

God the King and His Messiah

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Date: 28 August 2011

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[0 : 00] Well, friends, you might like to turn up in your Bibles to Psalm 2 again.

And I want to begin tonight's Bible talk by telling you briefly about my own experience in ministry. I became a Christian at 18. I entered theological college at 20.

I exercised Christian ministry for 20 years. They were 23 rich years of talking to people about God. And then I became clinically depressed.

And I needed to take some time out to sort myself out. And so I took a year off. I began to work in IT. And my first job in IT involved checking 800 computers for the Y2K bug.

And I met lots of people. And they were very different people to those that I met in ministry. You see, the world I encountered was largely a godless world.

[1 : 03] There were very few people interested in God. And those interested in God actually seemed to want to hide their interest. And I began to realize that really that is the world that we live in, isn't it? A world that is actively rebellious against God or simply does not recognize God as someone of any significance.

So I began to wonder, does God have anything to say to this world? And I found that he did. You see, Psalm 2 is a classic example of God speaking to his world.

He has some sobering and some wonderful things to say. Now, before we get underway, I need to say that the richness of this psalm we are looking at tonight is very, very difficult to measure.

It is overwhelmingly loaded with wealth. It is intricately bound into the whole of the book of Psalms. It is richly cited in the New Testament. I could spend weeks on it.

And yet somehow we've got to have a go at summarizing it in about 30 minutes or so. Now, in 30 minutes, I want to help you to grasp what this psalm means in itself.

[2 : 09] Then I want to help you to grasp what it means in the whole of the book of Psalms. And then I want to grasp just some of its significance in the whole of the Bible. So, you know, we're going to travel a fair distance tonight and you're going to have to stick with me.

First, let's take a fly through this psalm. In the end, I hope and pray that you will be blown away with its depth and its grandeur. And I hope and pray that you'll be drawn near to the Lord Jesus.

And as a result of this exploration, I am praying that you'll bow before the Lord Jesus again today.

And I'm praying that you'll go running to the Father to thank and to praise him with loud acclamation and with joy-filled hearts.

Because our God is a great King and a great God above all gods. And his Son is a mighty Savior and a glorious Messiah.

So with those prayers, those wishes uttered, let's get underway. And let's begin this sermon by, or this Bible talk, by reminding you of one of the rich stories of the Bible. I want you to, in your brain, go back in history and imagine that God has chosen his first King of Israel.

[3 : 20] His name is Saul. Saul is something of a failure as a king from beginning, from the very beginning of his career. And God announces to him that there will be no line of kings that descends from Saul.

Instead, God says, I'm going to look for one better than you. Now, we all know the story. Samuel the prophet sent off to a family of a certain Jesse. And he looks for this grand, tall, handsome man.

But I love this bit. Instead, he finds a small man. An insignificant shepherd boy. And this ruddy-faced lad is God's anointed. And we love him from the beginning.

He's just a star. Everyone loves David. We love him as he takes on the giant Goliath. We love him as he refuses to take the throne from King Saul. We love him as he gathers friends around him.

We love him as he waits. And we love him when he finally becomes king. He's just one of those people, isn't he? And then he captures the Jebusite city. He renames it Jerusalem.

[4 : 25] He brings the Ark of the Covenant into the city. And now he's king. He has God's blessing. And in 2 Samuel 7, he takes the initiative. He proposes that he will build a house for God.

He'll build this grand temple. And God sends his prophet to David. And he says, think again, David. I refuse your initiative. Well, he doesn't put it that way, but that's what he's saying.

You are not going to build a house. Nathan says to him, you will not build a house for God. In fact, it'll be the other way around, really, because God the king, not you the king, David, but God the king, will build you a house.

God's words come thick and fast from the prophet's mouth. He says, look, David, I took you from being a shepherd to being a prince. I've been with you. I will make your name great.

I will give you rest from all the nations, your enemies around about you. I will raise up offspring from you. I will establish your kingdom. I will be a father to you and you will be a son to me.

[5 : 27] Friends, these are some of the grandest promises in scripture. This is God's covenant with David. This is God's promise to David and his family. And this is the background to Psalm 2.

And this is what is being spoken about in Psalm 2. Psalm 2 is a psalm about David. It is a psalm about the Davidic kingship. It is a song about the promises to David, a psalm about the covenant with David.

So that in background, that's background. Let's now have a closer look. We are, let me tell you, friends, we are at the heart of God's promises to Israel. We are at the heart of God's purposes in his world when we read Psalm 2.

So first thing I want you to notice is there are four sections to this psalm. First section goes from verse 1 through to verse 3. Now, we don't know who speaks the words in Psalm 2, 1 to 3, but they are about the plans and the words of the nations and their rulers.

And the second section runs from verse 4 through to verse 6. It's about the Lord's response to the nations and their rulers. The third section runs from verse 7 through to verse 9.

[6 : 41] And it is about how the Lord's anointed king responds to what the nations and their rulers are saying. And the fourth and final section runs from verse 10 through to verse 12. And it parallels the first section.

Again, we don't really know who's speaking. It could be the psalmist. It could be the king again. We don't know. But we do know that the kings of the nations are being addressed.

So there's four sections to this psalm. And let's look at each one in turn. Have a look with me at verse 1. Verse 1 poses a question. And the speaker appears somewhat surprised.

And so he asks, why do the nations conspire and the nations plot in vain? Now, the word conspire is actually a word for growing a bit fidgety and restless.

And the word for plot is actually the same word that is used in Psalm 1 for meditate. And it means to sort of mutter or growl or read in an undertone or plot.

[7 : 43] And the portrait is profound, you see. Here are the nations. They're getting, you know, a bit uppity and a bit restless. And they're muttering and they're growling to themselves. And verse 2 tells us the object of their restless muttering.

It is the Lord. And it is his anointed. Now, really, the word anointed could be translated literally Messiah. So here are the nations.

They and their rulers are grumbling and plotting and growing restless. And they form a united front together. And the object of all of this is the Lord and his Messiah, the Lord and his anointed king.

Now, friends, I need to say this is not some small scale rebellion that is going on here. This is a banding together of world powers and their representatives. And they are asserting themselves against a threat to their sovereignty and power.

And this threat is God and his king. And these nations and kings object to the constraints that God and his king have posed upon them.

[8 : 47] It's as though they're saying, you've drawn boundaries around us and we do not like it. You are constraining us. We do not like it. We want to break free. And that's what verse 3 says. Have a look at it. Their words are strong and oppositional.

They cry out against God's sovereign rule and they say, let us burst their bonds asunder and cast their cords from us. And with that, we enter into heaven.

And the Lord sees the heavings of the nations and their rulers. And does he sit there sort of wringing his hands in angst and worry and say, oh, no, no, these nations, they're getting out of control.

No, the one enthroned in heaven laughs in amusement at them. He has them in derision. He entertains himself with mirth at their silliness.

He taunts them for their stupidity. And he refuses to take any seriousness, them with any seriousness at all. He reckons their opposition is laughable.

[9 : 53] But at the same time, their opposition is deadly serious, isn't it? And that's what verse 5 says. Look at it. The psalmist tells us that after the Lord's laughter and taunting, then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury.

And his words are about his anointed king whom they oppose. And they are firm words, significant words, terrifying words. For he says, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

This is the God of all the earth speaking. And he quietens the earth from its muttering and its rulers in their upheaval. And he utters his declared will. I myself have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

And then verses 7 to 9 explain what this incredible statement means. It spells out its content. The Lord, the great king, has made a declaration to all the world.

You see, when God spoke to David in 2 Samuel, he wasn't just having a little private chat with David. And a conversation between God and him in some sort of secluded little place.

[11 : 07] Well, it was a secluded place. But it wasn't designed to be a private conversation. It wasn't a private promise of God to his temporary, transitory human king.

No, 2 Samuel 7 was a declaration to the whole world. A decree of the Lord. That's what this psalm says. It is, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. That is, what he's saying is, you human, this human, Israelite king is the son of the Lord God of all the earth.

He is the Lord's son. The Lord has entered into a lasting commitment with this man and his descendants. God has adopted this man as his son and heir.

He has given this human his wealth, his authority, and his rule. He has bestowed on a human being all rule and authority.

[12 : 05] This is an extraordinary statement. And verses 8 and 9 tell us its implications. Look at it. God says, this is the meaning. Ask of me. And I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession.

And you'll break them with a rod of iron and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, can you see now why God's laughing and taunting in verse 4? For the nations have set themselves against the Lord, the God of all the earth, and against his anointed.

But this is not some sort of puny little God from some sort of puny little corner of the earth. He is the God of all the earth. And at his anointed's request, he will simply just hand them over to him.

And he'll say to them, here's your inheritance. The ends of the earth. They're your personal property and possession. You can do with them what you like.

You can break them with a rod of iron. Or you can dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

They're yours. And with that, the Psalms wound up in verses 10 to 12. Friends, God's declaration is deadly serious.

[13 : 15] It is uttered by the divine king of all the world. The poet directly takes on the powerful of the world and he sternly warns them.

Look at verses 10 to 12. Follow them with me. They are sober and strong. Listen to them. Let them soak in. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise.

Be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear. And with trembling, kiss his feet. Or he will be angry and you'll perish in the way.

For his wrath is quickly kindled. Now, if you've got the NRSV in front of you, the open Bibles, you'll see there's a little footnote in verse 12 that explains that the Hebrew is fraught with difficulty.

Nevertheless, I think the tenor of it is clear. What's being said is the mumbling, grumbling, muttering, conspiring nations and their rulers should change their tune. Instead of resistance, they should be wise and accept instruction.

[14 : 17] Instead of empty-headed plotting against the Lord, they should serve the Lord with fear and wail before him with trembling. They should give him homage. Otherwise, it may be that God's laughter and derision might take a nastier edge in one sense and turn to anger.

And the result will be that they'll perish and pass away quickly under God's kindled anger. Then, final line of the psalm addresses not only the nations.

It sort of turns to everyone. To all who hear and sing this psalm, and in the light of God the King and his purposes for his anointed, let all the earth take refuge in him.

Given that God's purposes are in his Son, stop all resistance. Take refuge in him. Take refuge in his Son. For his anointed King has been given the nations and the ends of the earth by his Father to do his will with them.

And how blessed, how happy, how extremely fortunate are those who take refuge in him. Friends, this is an incredible psalm when you look at it in this perspective.

[15:33] Now, I want you to ask yourself this question. What is at the heart of this psalm? What makes this psalm tick? Around what centre does it gravitate?

Friends, the centre of this psalm is God, isn't it? It is God himself. Verses 7 to 9 make this clear. They speak of a God who is King. A God who is sovereign.

A God who has a purpose for his world. And a God who utters his word to David. And a God who makes a declaration about where he's going and through whom he's going to do it.

A God who tells his people, look, I'm for you. I'm with you. Friends, the heart of this psalm is a God who is God. Who's sovereign, true to his word and willing to back up his word and promise with action.

Now, friends, I know that you know that this psalm is full of Christ. It is full of Jesus Christ.

[16:31] I know that the New Testament constantly alludes to this psalm. And I know that you know. However, I want to tell you that if you want to hear the riches of this psalm, you need to stop jumping to Jesus too quickly.

Because if you do, you will not hear his grandeur. You see, I think if you jump to Jesus too quickly, you'll understand the New Testament. If you don't jump to Jesus too quickly, you will understand what the New Testament does with this psalm far better.

So come with me. And I want to take you on a lightning tour of the whole of the book of Psalms.

Now, have a look at your, pick up your book of Psalms here. And you'll see right at the beginning of it, it says Book 1, Psalms 1 to 41.

Now, in the original Hebrew, that little term Book 1 wasn't there. But it does reflect the oldest manuscripts we have indicate that people, that the psalm was divided into five, five sections. It is an intricately structured book.

It's not just someone sort of got all the hymns and sort of threw them in a box and said, you know, right, we'll just pick them out one by one and put them in order, you know, put them in the order they come out of the box. No, they ordered the book of Psalms.

[17:41] They did an incredible job on it. There are five books. Let me show you something about those five books. Last week, well, last week we didn't look at Psalm 1. But Psalm 1, have a look at Psalm 1, is a sort of introduction to the whole of the book of the Psalter.

And it means that Psalm 2 probably operates as an introduction to the first book. Now, what have we discovered about Psalm 2? Well, it's about God's covenant with David.

That is, it's about God's eternal promise to David. Remember what God has said? David, you're going to have security. The nations of the earth are not to be feared because I'm your king.

I'm with your people. You don't need to fear your enemies because you've got David. And David's your king. Now, turn with me to Psalm 41. Friends, if you stick with me on this, this one, this is all magic.

It's really just, it's just brilliant. God and his sovereignty has given us some wonders in this. Now, remember, Psalm 41 is the end of book one.

[18:44] You can see that because at the beginning of 42, it's got book two. Okay, so we're dealing with the end of book one. And how does this book of Psalms end? This first book of Psalms.

Look at how it starts. See how it starts? It says, to the leader, a psalm of David. So it's a psalm of David. Now, look at how it goes on. It talks about how God protects David from his enemies.

And you can see this in verse 1, verse 2, verse 7, verse 11, verse 12. But look at verses 11 and 12. It's David the king speaking. And he says, So this is how book one ends.

Now turn to the end of book two. End of book two is Psalm 72. Keep flipping through Psalm 72.

Now I want you to notice who wrote this psalm.

It says it's a psalm of Solomon that is David's son. Now, it almost, though, reads as a prayer of Solomon. Perhaps it is, though, I think, David's prayer for his son.

[20 : 00] Because it actually, the title could mean for Solomon. And I think it might be written by David because look at how it ends. The prayers of David, son of Jesse, are ended. So let's imagine for a moment that it's a prayer of Solomon.

Sorry, of David for Solomon. Let's just imagine that that's what it is for a moment. And I think that probably is what it is. And in verses 1 to 4, what is the prayer for? Have a look at it. It's for a king who rules justly.

Verses 8 to 11, the prayer is for the king's rule to be secure from his enemies, just like Psalm 2. And in verses 5, 15, 17, the prayer is that the king will live long and be blessed.

So can you see what's happening here? Book 1 begins with a promise. David ruling over the nations of the world. It ends with David saying that God has done what he promised.

Psalm 41. Book 2 ends with a prayer that future kings will be godly, basically. Now look at how book 3 ends. So turn to Psalm 89.

[21 : 10] I want you to look at verses 3 and 4. Can you see what's happening in verses 3 and 4? You said, I've made a covenant with my chosen one.

That's Psalm 2, isn't it? In 2 Samuel 7. I have sworn to my servant David, I will establish your descendants forever and build your throne for all generations. You think, yeah, tick. That's exactly what God said.

But the kings appear to have gone now. And the psalmist reminds God of his promise to David and of his covenant with David. And look at verse 19 and 37. So verse 19.

It says the sorts of things that were said in Psalm 2. Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one and said, I have set a crown upon the one who is mighty. I have exalted one chosen from the people. Same with verse 38.

But look at verse 38 closely. But you have spurned and rejected him. Who? Your king. You are full of wrath against your Christ, your Messiah.

[22 : 14] You have renounced the covenant with your servant. You have defiled his crown in the dust. You have broken through all his walls.

You have laid his strongholds in ruin. Can you hear what the psalmist is saying? Can you hear his grief? Basically saying, God, you have forgotten Psalm 2.

Look at verse 49. Listen to him cry out. He says, Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David? Now look at verse 46.

How long, O Lord, will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire? How long, O Lord?

And with that, we move to book 4 of the Psalms. Now book 4 has lots of language about God as king. David as king sort of shrinks into the background.

[23 : 16] Now have a look at Psalm 106. So just flip over in your Bibles to Psalm 106. And I want you to look at verse 47.

It ends with another plea to God. 106.47 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting... Sorry, verse 46. Just make sure I've got it right. Verse 47. Save us, O Lord, our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.

Now where are God's people now? They're away from the promised land. They've no longer got a King David. They've no longer got a Messiah. They're in exile.

And they say, God, remember us there. And then Psalm 107 imagines that God has answered the prayer of Psalm 106.

[24 : 20] He's redeemed his people. Can you see that there? Go on. This is book 5, first part. I give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love. Remember his steadfast love was in doubt back in chapter 89. He has redeemed them from trouble.

He's gathered them from the lands, from east, from west, from the north and from the south. So God's now brought his people back from exile. There they are, back in the promised land again. Many of the Psalms that follow are prayers of trust in God.

They look to God for help and deliverance. And then come Psalm 145 and 146. Now we've had these preached on in the preceding weeks, but have a look at them here.

145. 145 is David's last Psalm. And Psalm 145 combines with Psalm 146 to have this mighty praise of God the King.

God the King is the one to be trusted. He's the one who assures Israel's future. He's the one who reigns forever. And once you've acknowledged this, then your future is secure. For God alone can

wrap up the future.

[25 : 24] He can secure the future. As Psalm 146 verse 3 says, it's not a prince who can do it. Have a look at it. Psalm 146 verse 3. Happy are those.

Or from verse, sorry, verse 3. Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals in whom there is no help. Can you see what he's saying? Don't put your hope even in a prince.

Perhaps even a Davidic prince. No. Put your hope and trust in God. For God alone is king. So he's the one who's to be trusted.

He's the one who will assure Israel's future. He's the one who reigns forever. And once you've acknowledged that, everything will be okay. If God is king, everything will be okay. It is God alone who can assure the future of God's people.

God alone can make it happen. And once you've said this, all that remains is to praise him. And so the remaining four psalms, what do they do? Not just that. You just burst out into praise to God.

[26 : 25] In fact, by the time you get to 150, that's about all you can do. Just praise God. Praise him here. Praise him there. Praise him everywhere. Praise him with everything. Praise him. Now, friends, there's a survey of Psalm 2 and the book of Psalms.

Now, did you notice the question that hangs over the Psalms, if I'm right about my survey of the Psalms? What is the question? Let me show you in case you missed it. Go back to Psalm 2.

Psalm 2 is clear on two points, isn't it? God is king. God rules the world. His sovereignty cannot be upset by any human. He laughs at any opposition.

And the rest of the book of Psalms agrees and praises God, the reigning king. There's no argument about that in the book of Psalms. However, Psalm 2 has a second point.

And that point's made very clearly in Psalm 2. And that point is that God's sovereign rule, God's kingship, is exercised through a human king.

[27 : 32] And that king is descended from David. That king is installed by God. That king is God's son.

Now, by the end of the book of Psalms, there is no such king. He does not exist. There is no human descendant of David set on Mount Zion, God's holy hill.

Notice the descendants of David have disappeared into the sands of history. So can you see what the psalmist is doing? He is posing this incredible question.

Yes, God is king. And yes, we can praise God with the psalmist. But if God is king, then where is his human king?

Where is his promise to David? Where is his son? Well, friends, we as Christians know the answer, don't we?

[28 : 39] Remember Mark 1. Go to Mark 1. And I want you to look at the very first words of Mark 1. And read them with me. Imbibe them and soak them in. Because if you've just heard what we've said, you will understand them perhaps for the very first time.

Because I think we read over them. We look at them as just sort of heading for Mark's gospel. But listen to them. The beginning of the gospel. The beginning of the good news.

Of Jesus Christ. Or let me translate it for you. Of Jesus, the Messiah. Of Jesus, the Messiah.

The Son of God. That's the language of Psalm 2, isn't it? All packed into one little verse that we skip over. Now look down to verse 9.

For this Jesus goes out to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptizer. And as he comes out of the water, the heavens are just ripped apart.

[29 : 41] And the Spirit descends on him. And a voice thunders from heaven using the language of Psalm 2. Look at it in verse 11.

You are my son, the beloved. And with you I am well pleased. Now look at verse 14.

Because Jesus comes into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. And as he does, look at what he says in verse 14. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Can you hear the language of Psalm 2? Can you hear the question that the book of Psalms poses? Can you hear it answered?

God's king. God's kingly rule is worthy of all the praise that the psalm ends up with. Why? Well, because he is king.

[30 : 41] And because he has appointed and anointed and consecrated his Davidic king, Jesus the Messiah. He is now in store.

And therefore the world and the nations should repent. They should not kick against God's purposes. They shouldn't mutter about him. They shouldn't stir themselves up against him. They should serve the Lord with fear. For his wrath is quickly kindled. And blessed will be those who find their refuge in him through his son. So friends, there's Psalm 2. Now the New Testament has many other applications of Psalm 2. You can read about them in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Philippians, Hebrews, Revelation. And I've listed some of them in your outline there.

But let me sort of, if I can, tie together what we've learnt about under two headings. And then I'll observe one point of application. So two headings, one point of application. First, the Psalm, Psalm 2 is crystal clear in what it says.

[31 : 44] God is king. King over all the earth. To oppose him is laughable. It is futile. It cannot succeed. He is king. He is working his purposes out in his world. Two, God's way of ruling in his world is to rule through a human king descended from an obscure king of a tiny nation.

His way of ruling the world is through a Davidic descendant. And that Davidic king is Jesus the Christ. God's son.

He is God's beloved. And if you bow before this son, then you'll be bowing before the God of all the earth. And if you resist this son, then you are resisting the God of all the earth.

And such resistance is laughable. It cannot hope to succeed. Finally, let me show you one more wonderful little thing about this psalm.

When you put Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 together, something magic happens. Now, go back to the book of Psalms again and look at how Psalm 1 begins. So flip back to Psalm 1.

[32 : 54] Look at how it begins. It says, Happy, or if you like, blessed are those who. Now, look at how Psalm 2 ends. It says, Happy, or blessed are those who take refuge in him.

Now, I wonder if you put those two psalms together, what are they saying? How do you avoid following the advice of the wicked in Psalm 1? How do you dodge taking the path that sinners tread in Psalm 1?

How do you avoid sitting in the seat of scoffers, as Psalm 1 says? Psalm 1 says, By finding your delight in the law of the Lord. By meditating on that Lord day and night.

But Psalm 2 expresses it in a much more full way. Psalm 2 says, No, actually, it's by taking refuge in God and in his Son. But there's one more repetition in this psalm.

Let me show it to you. Psalm 1 talks about the godly and the righteous. And it says, The godly and the righteous are those who meditate on God's law. And the word meditate is the word, remember I told you, It's for muttering to yourself.

[33 : 58] It's, you know, what you do sort of, you know, It's what you do when you talk to yourself, basically. Keep telling yourself something over and over again. It's the very word that's used in Psalm 2 verse 1.

And the nations are muttering to themselves or plotting in vain. Can you hear what's being said? What is the way of success in the world? What's the godly way of living in the world?

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 laid out for us. It's not muttering against God. No, it's muttering about God and his law. And this is found in muttering about the fulfillment of God's law.

God's Son. Can you hear what's being said? True blessing. True fulfillment. True godliness. True righteousness is found in meditating.

Muttering about. Letting it go round and round in your brain and on your tongue. God's Son. Jesus Christ. Friends, I wonder if this is your attitude.

[35 : 02] If not, well, you're opposing God. And I hate to put it this way, but the psalmist does, so it's fair game.

Such opposition is laughable. And it will be met with God's wrath. However, if it is your attitude, and friends, this is the grand part, then you are safe in the arms of God the King.

He is your shield and refuge. And you are truly, truly, truly blessed. For there is no better place to be than in his arms and in the refuge of his Son.

So let's pray. Lord God, we come before you acknowledging you as our King.

Father, we don't come to you with fear and trembling. But we come to you with confidence, for we have come to know you in your Son.

[36 : 29] We know that because of your Son, your wrath will not be quickly kindled against us. But rather, we will be in a state of incredible blessedness.

For we have taken refuge in him. Father, we too will tell of the decree of the Lord. For he has said to David, to the Lord Jesus, you are my son, today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, I'll make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. Father, we thank you for this gospel of your Son has stretched out even to us here on the other side of the world.

That we are the nations and we are the heritage of your Son. Thank you that your promises never fall to the ground flat. Father, we thank you for this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.