is very powerful. Surfing with fear, rejoicing and trembling.

Kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way for his wrath is quickly kindled. Kissing the son is a sign of submission. This sound sounds a bit oppressive, doesn't it?

submit to the son or else he will dash you into pieces. If you think so, we need to check our definition of oppression. Our foolish and biased minds have often confused justice with oppression.

We have grossly overvalued our worth and goodness and at the same time grossly undervalued God's son's worth and goodness. While we feel free to pronounce judgment on God, we do not accept judgment from God.

God is not man. He does not need to use his power to oppress people. Whatever he does is done according to his nature, to his nature of holiness and kindness.

[26 : 52] If the consequence for a child to play with erraticity is serious because it's a matter of life and death, the consequence for God's creature to break God's law is even more serious because it is a matter of eternal life and death.

God has given us a warning about the consequence of rejecting his rule and rejecting his ruler. He's fully expected and justified to judge those who choose to live as if there's no God.

We thank God that the last sentence in the psalm is blessed is all who take refuge in him. God has not only given us a warning about submitting to this king, he also promised blessing to those who take refuge in this king.

He has sent this king to redeem us. The punish of God has first fallen onto this king. Many kings in the world are kings because they were born in a royal family.

God's king does not only become king because he is the son of God, he is king also because he earned the kingship. He came to suffer and die for his people.

[28 : 07] One of the blessings for those who take refuge in God's kingdom is freedom. Surprisingly, when people want freedom, they want to get away from God's kingdom, but the real freedom is in God's kingdom.

In Luke 4, verses 18 and 19, Jesus said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind and set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Galatians 5, 1 says, For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore, do not sum again to a yoke of slavery. God has set up his king to bring in the ultimate freedom, a freedom which can only be achieved by submission to this king.

We are all deficient, ineffective, and deceitful. Only the true king can make us whole. If what you want is to topple this king, if what we want is to topple this king, then we are making a death wish.

[29 : 20] you may not want to listen to a doctor's advice to stop drinking soft drinks as you think that soft drinks are the best things in life. But if you submit to the doctor's advice and drink water instead, you will find yourself able to enjoy many more things in life as you get older.

Karl Marx thought that religion is open for the people. It is true that religion can lead to more burden and does not really solve suffering in life.

But even opinion gives some comfort and relief to the users. It may not be long term, but at least you give people some reprieve.

If religion is opinion to the people, e-religion is soft drinks to the people. E-religion tells people to enjoy themselves in whatever they like.

it is like soft drinks, which give people short term enjoyment, but need too many sufferings later, individually and in the community.

[30 : 29] The King Jesus is more than religion. He is also more than communism. We can only be free to be holy and kind in Jesus. Without this radical change inside us, there will not be any paradise with any religious or irreligious ideologies.

It is only in Jesus that we can have peace with God, with ourselves, and with others. Let us pray. Father, we are so thankful for your forbearance upon us.

we are just like little children, very short-sighted, and wondering very, very little things.

We thank you for such a promise that no one has seen, no one has heard. You have prepared for those who love you. May you help us to see that in the Lord Jesus Christ and live for him.

Thank you, Father, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.