

Why is America So Mad?

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: 05 July 2020

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Psalm 2, verse 1. 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.

Psalm 2, verse 7. I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Verse 10. Now therefore, O kings, be wise.

[1 : 40] 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 your way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.

This is the word of God. The only infallible word. So may God bless the preaching of his word. People sing all the time. They sing in the sunshine, in the rain, in the car, in the shower, when they're happy or when they're blue.

They sing at birthdays. We sing, right? We are people. We sing at birthdays, at weddings, at funerals, at football games. Amen.

[2 : 52] Rock. I was supposed to get like at least a little bit of a cheer, you know. We are fans of Tennessee still. At football games, rock concerts and musicals. And yes, at Fourth of July, fireworks shows.

Some people sing in an operatic voice. I had a cousin of mine, or I still have a cousin of mine. I was singing this operatic voice every time I'd ride in the car with her and it drove me crazy. Some do not, thank the Lord.

You know, some people sing in tune and some do not. You know, my wife recently said to me, I don't hear keys. So there you have it, you know. Some people love to sing.

They never stop singing. They sing when they wake up. They sing when they work. They sing when they drive. They sing when they walk. So much so, they literally drive us nuts.

And some, they don't love to sing so much. But when we gather together, why do we sing? Why don't we recite poetry? Why don't we hum?

[3 : 50] Might be a little easier with the mask on. Why don't we dance? Why don't we snap our fingers like Hamilton? Or better yet, why don't we just pray more? Is singing just a carryover from old school churches?

Do we have to sing? What if I don't connect with God while I sing? Some person told me in the Bible they don't connect in the sermon as much as they do. And the singing.

Does God really want every Christian to sing? Now, the short answer is yes. After all, the word psalm literally means song.

And the book of songs, therefore, is just a book of songs for worshiping God. And so, week after week, as we unpack psalm after psalm, we're not just learning a few more things to believe.

We're learning something to stand on and to sing. Just as we sang two songs based on the psalms this morning. We're learning the words. You know, it's fascinating.

[4 : 49] In the book, there's such a diverse range of writing in the Bible. It's very, like Paul, it's these epistles that are dense and intense.

Or like acts that we just went through. A narrative, a historical narrative telling you a story just like the gospel. But here we find in the psalms, we find poetry. It's loaded with poetry.

It's loaded with lyrics to songs. And so, we've got to learn the tune. I mean, we've got to learn the words. We've got to trace them out. We've got to learn what they mean. You can't sing without knowing the words, though I often try.

We've got to learn the tune. Every psalm has a feel. Every psalm has a tone, a melody. If you don't know what that means, just ask TK after the meeting.

It has a feel, a tune to it. And we've got to learn that tune. We've got to learn also the significance of the word. Why this word, not that word? What do they mean? What are they trying to say together?

[5 : 48] Because we're trying to learn all these things because we're being pushed to stand up and join the choir in the end. Now, you may not have been a choir boy and not like that too much.

But every song is trying to push us to stand and sing. It's trying to push us to believe something so much that we'll stand on it and sing about it. It may be about our salvation, praise the Lord.

It may be about our pain and trouble. It may be about grief. Psalms of lament are one-third of the book of Psalms. Or about the steadfast love of the Lord as the refrain is in Psalm 136.

Or even about our guilt. Psalm 51. Psalm 38. And our grace-filled Savior. And even about our King. As we'll see this morning. Some songs are cheap. Anybody can sing Happy Birthday. You don't get any arrows at you for joining in on that.

[6 : 50] They don't cost much to sing. But some are not cheap. And I think what we're going to see this morning is in our divided culture. Filled with anger and rage. Disunity and division. False pretenses and virtue signaling.

Some songs are hard to sing. And this is one of them. And where we're going is align your life with the campaign of King Jesus. Align your life with the campaign of King Jesus.

I've titled this message, *Why is America So Mad?* And I'm going to unpack it in three points. And I didn't choose this text for July 4th weekend. The Lord chose it and assigned it to us to study.

And point one is the nation's rage. The nation's rage. All the world rages and rebels against Jesus Christ. Is what this psalm is trying to tell us. This psalm is what a lot of scholars would say is a royal psalm.

That just means a psalm about royalty. About a king. And the psalms are so often called the psalms of David. That's what Jesus referred to them as. The psalm of David. And they're called that way because he wrote nearly half of them.

[7 : 56] 73 to be exact. And because he was the king who led the people in the worship of God. You remember that. He was the one after God's own heart. He was the one who rejoiced when the Ark of the Covenant came back into Jerusalem.

Into the city of David. He was undignified as I used to like to sing in my 20s. And literally littered throughout the book of psalms are these little psalms called royal psalms.

About the king. About who he is. And how we're to worship him. About King David. And this psalm is one of those. It's describing a coronation service.

We have inaugurations in America. We fled from England and their coronation services. Right? So we don't normally like those things.

But this is a coronation service that we need to give attention to. The psalmist is remembering his coronation. His crowning in a day of trouble. When the people are raging.

[8 : 57] It begins with these piercing, arresting questions. Look there with me again. Why did the nations rage? People's plot in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves and their rulers take counsel against the Lord and his anointed.

It envisions nations gathering together. Kind of like the United Nations type of thing. And peoples talking and plotting together. And then it narrows in verse 2 into the...

Or actually the second half of verse 2. Yeah? Into the kings and the rulers. Those who hold the power. So it's not just the nations that are gathering and the peoples that are gathering. But the kings and the rulers are taking counsel together.

And the word here, plot. If you see that down there in verse 1. They plot in vain. That's the same word used for meditate in Psalm 1. And the psalmist is putting them together in a very important way.

Rather than meditating on the law of the Lord or on the law of the king day and night. They're meditating and merging together to reject his rule. Rather than meditating on what the law says.

[10:04] They're meditating and merging and aligning together to reject what the law commands. It envisions a world. It's describing a world in which the law of the Lord is trampled.

And the counsel of the wicked spreads anywhere. Everywhere. Does it remind you of anything?

They're not... The idea is they're not seeking in their counseling and their plotting.

They're not seeking to understand. They're not seeking peace. They're not seeking justice. They're breaking out in rage and rebellion against the Lord. Look at verse 3.

This is what they're saying. Let us burst their bonds apart. Let us cast away their cords. Let's throw off the demands of the Lord. And live the way we want.

But the scene in these verses are so absurd. We're meant to kind of see some absurdity in them.

[11:01] Nations and peoples don't talk generally. We did work on the nine nations and the G20 and things like that. But nations and peoples don't talk. Kim Jong-un is not taking counsels today.

That's the way nations typically operate. Kings and rulers don't work together. And so it's meant to sound absurd. I mean, how could they be united together? And yet they are against the Lord's anointed.

And even the questions are meant to underline the absurdity of the scene. Why do the nations rage against the Lord and his anointed? It's meant to be repeated in our minds as we read this. Why do the peoples plot in vain against the Lord and against his anointed?

Why do the kings set themselves against the Lord and against the anointed? Why do the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed? The questions aren't looking for answers. They're rhetorical.

What are they doing? What's the point? You're raging against the Lord. Do you get it? It's meant to be just completely absurd and silly to rebel against the king of all.

[12:11] Now, if you look down in your Bible, look at that word Lord in verse 2. Against the Lord.

Now, most likely, that's in all caps in your Bible, is it? Give a little nod. All caps. Throughout the Psalms in most of our Bibles, when the Lord is translated in all caps, the translators are telling us this is the covenant name of the Lord.

This is Yahweh. What is signified at Y-H-Y-H as an acronym of sorts. And that may not immediately mean much to us, but it meant a lot to the original readers.

So when the original readers saw the Lord there, they knew this was Yahweh. This is not some distant deity. This was the personal God. This is the name that the Lord revealed himself to Moses. Remember that whole burning bush thing where the Lord started speaking out of the bush, this crazy scene. And Moses says, who should I tell him sent me to you?

[13:15] That's what he says to the Pharaoh. Who should I tell him? Who are you? I am who I am. Now, try that with your friends next time at the supermarket. Who are you?

I am who I am. I mean, what could this mean? And what he's telling Moses is that I am life without dependence. I am power without limit.

I am wisdom without misstep. I am faithfulness without change. I am love without selfishness, above which there is no other and without which there is nothing. So the psalmist is telling us that the nations and the peoples aren't raging and rebelling against some earthly king, against some temporal king over this little small area of geographical grass or something like that.

They're raging and rebelling against the great I am and his anointed. Against the king that God set in place. And so this scene is just meant to make us laugh.

Could anything be more ridiculous? You going to rage and rebel against the Lord? You going to prevail?

[14:28] And yet it's all too common, isn't it, in the city of man? Dale Ralph Davis says it like this, Psalms 1 and 2, in so many ways.

I just love that we don't want this man to rule over us. In so many ways, Psalm 1 and 2 form an introduction to the whole book. Psalm 1 zooms in on the individual. What is the man that pleases God? What does he look like?

He's one who meditates on the law day and night. And yet Psalm 2 zooms out wide-angle lens to see the raging and rebelling of the nations. Every nation, every king, every ruler, every politician says in their heart, we don't want this man.

This psalm pushes us to step back and look at the politics of our day. I am generally apolitical. But this confronts us.

Why is there so much anger and rage? Why is there so much division? Why is there so much tiredness? Why is there so much finger-pointing? Why is it that the political left and right used to be able to talk to one another and work with one another and now only shout?

[15 : 46] Why is it that they both say it's their fault? Well, that really helps. Why is it that every news article seems to be spun obviously in one direction?

I mean, I can't even read about the coronavirus and get something that doesn't feel like I'm being duped. I don't know if y'all feel that way. Why is it that the United States don't feel so united?

Believe it or not, this is it. The root problem in the United States is that the root problem of every person under heaven is we don't want Jesus Christ to rule over us.

We want things our way. The anger and rage of America is just a bunch of people who refuse to admit that they are part of the problem. Unless we see that the problem is us, it will always be them. Their faces may change, but the problem will always be them. And this person just forces us to reject the whole us versus them thing.

[16 : 51] It's not that simple. It's just not that simple. That's not the way life works in a fallen world. Alexander Solzhenitsyn says this, and he was in prison in communist Russia, wrote one day in the life of Ivan Denisovich and the Gulag of Petago, which I have not read that one, but he's just fabulous.

And he says about this, he says, if only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, then we could just separate them from the rest of us and destroy them.

But, as this psalm says and as he says, the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. Can't be us versus them.

Can't be left versus right. The line runs through our hearts. So when we see the anger and rage, we must first look at our hearts and take inventory.

Jonathan Lehman says it like this, you who call for immigration reform, do you practice hospitality with visitors to your church who are ethnically and nationally different than you? You who vote for family values, do you honor your parents?

[17 : 59] You who talk of welfare reform, do you give to the needy of your congregation? You who proclaim all lives matter, do all your friends look like you? You who fight for traditional marriage, do you love your wife, cherishing her as you would your own body, and washing her with the water of your word?

It's just pushing us to not look out there, but look right here. The seeds of rebellion aren't on the left and the right.

I'm the problem in America. Point two, the Lord's answer.

The Lord's answer. Jesus is the undisputed king of everyone and everything, and these verses, they take us into the coronation service.

I just love this. You know, look in verse four. He says, He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds him in derision, in disgust. You know, the people have said, we want to do what we want, but the Lord has other plans.

[19 : 03] And this verse just confronts us. If we grow up with a sentimental view of God, these verses offend. When the nations assemble, when they gather, when they plot, when they take counsel, when they roll out their armies to conquer the world, the Lord laughs and clamps down in fury.

Now, this is not the smug snicker of someone who thinks they're better than you. This is a big belly laugh of someone, of something that is truly puny and pathetic. One of the best parts of parenting more than one child is your older children seeing how silly they looked when they were younger. And they threw those temper tantrums. You know, occasionally when our youngest breaks out in a kicking and screaming flail your body on the floor tantrum, it's hard to keep a straight face for the older kids, you know.

The elders kind of laugh at him and they'll ask, did I do that? You know, because sometimes we'll just all erupt and laugh and even the youngest will laugh because he realizes how absurd this whole thing is.

And that's just sort of what's going on here. The Lord's laughing. That's, it's intense. All the raging and scheming and plotting and boasting of wicked men is just silly.

[20 : 25] He sits in the heavens. You see that? Obviously, the Lord doesn't sit down. He's a spirit. But it's saying he rules in the heavens.

Look at that. Look in verse 2. It says, the kings of the earth. Oh, that's great. That's great. They're the kings of the earth. They got that piece of grass that they're over. But the Lord, he sits in the heavens. That's what it's meant to do. It's meant to juxtapose those, put those together. Yes, the kings, they rule over the earth, but the Lord is in the heavens. And he rules over all.

I love that. He's in the heavens. He sits there. He rules over all. And then he speaks to their raging and rebelling. Look in verse 5 and 6. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I've set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

The Lord laughs and emphatically answered, As for me, I mean, it just stands out in the original text. I will set my king on Zion. Notice all the I's that run through there.

[21 : 34] I will do it. I will give him these things. I will set him on Zion. That's my decree. After being crowned, the Lord gives this anointed one, the king, all people and all powers.

Look down. He said, They give him the nations as his inheritance, the ends of the earth as his possession. Gives him power over all. This king will judge the living and the dead. He'll break the wicked with the rod of his iron scepter.

The king will dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. I think the imagery here is very fascinating with the potter's vessel. In Egyptian custom, the name of each city was placed, was written on a jar and placed, or written on a vessel and placed before the god, before the local god, what it was.

And when the people rebelled, the king would smash that vessel to announce judgment was coming on that city. And it's as if the Lord is smashing, the king is smashing that vessel because the Lord is coming.

Because the people are raging and rebelling against him. Now, who is this king? Who is this one to whom the Lord says, you are my son?

[22 : 50] And in that day, it was David. David was a great king. I just love the stories of David. You haven't read 1st, 2nd Samuel. You have to. They're just incredible. He defeated all the people's enemies and took out the Philistines about 20 times.

He gave them rest and prosperity. Most importantly, he led them in worshiping and obeying God. In the height of his fame, he wanted to build a house for the Lord. Do you remember that story? He wanted to build this house for the Lord because he was building a sweet crib for himself and he wanted to build something for the Lord and the Lord said, no, no, no.

I will raise up your son. I will establish his throne. I'll build my own house and I'll be to him a father and he will be to me a son. That's 2nd Samuel 7, one of the most important verses in the Old Testament for putting our Bibles together.

That's the same thing that's written down there in verse 7. I'll tell you to agree. You are my son.

Today, I have placed you in that place. Sure enough, after David came Solomon.

He was David's son. He built a house for the Lord, became the greatest king of Israel but then, like David, he died. Some people thought the promise of the Lord was over, that it was nothing but others continued to read these verses and came to see these promises were too great for an earthly king.

[24 : 03] I mean, what earthly king rules over the nations? What earthly king has the end of the earth as his possession? The Lord is not declaring and decreeing that David or Solomon will be king forever.

The Lord is calling them to keep their eyes peeled for the true king and true son of God, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1 puts this together. We're just going to read a few verses in there. If you look with me, it says, Long ago, and in many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he's spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed as heir of all things.

After making purification for sins, just making a sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high and become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent to theirs.

And then look, he says, for to which of the angels of God did God ever say, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. That's verse 7 in our text, right?

Or again, I'll be to him a father and he'll be to me a son. That's 2 Samuel 7. But of the son, he says, Psalm 45, your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

[25 : 12] The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. So we read this verse not thinking about David or anybody else thinking about Jesus Christ who God has decreed is on the

throne forever and ever.

So the Lord is saying to us, say what you want, do what you want, I am Yahweh and I've decreed that Jesus is the king forever. That may be a yawn to us, but it's a precious comfort to the people of God.

Christians get all tangled up in reading the book of Revelation, but the main point of the whole book to the original recipients is clear.

Jesus is the glory of heaven who sits on the throne now and is worshipped by elders and living creatures and martyrs and others. Jesus is the lamb already slain who's ransomed people from every tribe, tongue, and nation and can open the scroll with its many seals.

Jesus is the child called up to God who will conquer Satan, the dragon and all the demons. Jesus is the man riding on the white horse with the name King of Kings, Lord of Lords tattooed to his legs.

[26 : 18] Jesus is the one called the Word of God from which his mouth is a sharp sword to strike down all the nations and rule with his rod of iron right there in our text.

Jesus is the one who's coming again to make all things new. The main point of the book of Revelation to a people persecuted and being killed all day long is Jesus is in complete control over heaven and earth now.

That's the message here. You can run through walls if you believe that. You can eat dirt. You can be like Alexander Solzhenitsyn and sit under the thick thumb of Stalin.

Go read the stories. One of my favorite martyr stories is about Polycarp preserved from 155 A.D. And Polycarp just is the incredible story of them trying to get him to recant and to praise Caesar and he keeps refusing to recant and he says when he went into the theater to go and be burned alive which is the way he died to be burned alive he said a voice came from heaven be strong Polycarp and play the man let him feel strong for a day that's what this text is saying play the man let him think that it's that it's this world is in great control let him let him think it for a minute because the Lord is coming they were going to nail him to the piece of wood he said no I'll remain there I don't need nails because that's where my Lord called me to go it's unbelievable it's a most precious comfort we're not falling in the hands of any man praise God we're in the hands of Jesus Christ but it is a most important political campaign for us have no doubt

Christians should be into politics we should be proclaiming Jesus is king several months ago I received a journal that I get four times a year with the title the tribes that bind it's all about tribalism and American political and social culture tribes historically were you know about Native Americans or others referred to a group of people committed to one another who leaned on one another for help looked to one another for things they could not do in themselves similar to a church in some ways but it became a people a tribe but tribalism is an unhealthy imitation tribalism is rising now because we have no tribe we've moved far from home we're isolated ourselves we've turned from the beliefs of our parents that rooted us and rooted them and we're looking for something to live for we're looking for something to gather around we're looking for a team to be on and a cause to defend and it feels like a tribe tribalism does it gives you a sense of belonging it gives you a sense of mission but it's not a tribe it's not gathered around the way of life it's gathered around power it's gathered around the cause and if you stop seeing the cause exactly the way they see the cause you're out you're cancelled one article put it by and large politics is no longer about people participating in a shared project of societal order there is very little desire to actually persuade the strategy nowadays is to acquire enough political power to have it your way there may be groups that are more nuanced and charitable in their language but groups on the far left and right set the tone if you lift your head and look around the seeds of this the essence the effects of tribalism are all over our culture it's literally ripping America apart the far right the far left the black lives matter hashtag folks and the hashtag all lives matter folks identity politics we're all going to die if we don't put on a mask quick type of people and this virus is a conspiracy trying to take out Trump non mask wearing type of people there's little room for anybody with nuance in the middle and that's where [30 : 47] I want to be I always want nuance I love nuance and I want to be in there and they're in the middle and this this psalm warns us don't fall for tribalism don't fall for us versus them align yourself with the campaign of Jesus Christ he's the king watch out they're trying to win you over to their trial they'll eat you up align your life with the campaign of King Jesus but look one more thing he says he put his king in Zion on Zion my holy hill now unless you got a bible dictionary we don't often know what that is Zion is just a puny 11 acres on the south end of the mountain of Jerusalem when God went to establish his kingdom on earth he didn't go to the big city he didn't go to Rome

he went to the sticks he went to the back woods he went to the place from which people say nothing good and no one good ever comes he's saying my kingdom won't come in this world that's what's loaded in that little phrase he was in Zion he'll come in weakness my kingdom will come through the hands and feet of humble people committed to one another in churches and proclaiming the gospel of the king and this kingdom though beginning small and weak will spread throughout the world throughout the world

I mean there should be a wonderful confidence in our hearts right now America may be shaken but we know the future we know what God's doing he's building his kingdom and the gates of hell won't prevail against it Mark Devers says it well before and after America there was and will be the church the nation was an experiment the church is a certainty there should be a settled confidence in our hearts because of the certainty of this God's not anxious about America God is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it but have you ever noticed that the gates of hell are not an offensive weapon the devil's not stepping up with the gates of hell the idea is the church is not being surrounded by hell the church is surrounded hell you get that the church is bringing its kingdom to the very gates of hell preaching the only message that plucks sinners from Satan's snare and into life all that's going on with America doesn't alter our mission Jesus is the king one day every knee will bow before him and each Sunday we're proclaiming the gospel and getting one day closer to when every knee bows before him and while we do we're plundering Satan's house that's what's going on God made us alive together with Christ he took the record of debt that stood against us nailing it to the cross with its legal demand next verse he did this to disarm the rulers and authorities and the heavenly places to disarm all of this world's kings and Satan's kings with Jesus Christ that's what's going on that's the power of the gospel I invite you to come and receive life through Jesus Christ there is only one man who plunders Satan's house and his name is Jesus he's bound the strong man Matthew 12 so that weak men like you and me might be unclutched by Satan incredible point three the people's choice the people's choice award I guess the people's choice our culture is all about choice right and the final stanza calls us to make one will we worship God and serve him completely that's what it's going to ask us and the rest of the psalm he barely addresses the crowd I mean it's all describing this coronation but in verse 10 he sets them before him and begins to pelt them with commands look at verse 10 he says now therefore O kings be wise before he tells them to make their choice he tells them to choose wisely I was teaching my kids this the other day choices have consequences you can't choose a choice without choosing a consequence so that's what he's doing be wise make a good decision be warned!

Listen carefully make sure you learn what you need to learn that's what that means the repeated refrain of listen in the Bibles and in Proverbs is because there's no one more helpless than someone who doesn't listen and then he tells them what they need to hear verse 11 serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in his way for his wrath is quickly kindle blessed are all those who take refuge and him worship the king and submit to him completely worship begins with bowing that's what was all throughout the psalm psalm 95 bow before the Lord and serve him joyfully it's him you've been rebelling against and it's him you must do business with you must bow before this king with fear and reverence and awe yes instead of rebelling and rejecting you must serve him with joy we love to talk about being free on July 4th weekend we love to replay the courageous cry of

[36 : 21] William Wallace freedom you know or the rallying cry of Patrick Henry give me liberty or give me death but we like to empty out freedom and define it on our own terms as we define it deciding for ourselves breaking all constraints from friends or family or society to do things our way to do what we want and this song is confronting us and saying that's a dead end that's a road to despair that's not true freedom that is slavery worship the king John Knight said not Bobby John Knight this author said the 4th of July is a different sort of independence day for me 4th of July is a different sort of independence day for me on July 4th 1995 my multiply disabled son Paul entered the world and my life came crashing down around me and would soon include a deep and intense bitterness toward God I never denied

God existed or was powerful I concluded he was mean and cruel giving me my son with his autism and blindness gradually he says things began to change in his heart I remember a particularly heartbroken bitter email I sent to my pastor he had every right to discipline me in that moment but instead wrapped the words of the Bible around my heart God used those words from the Bible

