

A King to rule

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Thanks for joining us. That is a hymn and a half, that one, one of my favourites. The words are sensational. Do keep Psalm 110, which Chen and Connie read for us. Do keep that open and we're going to work our way through it.

But I want to start with a question first. If you were, here's the question, if you were in a burning building, which hero, which leader would you trust for rescue? So if you were in a burning building, which hero or leader would you trust to rescue you?

I wonder who comes to mind, who pops in your head. And I wonder how many of you thought about Prince Charles? Probably not many. And I guess the question is, why not? He's a future king, isn't he?

But I guess we probably don't have that Disney view of heroes and princes on white horses anymore. Prince William, he's not bad, is he? The Queen is terrific.

But Prince Charles is a bit, I don't know what Prince Charles is. He's just sort of something, isn't he? All right then. In a burning building, how many of you said that you would call Andrew Price or myself?

[1 : 13] Why not? We're priests, aren't we? Well, I guess we probably don't have that high Catholic view of priests in this place. Besides which, we've probably seen some of the damage that priests have done in Catholic and Anglican circles these past few years.

American politics. Aussies are obsessed with it. I don't know why, but we are. The big election is next month. There was a debate this week. Which one of those presidential candidates would you trust to rescue you?

Actually, at the moment, I don't think either of them would be any good because Trump's too busy being quarantined. And I think Biden's knees would give way if he slung you over the shoulder, Feynman style.

Anyway, closer to home, Melbourne is sort of on fire, isn't it, with COVID and lockdown at the moment. In summer, lots of our state will quite literally be like a burning building.

Is there a leader that you would trust to rescue you? See, I wonder how your emotional energy is going when it comes to leaders. Do you have enough room in your head and your heart to trust just one more?

[2 : 27] Or has 2020, some of the issues of life, has that exhausted you when it comes to leaders? I'll be honest.

I'm worried that we, me included, that we can't speak about leaders without the conversation becoming toxic or ungodly.

And that is the reason why we're doing Psalm 110. It's one of the most important Psalms because it's written to Israel at a time when she was utterly exhausted by leaders.

This Psalm shows what God has done about leadership once and for all. You see, way back in Psalm 2, which Andrew opened our service with, way back in Psalm 2, God announced he has a king.

A king who will rule the nations in justice, who will smash his enemies. The Psalm 2 king is good news for anyone exhausted by bad leaders.

[3 : 31] It's the gospel for God's people. And much of the book of Psalms is a search for this man. David, he wrote a lot of the Psalms.

Maybe he is the one. After all, he ruled over Israel. He extended the kingdom. He defeated Goliath. He was a man after God's own heart.

But in many of the Psalms, David is miles away from Zion. Instead of smashing enemies, he's on the run from them, you know, hiding in caves.

In Psalm 51, the terrible incident with Bathsheba, David showed himself to be an adulterer, a murderer, and a power abuser too.

David is not the Psalm 2 king. Next came Solomon, his son. Maybe he is the one. He was from the royal dynasty. He had unparalleled wisdom. He even built the temple.

[4 : 27] But he was unfaithful to God as well. Therefore, 3,000 of his wives led his heart to idolatry. And the kingdom was divided. In fact, 95% of Israel's kings were hopeless and sinful.

Nothing like the one we see in Psalm 2. And the overall narrative of the book of Psalms is a search for this man.

It's a lament at what has happened to Israel as she suffered under one bad king to another and then eventually exiled.

You see, the Israelites, like the Melbournites, were exhausted by bad leaders. And that is why Psalm 110 is so important for them and for us.

Because 108 psalms later, in all the strife of their state and in our state, God announces that his king is still on his agenda.

[5 : 32] That it's right for us to hold out, to trust in just one more leader. And today, even though the Bible, we say this all the time, the Bible is God speaking to us.

Today is very special. Because today, God is speaking to his son. You see, this is a psalm of David. And he narrates a conversation between the Lord, in capital letters, Yahweh, and David's Lord, his Lord, Jesus. The idea here is that we're listening in to a conversation within the Trinity.

It's quite incredible. God the Father, he's over there. God the Son, he's over there. And David is here, narrating it all down for us.

And so let's read what the conversation is. Of David, a psalm. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[6 : 37] The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, rule in the midst of your enemies. You see, in one sense, Jesus is David's son, his descendant.

But when he arrived, he didn't call David Lord, which would have been respectful. But actually, it's because it was the other way around. He was rejected by Jewish authorities because he claimed to be the Messiah, but then quoted verse 1 at them to show them it was true, to show them the pecking order in Israel.

The Lord God, Yahweh, said to David's Lord, Jesus, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

You see, the message for the Pharisees then, for God's enemies today, is that resistance is futile. Don't oppose God. Because God the Father says to God the Son, take your rightful place next to me on the throne, while I turn your enemies into furniture.

The footstool here is not that comfy, you know, the comfy one that you use by the fireplace. It is battle language. The idea is that Jesus will only be comfortable when all of God's enemies, all evil, is put to an end.

[8 : 03] Is when he's got his foot on his enemy's throat. That's the image. It's an Old Testament image of absolute power versus absolute vulnerability.

Verse 2 talks about his scepter extending beyond Zion. He says, rule in the midst of your enemies. Jesus' rule is a forced rule. His enemies don't come happily in repentance and submission. He forces them to bend the knee.

And if that seems like Jesus is a sort of dictator, well, I think that might be right. It is a dictatorship. But remember, Jesus is as good and pure as God.

To rival authorities then and today, God says, bring it on. My son will rule even in your midst, on your turf.

[9 : 04] Resistance is futile. And verse 3 is for us. Because verse 3 seems to be a call to enlist in the army. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.

Arrayed in holy splendor, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb. The footnote in my Bible says that even the translators have no idea what this verse means.

But in picture language, it seems to be about enlisting in an army. God's people, they've seen the scepter of his king and they offer themselves in his service.

They close ranks willingly on the day of his battle. And why? Because his victory is certain. You see, once a sinful lot, once a leaderless rabble, but now arrayed in holy splendor.

It's a miracle. They are totally new people. Like young men, they are. They're refreshed like the Jew. Born again from the morning's womb.

[10:15] And this army imagery, it puts a sharp edge on what it means to follow Jesus. It's a with him or against him type of feel. Whose side will we be on?

One of the worlds or one with God? Will we close ranks willingly, gladly, confidently behind our king?

Do we wake up every day like soldiers? Do we have that enlisted feel? Do we wake up every day in a battle against the world, the flesh and the devil?

Do my thoughts and words and actions show where my allegiances lie? You see, Psalm 2 announces a king.

And then centuries later, again in Psalm 110, to underline its certainty and its importance and its imminence. Jesus' arrival is the big thing on God's agenda.

[11:18] You see, we have spent time this past few weeks in the Psalms, bringing our lockdown emotion to the Lord. But it's right that we draw ourselves out to see what the big thing God is doing in the universe.

Have you got enough emotional energy for one more leader? Poor old Israel. They were desperate for a leader.

All her kings were sinners and all her priests were rubbish too. Where will Israel turn to for help? Who will protect them against enemies? Who will intercede for them properly with God?

And the answer in verse 4 is a blast from the past. Look at verse 4. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. That is a mouthful, Melchizedek. Melchizedek, he's something of a mystery man in the Bible. He appears sort of out of nowhere and then doesn't seem to die.

[12:26] He just sort of vanishes back where he came from. And so he is of a different order, a forever priest. And that is just what Israel needs.

Because one of the big problems with priests is that they keep dying. Hebrews 7, which Andrew read, you can see it on your screen. It says, Jesus is right there next to his father saying, turn aside your anger.

Don't judge that one. He is a forever priest. There's someone always living, always alive to intercede for us.

It's just what we need. The other problem with priests is that they're no good. You can see verse on your screen now, verse 27 there.

It says, You see, the reason you don't call Andrew Price or myself, the reason you don't call a priest if you're in a burning building, is that we are all stuck in the building with you.

[14:11] We cannot atone for our own sins. We're hopeless too. We can't help ourselves, let alone atone for your sins with God as well.

But in Jesus, we have one who is, as Hebrew says, holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, unlike all other high priests before him.

Hebrews said that Jesus sacrificed for their sins, as a good priest should. It says, Jesus offered himself. He is the payment.

Take them. Take me, he says, so they can be free. My life for theirs, so they can be saved, just as a good king should.

You see, that is the gospel. Way back in Psalm 110, way before Jesus even arrived, a perfect priest, a powerful king.

[15:17] It is good news for anyone who lines up behind Jesus. As the Cullens prayed for, they prayed for a lady named Christine Coles.

That's my auntie. My auntie Christine, she has advanced cancer at the moment, and she is a lapsed Catholic. And so, every week I go and visit her, and she's got the bottles of holy water and the rosary beads all laid out next to her bedside table.

And I'm sure that her priests were perfect gentlemen, but none of them have walked with her through the years of her life. None of them are 24-7 enough to help her.

None of that water or rosary beads are holy enough to atone for all her sin. And so, I keep telling her that, look, Anglican or Catholic, she's just got to have Jesus.

It's a simple swap. His life for hers. His rule for hers. A few weeks ago, she said to me, so it's not about religion then, it's about whether I love Jesus.

[16:32] And that is bang on. And I wish that I was her priest 60 years ago, so she could have had a lifetime exploring what it means to love Jesus, to see what he has done for her.

I wish that she had 60 years to know it the way lots of us have known it since we were young. And I'm so exhausted by church leaders who don't prepare their people for death.

Who don't prepare their people for the arrival of the king. The sharp edge of Psalm 110 is that Jesus can be our Lord, like David, or he can be our enemy.

But make no mistake, he will win. If you're not a Christian here today, you might be cynical about all this, you might scoff at everything we believe, but only for a time.

See, people might reduce the Psalms to being just sort of abstract poetry, or this Psalm to being not actually true. It's never going to happen. Maybe it seems that Jesus is nowhere, or that he won't actually win.

[17:47] And so verses 5 to 7 come in to underline the certainty of it all. Have a look at verses 5 to 7.

The Lord is at your right hand. He will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead, and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

And I think verses 5, 6, and 7 parallel verses 1, 2, and 3. See, both have Jesus at the right hand of God. Both have God crushing enemies, and Jesus ruling and judging the nations.

The point is that Jesus' victory is certain. And I think that's why in verse 4 in the middle, it says, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

And then comes the priesthood. You've just got to have Jesus. His victory is sure. He is coming. He will judge. You've got to have Jesus as your priest.

[18:51] But the tone, either way, the tone here is determination and certainty from God's point of view. And if we're here shocked by some of the judgment language, you know, heaping up the dead, crushing enemies, it's quite shocking language.

I think it's because we've forgotten what it means to have an enemy. We don't live in a land of warring tribes the way Israel did. We don't really, I guess we don't really have enemies anymore. But on the screen, this is from 1 Corinthians in the New Testament. This is a list of God's enemies. The end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after Jesus has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.

For Jesus must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. You see, death, there is an enemy that we can be afraid of.

There's an enemy we can relate to. The coronavirus is just an example of death's power, if you like, its reach and authority in the world. Death is undefeated.

[20:09] But we have a king. God is at his side. He will take death's corpse and throw it on a heap along with all other opposing authority.

And verse 7 shows the determination. Look at verse 7. He will drink from a brook along the way and so he will lift his head high.

The picture is that Jesus arrives and takes on death. It's a tough battle and death makes a run for it. Will Jesus give up? No way.

Verse 7. He will take a drink along the way. Like a marathon runner whose determination and resolve is lifted up once they have a swig of water.

It is a relentless pursuit of death and Jesus will overtake him, tie up his enemies, put his feet on their throats and end them.

[21:10] It will be a terrible day to be in opposition to God, to oppose his plans in the world. But a tremendous day, a fantastic day to be in the army because this victory is completely, completely certain.

And this glorious picture of Jesus, it is a refuge for us during lockdown life. when the shadow of death looms over Victoria, we need not fear it because we have one who has beaten death.

We can compare Jesus in Psalm 110 to any other leader we find and say, finally, here is one who can act for God.

Here is one who will bring justice and peace and an end to evil and sadness. here is a king we can confidently close ranks behind.

Do you have enough room left in your head and your heart for one more leader? Do you feel that Jesus is your hero? In the burning buildings of your life, who do you turn to?

[22 : 24] When the pressure at work is too much? When temptations to sin are overwhelming? When lockdown life has us beat, do you ask your king for help?

Is he the first name you turn to? The perfect priest who will turn aside God's anger, the powerful king who will deal with evil and death forever.

Jesus is so much more comforting than any other leader out there. His rule is the biggest truth claim you will find and the idea of being his friend or his footstool is more urgent than anything else COVID related.

Let's spend some time giving thanks to God for Jesus. Praise the Lord.

We will extol the Lord with all our hearts. Father God, we're so grateful that King Jesus is high on your agenda. Father, we're so grateful that in Jesus we have someone to deal with evil and death.

[23 : 38] We have someone to atone for our sins, a perfect priest. Father, would we align our lives, would we close ranks behind the King? Would we show where our allegiance lies by the ways we're daily in the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil?

And please, Father, would we take refuge in him when we're exhausted by all other leaders in the world? We thank you that you have done something once and for all.

And we look forward and say, come Lord Jesus. We ask this and pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.