

“The Christian Worldview”

16 August 2020 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

Welcome & Call To Worship:

Hymn of Preparation: 10,000 Reasons (Bless The Lord)

Prayers of Adoration & Confession:

Reading: Psalm 2

Sermon:

Last week, we learned about two ways to live: one of relationship with God and a delight in His instruction, which leads to eternal life, and the other where we follow our own hearts, the way of the world, and it leads to eternal perishing. The psalmist used the picture of a tree planted by water and thriving for a life with God and the picture of chaff for the other. Psalm 1 looked at the direction, description and destiny of the believer's life and was extremely clear that life is found in relationship with God and in obedience to His word. The picture of the tree planted by the water highlights the Christian's stability, vitality, productivity, durability, and prosperity in life, whatever the circumstances.

Psalm 2 broadens the picture. It is the big picture. It gives us the view of God on the world and as such it is the worldview of the believer and the Church. We see this worked out in the early Church in Acts 4. Peter and John have been arrested after the healing of a crippled man in the temple area of Jerusalem. This created a commotion and Peter takes the opportunity to boldly proclaim the gospel with the memorable line (3:15), *“You killed the author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”* The truth was uncomfortable for them as Jews, particularly the point of Jesus' resurrection. They arrest them and put them in jail. At the hearing the next day, Peter is asked, *“By what power or what name did you do this?”* (4:7) and his reply is Jesus Christ: *“He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved”* (v.11-12). This really upsets the Jewish leaders; however, they fear the people. Their verdict is fudged and they simply tell Peter and John not to speak, which they refuse to do, and when they are released and return to the church, they use the words of Psalm 2 to understand what just happened.

Read Acts 4:23-31.

So, with your Bibles open at Psalm 2, let's explore the Christian's worldview.

I. The defiance of the world (v.1-3)

“The nations conspire”: there is a deliberate move to take God on - the footnote says *“they rage”*. They are anti-God, against God. *“The peoples plot”*: it's personal, a personal defiance. There is universal (v.2) opposition to God (remember *Yahweh* is His personal name) and to His Anointed One (see v.7 - *His Son, Jesus*). In v.3, we get to eavesdrop on their thoughts, or conversation, and we note that they see God as oppressive, restricting their freedom and enslaving. We want to be free of God and Jesus and there is always defiance. That is the reality of the world: its people, nations, and rulers.

It is therefore important that Christians understand and grasp the reality of our worldview. Jesus made sure He taught this to His disciples, and He used a word stronger than defiance: *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world. But I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you”* (John 15:18-19).

So, in our worked example from the early Church, they are not surprised (v.27) when the authorities move against them because of the gospel. The defiance of the world to us should not be a surprise; it should be expected. Understanding that will help us enormously when we try to understand that opposition when our message and intentions are for and in line with God’s and yet we face defiance and hatred.

This defiance or hatred of the world explains why law-abiding, gifted, community-serving men and women languish in prisons around the world. It explains why the name of Jesus is a joke, a swear word, and followers are often ridiculed. It is why in our hearts we resist the way of God and it’s often simply the last resort for us to obey. To understand the world from a Christian viewpoint, we must reckon with the defiance of the world.

II. The King is enthroned (v.4-6)

Our worldview must start with a realistic view of the hatred of the world towards God and His people, but it has to include a realistic assessment of the fact that God is enthroned, and as such, He laughs and mocks at their puny efforts of opposition. The apparatus of the state, the armies of the world, their economic power, the strong laws and culture imposed on us, the people, is to God a weak and laughable reality. The deceitfulness of false religion and its associated grip on hearts and minds is strong from a human perspective, but to God it is such a puny response that He might sarcastically say, “are you having a laugh?” His attitude to these “superpowers” is dismissive and derisive.

If we re-read v.1-3 considering this reality, the sovereign and exalted reign of God, then we can see the question **“Why?”** of v1 in a stronger light. Dale Ralph Davis says this world is rebellious, but it is an insane world. He tries to get inside the head of the psalmist by saying, *“He can hardly believe it! What suicidal nincompoops to be possessed of such livid rage toward the God who rules.”* This is the enthroned King’s attitude and His action is to say, *“I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill”* (v.6).

Zion, a small and insignificant hill surrounding Jerusalem: what was that in the world’s eyes? To the watching superpowers it didn’t look like a great deal, but it happened - little Israel anointed her king. This may be a King of Judah/Israel, but clearly the psalmist speaks of a future time, the time of Jesus.

The world mocked Jesus during His trial, they taunted Him as He was led to the cross. Humbled and shamed, beaten and bloodied, they scorned Him as He hung gasping for breath. Yet when it went dark at midday and when the earth shook, they were not so sure. But for those who believe, the resurrection proved that Jesus the King had been installed. He has risen and ascended to the right hand of His Father in heaven and He sits enthroned. *“The gospel of God....regarding his son.....who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 1:1-4).

God is enthroned, He reigns in heaven and on Zion (in the Church), and the powers of the world are nothing to Him. It doesn't look like much now, but the reality is that Jesus is the one enthroned in heaven and that changes everything.

III. God's decree (v.7-9)

It is helpful to picture an actual coronation of a king. When he has been installed or crowned, a decree or statement is read by the ruling authority of the nation, or in this case God. Yahweh speaks and issues an authoritative statement which tells us a lot about the King and His rule.

It establishes the legitimacy of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. God the Father revealed to us the person of His Son at His baptism (Matthew 3:17), at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), and through His resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4) and His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Hebrews Ch 1:3-5). Jesus is the legitimate Son, the heir with the full authority of God.

It shows us the extent of His rule: *all nations*.

It shows us the force or power of His rule: *nothing can or shall stand in its way*.

In his commentary, Matthew Henry says, *"Take comfort and plead, "The kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established and shall triumph over all opposition."*

Let us take a moment to hear the words *"ask of me"* (v.8). The decree is from God the Father to His Son. He says, "ask of me and I will establish the nations under Your rule and bring them into Your kingdom; ask of me and I will defeat and destroy Your enemies." So here is a wonderful promise given to Jesus by His heavenly Father, an agreement, a covenant really. And this is the role Jesus has presently, a role of interceding for the salvation of the nations as Hebrews 7:25 states: *"Therefore He is able to save completely (forever) those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them."*

Prayer is the means to achieve the reality of the kingdom and we have a role in this as James reminds in negative terms, *"you do not have because you do not ask"* (James 4:2), or as Jesus told His disciples positively, *"Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name"* (John 15:16).

This is a great encouragement and challenge to us all. It has been encouraging in our COVID times that prayer has been ongoing and appreciated. I ask us to think seriously about these three small words: "ask of me." Share with each other about prayer, requests and answers. Let us have a conversation about prayer in the church, engage in more prayer and speak of the people and situations you would like prayed for. Talk to me and the elders if you think we should be having more times for corporate prayer. **ASK OF ME!**

IV. The call for a decision (v.10-12)

When Jesus came to earth and began His ministry, He used the words from the prophet Isaiah to outline its nature (see *Luke 4*), and the last line of that quotation from Isaiah 61:1-2 is, *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."* The ending of the psalm is remarkable, that the same kings, rulers and people who showed such defiance and rage towards God are offered hope if they will come into submission and relationship with God. **Be wise, be warned!** Oh why do you rage? Will you not understand the reality of what God has done in

Jesus? Will you not submit because He is coming back and at the name of Jesus every knee will bow?

Be wise, be warned:

- *“Serve the Lord with fear”* (v.11)
- *“Rejoice with trembling”* (v.11)
- *“Kiss the Son”* (v.12)

None of this seems attractive to those who are proud and determined to go their own way, but it remains the way of salvation - to acknowledge our sin and need, our hopelessness in affecting a change of our hearts and to stand before the righteous judgement of Jesus - to be admitted to the assembly of God's people in the new heaven and earth, to avoid eternal punishment. Be wise, be warned: the invitation remains as long as you live or until the Lord comes back to fully establish His rule on earth.

The psalm ends with the statement, *“How blessed are all who take refuge in Him”*. I was struck that the introduction of Psalm 1 and conclusion of Psalm 2 emphasise the way of blessing. The introduction to the Songs of Life, the Psalms, outlines the way of blessing. Psalm 1 tells us there are two ways to live, so choose life in Christ, and Psalm 2 teaches us a biblical worldview.

The world hates God. God is enthroned; Jesus is His Son and will establish His kingdom. God offers grace and favour to all those who oppose Him . . . for a time. So be wise, be warned and be blessed in Him. For those who have already experienced that blessing, let us ask God for more of His reign in the world and in our lives, because we know that for others this is the only way to life and blessing - taking refuge in Him. Today truly is the day of God's favour in Jesus. Amen.

Hymn of Reflection: O Praise The Name (Anástasis)

Prayers for Others: Carole Speer

Closing Praise: Come Thou Fount

Announcements

Benediction: And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now, and for evermore. Amen.