

The Lord Reigns over 2024

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 January 2024

Preacher: Andy Meadows

[0 : 00] The reading today is Psalm 93, which can be found on page 598 in the Church Bible. That's Psalm 93 on page 598.

The Lord reigns. He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed. He has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved.

Your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord.

The floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their roaring.

Mightier than the thunders of many waters. Mightier than the waves of the sea. The Lord on high is mighty. Your decrees are very trustworthy.

Holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore. As Benji said, my name is Andy. I am acting lead pastor here at Grace Church.

[1 : 00] You can follow along with our talk with the headings on the PowerPoint behind me or on the back of the server sheet. You can jot some things down. Let's pray as we look at God's word.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Well, Happy New Year. I always don't quite know how long you can say Happy New Year for. So I'm going to say it once now. Happy New Year. And I don't have to say it again. It's great.

But as we look to a brand new year, I wonder what your expectations are for the next 12 months. January is that point that allows us that fresh breath of optimism, perhaps.

This year, I'll manage to do this. This year, as a world, we will achieve this. But as we grow older, perhaps grow wiser to how the world works and the world is, perhaps we realise that this coming year, in all likelihood, is going to be pretty much the same as last year, or at least very, very similar.

[2 : 16] And if we think back over the past few years, well, the world doesn't seem to be getting better and better, does it? Just that perhaps we're becoming more and more accustomed to bad news.

The Collins Dictionary word for the year 2022 was perma-crisis, meaning an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events.

For 2023, the word greedflation was on their shortlist. I don't quite know what that means, but it doesn't sound very positive, does it? Greedflation. There are plenty of reasons to be fearful as we look ahead.

Some of us, I'm sure, will face health issues, family issues, employment issues, exams. Some of us may be really dreading the year ahead.

Well, wonderfully, as we start a new year, these words of our psalm this morning draw us back to our unchanging, all-powerful, almighty God who reigns, even through the perma-crisis all around us.

[3 : 30] Well, we've jumped into a small collection of psalms this morning that repeats the same theme that started in verse 1 of Psalm 3.

The first three words. The Lord reigns. The Lord reigns. Lord here being God's covenant name, Yahweh, revealed to Moses in the Exodus as he rescues his people.

He is the God who makes people for himself and keeps them and demonstrates his goodness and his faithfulness time and time again when his people waver and when they rebel.

And so despite how bleak things looked in 2023, despite how things bleak might look this year in 2024, this is a psalm to point us back to the Lord's rule all over the world, whenever and wherever we are.

And that's really our first point this morning. The Lord reigns eternally and globally. The Lord reigns eternally and globally. The psalm starts off in a throne room.

[4 : 45] We're given a picture of a strikingly powerful king. If you look down at verse 1. The Lord reigns. He is robed in majesty.

The Lord is robed. He has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established. It shall not. It shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old.

You are from everlasting. The most watched TV programme or event of 2023 was unsurprisingly the coronation of King Charles, followed by Happy Valley and then Eurovision, if you want to know that.

But at the coronation, we saw King Charles with his robes. And then go behind a curtain to, for some reason, take them off and put them back on again. Well, these robes, well, those robes were fine, weren't they?

But these robes, well, they're no match. The king of creation has robes in Psalm 93. These robes are made of majesty. They are armed with strength.

[5 : 52] This is no token monarchy, but real power. If this king would have a portrait done of him, he'd be wearing two things at the same time, a majestic velvet robe and a suit of armour.

Because this is a king of majesty and strength. I don't know if you go to the Tate Gallery or the National Gallery and you see portraits of kings and queens and you see the caption underneath of when they reigned and where they reigned.

Well, what would be the caption of this king's portrait? What's the location of his kingdom? The world is established. Put away the atlas. There are no borders to his reign, no superpowers out of his control.

The Lord's rule is endless and cannot be usurped. He has no vulnerability to military coup. To quote the well-known children's song, the Lord indeed does have the whole world in his hands.

He is the universal king of creation from the smallest molecule to the biggest mountain. Everything bears his fingerprints and sits under his reign. Well, if that's the territory, that's the borders, the whole earth, what about the dates?

[7 : 11] Verse two, your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting. And then verse five, holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

This is not a new God on the block. He is not frightened of a successor. He is not hiding away. There will never be another God on this worldwide throne.

He has ruled everywhere from all eternity. As Julian prayed earlier, 2024 is an election year.

In fact, it's the biggest global election year in history. More than 60 countries representing half the world's population will go to the polls this year. An estimated four billion people voting in elections. Those elections will range from the massive, India's multi-day legislative elections, the largest in the world, to tiny North Macedonia's presidential election.

[8 : 16] I guess there'll be elections we'll keep a close eye on, won't there? At America, at Taiwan, and of course here in the UK. And yet, Psalm 93 encourages us that all this takes place under God's global rule.

I guess, I guess, though, it's easy to look back at world history and think and doubt that verses one and two could be true. We could bring to mind lots of evidence that seemingly points to the contrary and think that, well, God has fallen asleep at the wheel.

He's fallen asleep on the job. Yet instead, we hear the wonderfully commanding and reassuring voice of the Lord here, telling us there is nothing that can dethrone him, nor is there anything out of his reach, nor is there anything that has surprised him or caught him off guard.

So when we lost a loved one last year, or perhaps to come this year, or when an election result doesn't go the way we want it to, when wars continue around the world, or when we struggle with ill health or loneliness, or the presence of sin in our hearts, we can look at Psalm 93 and be reassured that all happened and will happen this year within the confounds of the Lord's eternal and global reign.

He did not, and he will not, lose control. That is a great comfort to us, but if you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus this morning, that comfort is also a warning because God lays claim to all time and space and people.

[10 : 05] And this small collection of Psalms tell us that God's kingship is forever. They tell us how he will come to judge the earth. And he calls on people to acknowledge him as king, to bend the knee willingly and gladly before the king of creation.

The Lord lays claim to every location and every day of history, and we need to keep fixing our minds on that. Well, it's possible to think, well, that's very well, but we know life is not straightforward.

We know that if we talk to people on a cancer ward, to refugees fleeing war, if we talk to the family of those stabbed on our streets, it's far from obvious on the ground level perhaps that the Lord reigns.

If that's how we feel like responding to this big truth, well, then the Bible has got there first and given us an answer. So secondly, the Lord reigns in the face of chaos.

The Lord reigns in the face of chaos. Over Christmas, we went to the seaside where I grew up. I'd see my parents, and during winter, storms crash against the seawall where we went for our brisk New Year's Day walk.

[11 : 29] It's almost like the ground is shaking, and you get absolutely soaked if you stand too close. Well, that's the picture here in verses three and four.

We've moved from the throne room to the seaside. The psalm goes from the steadiness and stability of the Lord's rule over all we see to the unsteady and unstable waters of the world in which we live.

The geographers in the room will know that big waves come in three. Well, so too in Psalm 93, actually. Have a look at verse three. The floods have lifted up, O Lord.

The floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their roaring, mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea.

The Lord on high is mighty. Storm Babette was the biggest UK storm last year, I read. The third wettest three-day period in England and Wales, plus 60 mile-an-hour winds, followed by Storm Ciaran.

[12 : 39] And now 400 flood warnings are in place across the country. And we're probably seeing the pictures on the news with hundreds of homes evacuated.

Perhaps there's some here who can remember the great storm of 1987, where 100 mile-an-hour winds brought devastation across the country. 18 people killed, 15 million trees blown down.

As frail humanity, we know nothing can be done to avoid the wild, untamed power of storms and the sea.

And rather appropriately, the author of Psalm 93 uses that to illustrate the power of the chaos that we see in the world around us. In fact, throughout the Bible, the sea is used to represent chaotic forces of sin and evil that are opposed to the Lord's rule and that threaten his people.

And the psalmist knows as well as we do how helpless we are in the face of chaotic forces that come our way time and time again. The UK threat level is currently substantial, meaning an attack is likely.

[14 : 02] And basically, the level, it just hovers between substantial and severe every so often go from one to the other. The psalmist here knows the assault of sin and darkness and evil.

That is our lived experience as well. And comfort for the Christian does not come in saying otherwise. Perhaps, I feel sorry for the TV weather presenter, Michael Fish.

He will always be remembered, won't he, for telling viewers in 1987 that a storm is not going to happen and then three hours later it hits.

Well, for the Christian, we can trust the Lord who is mightier. We don't just think it's not going to happen, but we trust the Lord.

Three times in verses three and four, we're told the Lord is mightier, matching the number of the crashing waves. The Lord reigns with power that is greater than the most powerful force that can face humanity.

[15 : 13] You may have heard of King Canute. He was praised as a great monarch, but actually he feared his people thought too highly of him. Legend has it that on one occasion Canute ordered his servants to place his royal chair by the seashore and sitting on his throne he demanded the waves to recede to go back.

Waiting for the waters to obey his command he got wet as the water splashed around him. And so finally Canute got up and rebuked his servants claiming that only the Lord who created the heavens and earth is worthy of praise and in control.

And some say can you took off his crown soon afterwards and never wore it again. Well the Lord God of Psalm 93 reigns. He is in control.

He really is in charge of every roaring force in this world. He really does have the power of everything. And the psalmist here doesn't have a problem with putting these two things side by side.

He holds in tension the Lord's global and eternal reign together with the chaos that we experience in our world and our lives.

[16:33] And we are called to do the same as God's people. And so this year we may be asking the why question. Why has this event or thing happened in the world or to us personally?

Psalms often ask that question. Why? But in Psalm 93 we're reminded that whatever we go through the Lord still reigns.

That's not a complete answer to suffering by all means but it is a real one. Even when the waves of hardship come crashing in the Lord still reigns.

I guess we might be able to look back on 2023 and see the Lord's provision in our lives. real moments of his care and rejoice. But we're not fully liberated yet from the roaring chaotic forces of sin and evil in our world and in our hearts.

But that day will come when Jesus returns we will see the full might of the Lord as he comes to silence the raging waters once and for all.

[17:45] And so again if you wouldn't call yourself a follower of the Lord Jesus here this morning well what's the alternative to Psalm 93? The alternative is that God is not in control.

He exists and he's doing the best he can with the resources he's been given to manage the situation or that there's no God at all and so we are under the control of blind chaotic forces.

we would have no reason to take comfort if that was true. But in Psalm 93 we find real comfort and real confidence for the year ahead and beyond.

You see when chaotic forces affect our lives the Lord is not sitting there with the head in his hands. Instead as we've just been celebrating at Christmas that mighty Lord stepped into our world in the person of Jesus Christ experiencing the full force of evil himself.

The one who calmed the storm with the words. Who went to his death to ensure his people would be rescued from sin and evil once for all and has now been installed as God's king on the throne.

[19:08] And so this year will be difficult in lots of different ways for many of us, for all of us actually. And we must expect it to be. But because the Lord is mightier, he can and he will generously give his people everything we need to continue to trust in him, to endure to the end, and then one day reign with King Jesus in glory.

The Lord reigns eternally and globally in the face of chaos and lastly through his trustworthy word. In verse 5, we've now moved from the throne room to the seaside and now to the temple.

In verse 5 says this, your decrees are very trustworthy, holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore. Amidst the chaos of a fallen world, here is where the psalmist sees and knows that the Lord is mightier, he's not the roar of the waters that the psalmist listens to, but God's word.

Amidst the turbulence of life, the psalmist takes great delight in the decrees of the Lord. The monarch's Christmas Day speech is always the most watched TV programme on Christmas Day. 5.9 million viewers turned in this last year to watch King Charles. And what the monarch says each year makes the news headlines afterwards, because there's not much else to talk about, and the papers the following day.

[20:48] Well, however interested we are in what King Charles has to say, more importantly, God's people are to listen to what the King of creation, the Lord Almighty, says.

The psalmist says here that listening to the trustworthy word of the Lord amidst the chaos of life is the befitting way to live. Different storms will threaten us, each of us, this year, yet the promise of Psalm 93, what the psalmist wants to really get us to see, is that we can trust the unchanging word of the Lord Almighty.

The psalmist doesn't think God's words just gives us a steer. All that listening to God's word is a burden, extra weight for our rucksacks. Psalm 93 is not a lament about the Lord's rule in our lives, but it's good.

His word is good, necessary, dependable, trustworthy, in a world where I guess if you're like me, you think less and less seems to make sense.

well the dependable word of the Lord will always sustain and nourish God's people. It's really encouraging to know that we have God's word, his trustworthy, dependable word to navigate us through the trials and storms.

[22 : 17] It's why as a church family together this year when we collectively face the floods mentioned in Psalm 93, three, yes we will certainly love one another, we will show compassion for each other and listen to each other and provide practical help for one another right through what we each face this year.

But above all that it would be a wonderful thing to share the trustworthy decrees of the Lord with another, speaking the truth in love to one another as we face the year ahead.

that's why it's so good to read the word of the Lord individually and collectively as his people each week, delighting in his trustworthy decrees, asking him to help us trust in him and live those holy lives that befit his people.

As we close, because my parents live by the sea, we get an all inclusive beach holiday each summer, which is great. And when we actually brave going into the sea, well children can understandably get nervous.

So as we're walking into the sea, what does the young child do? They hold tightly to their father's hand. And more importantly, what does the father do?

[23 : 42] Hold on tightly to his children's hand. So when the waves come and the waves crash, they are standing firm, they are not pushed over as they hold on to their father and as they're held on to by their father.

In the Lord, we have a mighty, majestic king, the king of all creation. Yet as we've been thinking in our service as well, in the Lord, we have a heavenly father who cares deeply for his children and holds on to his people.

people. And so whatever happens this year, we can be reminded that though the waves crash, God is still in charge. His rule will never end.

So the Lord reigns eternally and globally in the face of chaos through his trustworthy word. Let's pray together.

Heavenly father, we thank you that you are in control, that nothing takes you by surprise, that you hold everything in your hand.

[24 : 55] And when the waves crash, when we face those floods mentioned in Psalm 93, we pray that we would look to you as one who is mightier, the one who holds the whole world in your hands and yet loves and holds on to your people.

Amen. Amen. Amen.