

Psalm 2

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Date: 19 June 2022

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[0:00] Good morning. For those of you I've not met, my name is Dave. I'm one of Shoreline's pastors or elders.! Hey, AJ. I invite you, as Kyle just mentioned, to turn with me to Psalm 2 as we continue our series in the Psalms this summer.

As we begin to read Psalm 2, if you were here last week with us, or if you are familiar with Psalm 1, I'd encourage you to pay attention and think about how these two Psalms might be linked as we walk through Psalm 2 here.

And so, as we come together to God's Word, if you don't have a Bible of your own, there are some, I think, on the back table. And at least, I can't see, but Psalm 2 will be up here on the screen as well.

Hear now God's Word. 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 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.

[1:36] 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 to pieces like a potter's vessel. 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 take refuge in him. This is God's word. Let's pray. Truly, Lord, there is none like you.

Whose word is so powerful as to make the heavens and the earth. And all that is within them.

[2:43] Lord, as we come now to the word that you have spoken to your people, will you make our hearts attentive? And will you, not by the power of my words, but by the power of your word, show us your Son to the glory of your name.

Amen. You may have noticed as we walked through, read through the passage, that Psalm 2 breaks down into four stanzas, four sections.

And before we examine each of them in turn, it's worth time considering how Psalm 2 is related to Psalm 1. For thousands of years, both the Jewish people and the Christian community have understood Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 to be very connected to one to the other.

Psalm 1 begins with the word blessed. Last week we thought about that idea, that so much of our understanding about the Bible can be wrong if we come to it with the wrong attitude.

The very first word of the very first Psalm is blessing. We come to God's word. We ought to come looking for a blessing because that is indeed what he intends for his people out of his great goodness.

[4:10] And what is the final verse? The final line of the final verse of Psalm 2. Blessing. Psalm 1 opens, Psalm 2 closes with that word of blessing over God's people.

In both Psalms, someone sits and laughs or mocks. In Psalm 1, the righteous one meditates on God's word.

Literally, the word means murmur. The image is of a righteous Israelite quietly mulling over the Bible, a verse perhaps, as they tend their field all day.

Psalm 2 shows a different kind of murmuring. But it's the exact same word in verse 1 when the people mutter in vain or plot in vain against God.

In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff. And in the second Psalm, we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel.

[5:25] In Psalm 1, the Lord knows the way of the righteous and the wicked and the way of the wicked will perish. And again, in Psalm 2, those who reject the Lord and his anointed will perish in the way.

There are a lot of links between Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. And so, God's people have always understood them to be very closely linked, read together. And in fact, just to the point where in the book of Acts, Peter refers to a quote from Psalm 2 as the first Psalm because they're a unit together.

And so, both Psalms have, again, application, just like all of God's word, to all of God's people. We, beginning and end, are blessed when we delight in and meditate on God's word.

Psalm 1. Psalm 1.

All of the chaff blown in the wind. So, the Psalms speak to us all, but they also speak of one. One central righteous figure.

[7:00] And where he stood apart from the wicked in Psalm 1, we will see him stand over them, and indeed the whole world in Psalm 2.

And so, we begin in the first stanza, beginning in verse 1. Why do the nations rage on the people's 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 bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.

Who are these people? And who is this anointed one? We see that the kings and the rulers of the earth set themselves against the Lord, but it's not just the leaders, and it's not just the rulers.

It's not just the government. It's the peoples, too. It is the whole earth. There is a universal desire in the human heart.

[8:09] Every person here, every person who is not seated here, every person, there is a universal desire to cast off the bonds and the cords.

But what bonds? What cords? It says here that it is the bonds and the cords of the Lord and of his anointed.

The anointed one could mean several. Kings and priests and prophets were all anointed with oil in Israel to be set apart for a task for the Lord. But this one, this particular anointed one we see in verse 6, is in particular the king of Israel.

But that doesn't make any sense. Not quite. You see, Israel was not an empire. There was no dominion over other nations to be cast off, no bonds to be broken.

There's one short period of time where Solomon does receive tribute from other countries nearby, but it is nothing like the universal empire that we're seeing here.

[9:23] The nations and all the peoples and all the kings and all the rulers. This doesn't really fit Israel's kings, even the two greatest ones, David and Solomon.

In fact, it was quite the opposite. The great empires of the world, Assyria, Babylon, Alexander's Greece, and then Caesar's Rome that made Israel their vassal state.

This is almost the inverse of what their experience was. Conquest really hasn't been the practice, or even really the aspiration, of the Jewish people.

So, what bonds from the Lord, and from the Lord's anointed, the king in Israel, do the nations and all the peoples rage against?

What cords has the anointed bound all the peoples of the earth with? If it's not political or legal or economic, what universal dominion is there to cast off?

[10:33] The bonds that the Lord, that the God of Israel has placed on the world, are moral.

Certainly, he has written it in his word, but also he has written it on our hearts. That's what the apostle Paul brings out in Romans chapter 2, that all the world knows that there is a God and that we are morally accountable to him.

Here's how he puts it in Romans 2, 14. When Gentiles, non-Israelites, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law, that is the written law, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.

What Paul is saying here is that even though the nations do rebel and sin, all the peoples, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We know we have. We all know it.

Our culture may hate to admit it, all the cultures may hate to admit it, might seek to redefine what sin is, call darkness light, might celebrate what is wrong, but deep down, the whole world knows that we are bound under the weight of our own sin before a holy and just God.

[12:15] The whole world knows it. which is why Charles Spurgeon, when he preached Psalm 2, concluded that that's the kind of bondage, that's the kind of cord that the psalmist is seeing the whole world trying to cast off.

He put it this way, he said, that we have in these first three verses of Psalm 2. A description of the hatred of human nature against the Christ of God, saying, let us be free to commit all manner of abominations.

Let us be our own gods. Let us rid ourselves of all restraint. And truly, that is what humanity wants, isn't it? Freedom.

Freedom from every restraint and obligation. Every society in history has done it its own way, and every individual has done it our own way.

When the psalms are being written, this is probably used at the coronation of kings, probably with David's first. Israel was surrounded at that time by nations who went their own way, sacrificing children to Molech, employing temple prostitutes, practicing all kinds of wickedness, everything their heart desired.

[13:36] And Israel was tempted to do the same. Our society is no different. I mean, the specifics of it look different, but our society, of which we are members, is not really different.

Verse 3 could be said of us as well. Bursting the bonds of puritanical thinking, right? That's what, that's the march of progress in our culture, so to speak.

Casting off the restraints of a bygone repressive decency, as our culture would call it. Cutting away even the very idea of moral absolutes.

That's the moral imagination of our time and our place. Our society seeks that freedom in positive language, doesn't it?

What it calls being true to yourself, or telling or living out your truth. Today, being true to yourself is the pinnacle virtue in our society.

[14:43] And we are not immune to that kind of thinking. Right? For instance, being true to yourself is being, is seen to be more important than being true to your marriage vows.

Breaking moral barriers is seen as heroic in our society. No matter how wise or moral or sacred that barrier is. And for some reason, it's not enough to simply live that way, but it must be celebrated, spoken about.

We must express it. And that fits very well, I think, with the attitude of defiance that is being shown by the nations in verses 1 and 2 and 3.

We live in the midst of stanza 1 of Psalm 2. And against all that, and friends, not only do we live in the midst of it, but we ourselves are not only tempted to partake in it, but our own nature.

Societies only come from the moral imaginations of the individuals who live in it. Let us not look and point the finger somewhere else while ignoring the log in our own eyes.

[16:06] And so, to this society, to that natural inclination of my heart and your heart as well, what does the Lord say? Verse 4.

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.

It is good not to sit in the seat of scoffers, someone, because he who is seated in heaven laughs at them.

The Lord is in no way threatened by our rebellion. We can call it the right side of history as long as we want.

It is he who owns it and will conclude it on his terms. What's most interesting about this is his reply, what he actually says.

[17:19] Verse 5 says, then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury.

What word of wrath would you expect the Lord to say? What would be a wrathful word that he was about to express? Like if I asked you, what is the word of judgment?

Or fury or wrath? What kind of things would you expect to hear? Fire and brimstone? Pestilence and plague? The removal of protection?

Damnation? What would you expect the word of wrath to be? Would you guess that the word of wrath that terrifies is I have established my king?

I wouldn't. But if we think about it, that makes perfect sense of the first stanza, doesn't it? The whole world is clawing, scraping to cast off authority, be our own rulers.

[18:41] And against that, the word of judgment is, you are not God. You will not have your own way. I am God and I will establish my rule on this earth.

The lamb seated on the throne is a rebuke of all the world. There is nothing we can do to upset or disrupt his reign.

All our strivings against him are, as the first stanza put it, vain. The lamb reigns.

The lamb will reign. This is an unbendable, unbreakable fact, and then in verse 7, he speaks.

The king who is established and seated on the throne in verse 6 opens his mouth verse 7 and says, I will tell of the decree.

[19:52] 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. The king opens his mouth to speak and what he says is what the Father in heaven has said to him.

it is a royal charge. And he receives in that decree two things.

Sonship and the nations as his heritage. The nations which are raging at that moment. They are his inheritance.

it is interesting to me that at the very beginning of Christ's ministry if you look to chapter four of the book of Matthew the tempter comes to him and tries to knock him off of his mission.

[21:09] What are two of the three temptations? Sonship and the nations. At his baptism the Lord had just been that the heavens had just been opened and a voice from heaven spoke saying this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

And immediately he went to the desert and the tempter challenged him. He said if you are the son of God turn these stones to bread.

And the final challenge the final temptation was worship me and I will give you the nations. So the outset of Christ's ministry the tempter was tempting him away from this royal decree Psalm 2.

The Jewish people knew that this couldn't apply. We already talked about how the inheritance of the nations couldn't have applied to David or Solomon.

I like how one writer put it. He said the king described here is far greater than either David or Solomon who were themselves the two most distinguished!

[23:27] to the king of the David covenant! Heir to this throne was Christ Jesus! In chapter 4 of Acts last year we walked through the whole book of Acts together 4 of chapter 4 we saw that as they were preaching about Jesus and healing in the temples the Sanhedrin the ruling council in Jerusalem brought them and questioned them saying on what basis are you doing this and what authority are you doing this at that time they didn't punish them or imprison them they released them with a warning not to keep doing this then as they were released Acts 4 23 when they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them when they heard it they lifted their voices together to God and said sovereign Lord who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them who through the mouth of our

father

David your servant said by the Holy Spirit and then they're going to quote Psalm 2 why do the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain the kings of the earth set themselves and their rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus the anointed one whom you anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place we see here that now this king reading Psalm 2 by itself is very hard to imagine that it applies to the kings of Israel but the church since its foundation has understood that this would be about

Christ and the nations are indeed presently his though at this time he permits them to rage and he will one day conclude this era of raging and restore his perfect rule in all the earth indeed the nations have already been given into his hand and so how do we respond that's the final stanza how do we respond verse 10 now therefore oh kings be wise be warned oh 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 take refuge in him fourth stanza teaches us how to respond to the lord and to his anointed king no matter how many and how greatly the nations rage no matter how long or how loud the people's plot it is all in vain let us each take heed of that because the one who made them by his word will speak his word of judgment upon them and that ought to terrify us as we saw in verse five and in the face of that we are given the instruction in this final stanza two instructions to serve the lord or to kiss the son verse twelve that's a symbol of submission of fealty of allegiance of surrender and then taking refuge in him that's a symbol of abandoning hope that we could weather the storm ourselves we need to go somewhere else for refuge casting ourselves into his care entrusting ourselves to him and that those two things surrender and running for refuge somewhere else that's very nearly what the apostles in the new covenant will call repentance and faith like how one writer put it there is no refuge from him there is only refuge in him how glorious is it that the judge of the nations freely offers protection refuge and care to all who would come to him and so friends

I would encourage anyone who has not cast themselves on Christ will you now will you see that you are indeed among this nation the many peoples of the earth who are in rebellion against his moral kingdom and that your rebellion is futile forever futile and that he is offering refuge before his judgment comes and notice something else those who have not yet received his grace their view towards his rule in that first stanza is seeing it as bondage is seeing it as something that constricts and constrains them but once you have received his grace once you have found that refuge in him you will see him as he truly is not as a slave master but as the great and loving one who offers protection and forgiveness and care forever and when you then receive his commands you will be receiving them from the good father the great king who loves and it will no longer feel like bondage Jesus said my yoke is easy and my burden is light those who have experienced his grace gladly submit ourselves to him knowing that we are being guided by the one who is not only the greatest in power but greatest in love and so praise the Lord that he is patient offering us time to seek shelter in the anointed he has not yet broken the world with his rod of iron verse nine has not yet come to pass but it will and we do not know the day but verse eight ask of me I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession that should sound familiar to us already already it has come to pass because

[31:28] Jesus said in Matthew chapter 28 does this sound so much like what was given to the son in the third stanza all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me go there for and make disciples of all nations his rule and his inheritance!

are already being enacted in this world and he said baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit all authority is already his a king from David's line God's own son has ascended to his throne and rules right now and the nations make disciples of all nations the nations are his heritage and he has sheep for his flock in each of them which he is gathering to himself which is exactly we read from Acts chapter 4 the very next verse Acts 4 29 now Lord look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness that's what they asked for in response to threats vain threatenings was gospel boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through your name through the name of your holy servant

Jesus when they had prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness and so and so we see that we Matthew 28 the command that he gives us and Acts chapter 4 the request they make of the Lord that they would also be bold to speak the gospel he has involved his people in fulfilling that promise in bringing his heritage the nations to himself and so when we walk in the way of evangelism we are participating in the promise that the father made to the son in psalm 2 we are helping bring in his heritage his inheritance into his into his flock what a high and mighty privilege let us think one more thing we said at the outset that this is connected to psalm 1 and that it's bookended blessed and blessed we ought to look at this and see blessing upon blessing upon blessing and we have we not the very first and the very final words are blessed this is a book of blessing so when you open your bible look for

God's love towards you if you have kissed the son and so it's important for us to remember that we as we read psalm 2 which incorporates into it themes of judgment scoffing at sinners the hard words we have also to remember that when we read this psalm even if it might not feel at every breath that it looks like blessing there is blessing to be had here in the first stanza we see the whole world set against the Lord and his Messiah that doesn't sound exactly like blessing does it but it shows us is that our Lord sees it all so often it feels like those who are walking in sinful ways that harm those we love or indeed ourselves or are harming people in ways that we can't touch can't see can't feel can't affect we see suffering all around the world and we see evil being done and we know that there is hidden evil in this world as the nations throw off every bond of morality the Lord sees it all it is not something that he is blind to and as we'll see it is not something that he will leave unfinished in verses 4 through 6 the second stand we see that the Lord is not in any way threatened by this rebellion not only does he see but our Lord is not threatened this is a psalm of reassurance if you've already taken refuge in him you can be certain that he will never be threatened by any plot that is against him and so your refuge is truly safe the last two stanzas kind of work together to show us blessing where he establishes a king and then that king makes provision while a firestorm ought to be coming he makes a way he first demands righteousness of the rulers of this world which is a blessing to us and then he makes refuge for all who would lay down their arms and run to him

[38:13] I'll quote Spurgeon one more time as we close look back through all the ages of sinful humanity hearken to the proud things which men have spoken against the most high listen to the rolling thunder of the whole earth plotting and murmuring against the majesty of heaven and then think that God is saying all the while I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion Jesus reigns the father sees the sorrows of his soul and his unsuffering kingdom will come when he shall take unto himself his great power and reign from the river to the ends of the earth even now he reigns in

Zion and our glad lips sound forth the praises of the prince of peace greater conflicts may here be foretold but we may be confident that victory will be given to our lord and king glorious triumphs are yet to come hasten them we pray oh lord it is Zion's glory and joy that her king is in her guarding her from foes filling her with good things Jesus sits upon the throne of grace and the throne of power in the midst of his church in him is Zion's best safeguard let her citizens be glad in him let's pray lord there is none like you who is unthreatened by every power that is in heaven and on the earth whose word cannot be thwarted thank you lord that even though we are rebels you offer us refuge but for anyone who has not laid down their arms and run to you the king for refuge may this be the day and thank you lord that you have invited us to be a part of that process of heralding of announcing that amnesty is available that refuge is found and the very one against whom we've shaken our fists lord there is none like you amen we turn our attention now to the lord's supper it very much tells the story of psalm 2 or psalm 2 tells the story of the lord's supper we were part of that mass of humanity rebelling against god verse 3 saying let us burst the bonds of his moral rule over this world and cast away the cords of the anointed over us and so we deserved the fate described in verse 9 being broken with the rod of iron dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel because we have sinned against so great a king so great a god but the king the very one who was to bring judgment chose to stand under the rod of iron himself and fulfill the demands of his own justice so that he may remain just and the justifier of the ungodly and so that he could then forge for us that final blessing of verse 12

a place of refuge there is refuge in him because he took the blow of his own justice for us and so this celebration is his testimony to his people his gift to his people reminding them of this promise and so for all who have kissed the son this is for you receive it from your king as a reminder that you have already found refuge in the one who sits high above the heavens as they were eating Jesus took bread and after blessing it broke it gave it to the disciples and said take eat this is my body let us receive his grace to us together and he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying drink of it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins let us take refuge together in the sacrifice he made for his people

Lord we see in this meal that you have given us that you bought the place of refuge by your blood Lord we we cannot yet comprehend the magnitude of the sacrifice but you have told us that we who have taken refuge will be brought into your presence one day and then we will see then we will know how great you are and what kind of sacrifice this truly was and so Lord we eagerly await that day and we take refuge in you now and forever we praise your name in Jesus Christ Amen