

Kiss the Son – Psalm 2

Series: Songs for Life

Date: 23 July 2023, 7th Sunday after Trinity

Location: St George's Battery Point

Texts: Psalm 2; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Mark 1:9-15

Why do the nations rage? Handel's Messiah

That was an excerpt from *the Messiah*, that great oratorio by Handel. It's the opening line from our text for today, Psalm 2. We've just finished a series on 1 Samuel, and today we're starting a short series on Psalms, the great song book of the Bible, many of which were written by king David. Psalm 2 is a terrific transition point from Samuel to Psalms as it's all about God's anointed, that is, his chosen king. Psalm 2 is key to understanding the book of Psalms. It introduces the 4 main characters of the Psalms - God, his king, the nations, and us as the readers. Psalm 2 is also one of the most important texts in the Bible. It's like a poetic summary of the whole Bible. It's a key to understanding the whole Bible. If you can get your head around this Psalm, then you're a long way to understanding the whole story of the Bible. Psalm 2 invites us to see how God relates to the world, and how we can relate to God.

Psalm 2 does say some things we might find difficult to hear. Verse 4 has God laughing at the nations. In verse 5 he terrifies them in his wrath and in verse 9 his chosen king smashes them like a hammer hitting a clay pot. What are we to do with these images?

As we come to read the Psalm it's helpful to ask 2 questions:

1. What did this text mean for its original audience?
2. What does this text mean for us now?

Actually, these 2 questions will help you understand any text in Scripture.

The key moment between those 2 questions for any Old Testament text is Jesus. Jesus makes all the difference between what the text meant to its original audience and what it means for us. Let's use those 2 questions to read Psalm 2.

What did the Psalm mean back then?

The opening stanza of the Psalm, verse 1-3, asks,

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?

The nations of the world and their rulers are pictured as gathering together, plotting a rebellion against God and against his anointed one. God and his anointed rule over them, but, verse 3, they feel this rule is oppressive, like a chain around their neck that they need to throw off.

"Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

In verse 4 the scene moves from the conspiracy on earth to the throne room of heaven. God's response to this rebellion is both laughter and anger. He laughs because it is laughable that they would think they have a chance against God. He is God after all – all powerful, all knowing. But anger too because what right does the creature have to reject its Creator?

In verse 6 we begin to see who God's anointed one is. It is his chosen king, who rules from Zion – that is Jerusalem.

'I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.'

The one who is enthroned in heaven rules on earth through this king.

But why would this statement in verse 6 strike fear into the hearts of the rulers and nations? Because of what follows in the following stanza, verses 7-9.

Now the voice changes again, and this time it is the anointed one, God's chosen king who speaks.

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD

And what is that decree?

He said to me, "You are my Son, today I have become your Father."

Here we're taken back to 2 Samuel 7, where God promised king David, through the prophet Nathan, that one day he would have a son, a descendant, who would build a temple for God, and whose kingdom God would establish forever. And God says of this king, "I will be his father, and he will be my son."

And so this title, *Son of God*, became the royal title of the kings of Judah – like your majesty, or his royal highness.

This is actually what the term *Son of God* means in the Bible. Not God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, but rather God's chosen king. His anointed one. Anointing with oil was the way someone was crowned king in the Old Testament. The fact that this king, this Son of God, is also called the Anointed One in Psalm 2 has led scholars to suggest that this Psalm may have been used in the coronation of the kings of Judah. Whether or not that is the case, this Psalm says that the king in Jerusalem is God's chosen king, his deputy on earth – the one through whom he rules over all the earth. And so, verses 10-12, the rulers and nations are called to serve God, and bow the knee to his vice-regent, to kiss the Son, the king in Jerusalem.

But the warnings for failing to do this ring a bit hollow. Indeed the whole claim that God rules the world through his king in Jerusalem seems ridiculous, absurd. On the world stage Judah was a small and insignificant kingdom, more often than not the meat sandwiched between the great superpowers of Egypt to the south and Assyria and then Babylon to the north.

Was this Psalm then just exaggeration? A kind of nationalistic pep talk?
 Not quite. Because God had promised Israel that they would be his people and he would be their God. And Solomon had built his temple in Jerusalem. And he had promised that one day he would establish an everlasting kingdom for a son of David. And so each time a king was crowned the question was asked – could this be the one? Could this be the one? Could this be the everlasting king?

And then one day, in about AD 30, a young man by the name of Joshua ben Joseph was ritually washed by his cousin John in the Jordan river. And as he came up out of the water the heavens opened and God himself, not a prophet, like with David, nor a priest, like with his descendants, but God himself said the very words of Psalm 2, *this one is my Son, whom I love.*

What are the first words that Jesus says in Mark's gospel? *The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news!*

The king has come. So kiss the Son. Find refuge in him

What does this Psalm mean now?

We've asked what this Psalm meant to its original audience. We've seen how it was fulfilled in Jesus at his baptism. But what might it mean for us today?

A key to helping us answer this question comes in Acts 4. There Peter sees this Psalm not just fulfilled in Jesus' baptism, but also at his crucifixion:

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together
 against the Lord and against his anointed one.”

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. **28** They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

But what about the rest of the Psalm?

Handel is the best exegete of this text.

We're in the 2nd part of the Oratorio. This begins with Isaiah 53 and what Jesus' death accomplishes. Handel then quotes Psalm 22 and the various people who mocked Jesus on the cross. Psalm 2 follows. And then:

[Hallelujah chorus]

This what the chorus, representing us as humanity sings:

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. (Revelation 19: 6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord,

and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11: 15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (Revelation 19: 16)

Hallelujah!

What Handel is saying is that Psalm 2 is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus' ascension and reign. Psalm 2 proclaims that no one and nothing can stand against the Lord of heaven and earth and his chosen king. Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigns!

1 Cor 15.28 says Christ will reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. This is where we come to those confronting verses in the Psalm. God rules through his anointed Son. Will you bow before the king, or stand as his enemy?

But before the Psalm confronts us individually, it disturbs the kingdoms and rulers of this world.

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

¶ Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

The rulers of this world will one day have to give an account to him for how they have ruled the little patch of this earth and its people entrusted to them for their short season. This Psalm invites them to be wise, to kiss the Son now, to rule according to his laws, and to serve him with fear.

This Psalm is also an invitation for all the poor and oppressed of the earth, all those who suffer violence and injustice, to come and celebrate the rule of the Son. Because his kingdom is a kingdom of justice and peace. That the LORD reigns through his anointed Son is great news for the creation itself. In Psalm 96 the fields and all the creatures in them are jubilant and the trees of the forest sing for joy, because the LORD comes to judge.¹ Rulers too can celebrate his rule, but they do so with trembling knowing that they must give an account to the Son.

We too are called to kiss the Son. To serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule. We are called to not join the folly of plotting against the LORD in vain, or trying to

¹ Psalm 96.12-13, cf. 98.7-9

throw off his yoke. But to serve him, in the little patches of creation God has placed under our care. We do so, knowing that Jesus says,

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.²

I love how the Psalm ends - *Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

How is this so?

Jesus may have been crucified in weakness and humiliation, but this is in fact none other than God's power and glory displayed. Because the Cross is his throne. He reigns in love. The cross is the great triumph over our greatest enemies of sin and death. So we can find shelter, refuge and rest in the Son. We can receive all the blessings he has purchased through his death for us: the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, adoption as his daughters and sons, the gift of the Spirit, the promise of glory.

We wait for the day when Christ will put all his enemies under his feet

But today – Kiss the Son. The Lord God of hosts reigns through him. Kiss the Son lest you find yourself his enemy. Kiss the Son. Cast your own little crown at his feet. Kiss the Son for you will find refuge in him.

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Bass: Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed. (Psalm 2:1-2)

Chorus: Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their yokes from us. (Psalm 2: 3)

Tenor: He that dwelleth in Heav'n shall laugh them to scorn; The Lord shall have them in derision. (Psalm 2: 4)

Tenor: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (Psalm 2: 9)

Chorus: Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. (Revelation 19: 6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 11: 15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (Revelation 19: 16)

Hallelujah!

² Matthew 11.29-30