The Rebellion, The Decree, The Kiss

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[0:00] Let's read together the words of Psalm 2 from the Old Testament.! I'm going to invite Anne to come and read for us. 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, and 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.
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. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.
[1:12] 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. Amen. We have read a psalm which begins about rebellion.
I wonder why it is that we love rebel stories so much.
We think about some of the most famous rebel stories that we've read, or movies that we've watched. Things like Star Wars and the rebel alliance against the evil empire. Or the Hunger Games, when Katniss becomes the symbol of rebellion against the capital.
Braveheart, when William Wallace stands up and rebels against Longshanks. Or even Lord of the Rings, the fellowship, and rebelling against the all-powerful Sauron.
There's so many stories about this, and we love them. They make us clench our fists in camaraderie. And we go, yes, we want to take part in this rebellion. We live vicariously through the characters in these stories.
[2:20] We want to see the tyrant crushed. We want to see the rebels win. We want to see the all-powerful ruler, who is evil and oppressive, be overthrown.

But Psalm 2 gives us something a little bit uncomfortable to think about. Because Psalm 2 switches that scenario a little bit.
We see a rebel story, yes. But we see people rebelling against the king who's no tyrant at all. What if the rebels are rebelling against a king who is good and just and kind?
What if every good thing that we have that we're rebelling against comes from this king? We still want him to be overthrown.
And that's uncomfortable for us to think about, I think, because it shows an underlying fundamental problem with humanity. It's not that we are strongly opposed to oppressive rulers, is it?
[3:25] Of course we are. But there's also something much deeper. And I think the question we have to ask ourselves is, am I rebelling against oppression, against tyranny, or is it simply that I don't want anyone to rule over me at all?

We can think about the megalomaniacs, the despots that we see on the news. They're plotting and scheming to increase their own power. And we rightly castigate them for their behavior.
But the Bible tells us, fundamentally there's a problem in our hearts. Our problem is that we don't want God's rule over us.
We don't want God to be our king. But Psalm 2 doesn't just leave us there. Psalm 2 takes it further. And this morning we're going to see something incredibly uplifting and incredibly assuring.
There is a king on the throne. A good king. A righteous king. A king completely in control of this world. No matter how chaotic and violent and out of control we think it's becoming.
[4:39] Because of this great king's mercy, God invites even the most rebellious of rebels to come to him. He offers refuge from the dangers of rebellion.

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He doesn't stop merely at safety. But he offers blessing. I've got three headings for us as we work through this psalm together. The rebellion, the decree, and the kiss.
So first of all, the rebellion. Psalm 2 opens and it thrusts us straight into the heat of battle. Why do the heathens rage? The peoples plot in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves.
And the rulers take counsel together. We've got countries, cultures, royalty, governments. All banding together. And there's a picture of a world in rebellion.
And notice the language. The nations rage. The peoples plot. The kings set themselves. The rulers take counsel together. This is war language. This is a picture of a rebellious world in turmoil.
[5:44] If you watch the news, it doesn't take very long to see that there's a real mirror of this in our world today. Wars are grinding on all over the place. There's political instability.

Governments are collapsing. We see violence everywhere. Leaders make decisions that to us just seem absurd. Nations threaten nations. People fight over who gets to exercise real power.
Psalm 2 doesn't paper over the violence, the hatred, the instability, the scheming that's the reality of our fallen world. And it tells us where all this anger and plotting is ultimately directed towards.
Who it's against. It's against the Lord and his anointed. Saying, let's burst their bonds apart. Let's cast their cords from us. Well, this is extraordinary because here the people are not indiscriminately firing shots at one another.
It's not king fighting king. It's not person fighting person. What we're seeing here is human rebellion directed against God and his king.
[6:54] The word that we have in verse 1, plot, is the same word that is in Psalm 1 before. In Psalm 1, it's used to describe the way that a blessed person meditates on God's word.

We looked at that a couple of weeks ago and we said, this is not a 10-minute meditation at the beginning of your day. This is an all-encompassing posture by which we live our life. Thinking about God's word.
Living through God's law. Loving God's law. And so when we think about the same word being used here for how the evil rulers of the world are plotting against the Lord, we see that this is a deep-rooted, premeditated, a deliberate attack on God and his anointed king.
And notice the language that they use to describe the king's rule. They call them bonds, cords, chains. So they look at God's rightful authority.
God made the world. He rules over everyone. He's the ruler of the whole world. And they think, that's imprisonment. I don't want to be tied up. Let me break free from this bonds that are holding me back from being the person that I think I should be.
[8:07] Let's decide for ourselves what's right and wrong. I want to determine how I live. I mean, isn't this just exactly the same as what we see all across the world just now, even in Edinburgh?

We see people thinking about God's law as a way of restricting pleasure or enjoyment or fun, rather than thinking about submitting to God's righteous and good rule designed for the good of our lives. We look at things like our money, our sexuality, our marriages, whatever it is that we're meditating on day to day, and we think, this is not good.
This is restriction. This is holding me back. It's like I've got handcuffs on the life I want to live. But you see, this rebellion, it's not primarily a political issue.
It's a heart issue. And it goes right back to the beginning of time, right back to the creation of the world, right back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam was placed in the garden, and remember, Adam was in a paradise, no evil influence around him, no sin to deal with.
[9:20] And he was placed in the garden to rule over it, have authority over the garden, to tend it and to care for it. But Adam was a king underneath the true king. Of course, Adam rebelled.

He didn't listen. He didn't trust God's word. He rebelled against him. And when he did, when Adam rejected God's word, he undermined the goodness that God had for his people.
He wanted to determine good and evil for himself. And now all of us, deep down at our heart level, we inherit this rebellion. We might not be a country.
We might not have a lot of power at all outside our own homes. We might not have a lot of power inside our own homes. But we all want to be king of something.
And the thing that we want to be king of more than anything else is our own hearts. We want to be king of ourselves. We want to sit in the throne of our own person.
[10:19] So we have to ask ourselves today. We're forced to, I think. Where are the areas in your life? What are the things in your life over which you're happy for God to have rule?

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And what are the things in your life, what are the areas in your life where you're not? Where are the places where you see God's law as bonds, holding you back from the things you want to do?
The restrictions on who you're supposed to be. Instead of seeing them as they really are, God's bonds, these bonds, these chains, they're like a loving mother holding a toddler's hand beside a busy road.
Not for harm, not for restriction, but from love. We can invite God to enter into those places in our hearts where we feel we are holding back, we're pushing back, rebelling against God, even this morning.
But then comes this great moment in Psalm 2. In verse 4, it tells us that he who sits in heaven laughs. The Lord holds him in derision.
[11:28] Why? Why is God laughing here? How can God laugh when it looks as though the whole world has banded together against him? Well, we know it's not because God's indifferent. God cares deeply about his creation, about all the people that he made.

And we know that he's not unmoved by this rebellion because we read in verse 5 that God speaks and then he acts. And in verse 6, he reminds them of the things that he's already done.
He's set his king on Zion, on Jerusalem, the city of God, the city of David. So how is it that God laughs?
Well, I think the answer is about perspective. I've got a new perspective today. I've not been up in this pulpit before. But the perspective in Psalm 2, we see the earth raging from the earth, but we see God who sits in heaven.
The rebels are like children swinging punches at a father who's got his hand on their forehead, holding them back at a distance.
[12:33] They're unable to impact him in any negative way. Completely impervious to the rebellion.

But it's not that God doesn't care. That's why David says that the nations plot in vain. He says that in verse 1. The rebellion is emptiness, it's vanity, it's hopelessness.
It's all for nothing. Because earthly kings only possess any authority that God allows them to have.
And I think this is incredibly important for us.
In 2026, when we look at the world around us, we see so many things that can terrify us, frighten us. We've become hopeless and dismayed if we concentrate too much on the things that are happening and not the one who's in control of it all.
We watch war, political instability, Christians being pushed back to the margins of society. We look in our own city in Edinburgh, the things that are happening here, and we can despair.
[13:36] Where's God in all of this? But Psalm 2 is reminding us where to look. We look up, the world rages, but God reigns. People plot that God sits on his throne.

The world shakes, but God's throne doesn't. We can look at the world, see ourselves surrounded by rebellion and chaos, and we can rest assured that the safest place in the universe is under the rule of the good king.
So that's the rebellion. Point two is the decree. Having set this scene of the world in rebellion against God, David, who wrote the Psalm, he then gives us God's declaration.
In verse seven it says, I will tell of the decree, the Lord said to me, you're my son, today I've begotten you. Ask of me, and I'll make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
This is royal language being used here. The king of Israel is God's anointed king, and God speaks about him like a son. To get the background to this, we can go to the Old Testament book of Samuel, 2 Samuel verse seven, and the covenant that God makes with David, the binding commitment he makes with him.
[15:00] God promises David, I'll establish the throne of his kingdom forever. And then just a little bit later, a few verses later, God says, I will be to him a father, he shall be to me a son.

The Davidic kingdom was God's chosen representative. But there is a problem here, if we stop there. Because no Davidic king actually ruled all the nations.
Nobody possessed all the nations, like Psalm 2 says. David didn't, and then his son who followed after him, Solomon, didn't, and all the successes after them, they didn't have the nations as their heritage either.

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But there, what does Psalm, what does Psalm mean then? Well, it means that Psalm 2 can't be pointing just at David.
It's got to be pointing beyond this Davidic kingship, the immediate one in front of us. And verse 2 helps us, I think, to understand. Because verse 2 identifies the Lord's anointed.
[16:06] And that word anointed in Hebrew is Mashiach, which is where we get the word Messiah, or in Greek, Christ. So this Psalm, written by King David, is about the immediate Davidic kingship, the things that are happening in David's life as he writes this, or before he's written this.

But it's also about the ultimate fulfillment that's coming in Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes this really clear for us. So God quotes Psalm 2 from heaven when Jesus is baptized, and then he quotes it again from heaven, Jesus' transfiguration, when he's shown in his glory on the mountain.
Acts 4 quotes Psalm 2, and it says that, it applies it to Herod and Pilate and the Gentile nations, all the peoples gathered against Jesus.
And then in the book of Hebrews, Psalm 2 is quoted and applied directly to Jesus in chapter 1 and in chapter 5. And then, in Acts 13, so Paul is talking about Jesus' resurrection, and he quotes again, Psalm 2, verse 7.
And he says that, this decree, you're my son, today I begotten you, is fulfilled at the raising of Jesus from the dead. So the resurrection then, when Jesus is raised again, it's not merely Jesus coming back from the dead.
[17:35] It was the Father's declaration that this is my king. This is the king that rules over all the earth. Not that Jesus hasn't always reigned, but that he's exalted at his resurrection.

Maybe we could say the resurrection is God's coronation of the crucified king. And then we look at verse 8, and God says to his son, ask of me, and I'll make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the world, the ends of the earth, your possession.
And we can see this incredible movement that's happened in the psalm. In verses 1 to 3, the nations are rebelling against the king. But then in verse 8, the very nations that were rebelling are given to the king.
The rebels have become the inheritance. When we think about the words used and we think about the implication, it's got huge meaning for us as we think about the mission of the church.
At the end of the book of Matthew, Jesus speaks to his disciples, and he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. That sounds very much like Psalm 2 language.
[18:47] And he says, go therefore and make disciples of every nation. So why does the church go? Why do we go? Why do we tell people about Jesus? Why do we put ourselves in those conversations that we don't want to put ourselves in and tell people that Jesus wants them to come to him?

Well, we do it because Jesus has the authority over the nations. Mission happens because the king has been enthroned and all the nations belong to him.
And that has to change the way that we talk about, or at least the way we talk internally about how we speak to people who don't know Jesus about what it means to become a believer.
When we speak to people about Jesus, if we're really honest with ourselves, it's so much easier to talk about the benefits that we get from church rather than the reason that we gather.
It's easy to say things like, I love going to church because I love the community. I love going to church because I've got some really good friends there. I love going to church because it gives structure to my week.
[19:53] Otherwise, I'd just be all over the place. I love going to church because it's the only hour in the week that I'm not checking my phone. Those things might be true. Those things might be good, but they're not the heart of the Christian message.

Because when we speak about Jesus, we're announcing that the king has come. So when we speak to our friends and our neighbors, our colleagues, even people within our own families about Jesus, we're not asking them, would you like to come to church with me?
Not really. What we're saying is, there's a king and he has rightful authority over your life. And as we're just about to see, this king is not a tyrant.
He's a king who's come to save. Our fixes thirdly, finally, to our third point, the kiss. So when you think about the rebel stories that I listed at the beginning, if we were in one of those, if this was a Hollywood movie, we would end at verse nine.

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The victor, the victorious king would march. Verse nine says, you'll break them with a rod of iron and dash them like a potter's vessel.
[21:10] That's what we would do. That's what we think of as human victory. We would have the king marching into his enemies, take them captive and smashing their armies to bits.

But our king, the true king, is not an earthly king. And the psalm doesn't end in disaster, even for rebels. It ends with hope. Verse 10 and 12, they're really a plea to anyone who's opposed to God. It says, now therefore kings, be wise, be warned, O rulers of the earth. Yes, it's a warning, but this is also an invitation. And just think for a second how extraordinary that invitation is.
This is the king who's come to rightly judge the nations, the rebellious nations who've been fighting and warring and plotting against them. And he's saying to them, come to me.
The king who'll judge the nations is offering mercy to the nations. Our psalm says, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.
[22:15] Rightful respect and joy, actual joy, coming to the king you once rebelled against. And then our psalm says, kiss the son. And this word kiss, this is the language of homage.

It's the language of submission and allegiance. The rebellious rulers, all the nations, all the people, they're told, stop fighting this king.
Bow before this king. Honor him. And then this, we get here, a glimpse of the gospel. More than a glimpse of the gospel.
A vision of the gospel. And when we think about it in these terms of rebels coming against the king and being welcomed by him, it's actually breathtaking what takes place.
Because at the cross, when Jesus goes to the cross, the nations do exactly what Psalm 2 predicts. The rulers plot against Jesus.
[23:16] Herod and Pilate, they counsel together. The religious leaders take counsel and they decide that Jesus has to be removed. They reject the king's authority.

The king has come and they've rejected him. And Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest followers, Judas. And when Jesus is arrested before he's put to death, he's arrested in a garden called Gethsemane.
And Judas had already prearranged the signal of which person Jesus was going to be was going to be a kiss.
So Jesus is in the garden and the men come to arrest him. And Judas says, Rabbi, which means teacher. And then he kisses him. The king who invites the rebels to come and kiss him is given a kiss of betrayal just before he goes to his death.
And what does the ultimate king do? He gives himself over, of course. He doesn't call down an army of angels from heaven to save him. He doesn't destroy his enemies.
[24:26] Even though he's got the power, he's got the right to do so. He absorbs their violence. He absorbs their hatred. He absorbs their mocking, their rejection.

And ultimately, he absorbs the judgment that they deserve. This king, the righteous king, the good king, the true king, this king is crucified.
But the God who created life can't be held by death. And so the king is raised. The crucified is crowned.
And the king who was executed is exalted. And then we come to the crescendo of Psalm 2. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.
And again, that's astonishing. Because the king, who's got every right to destroy his enemies, he came and he died to be the refuge for his enemies.
[25:28] The rebels have been invited to be refugees. That's the gospel in microcosm. The king's not pretending that rebellion doesn't matter.

Judgment's real. Verse 9 is real. There's a day when the king will come and he will justly judge the world. But before that day comes, the king extends this invitation.
Stop fighting the king. Come, submit, take refuge. Be reconciled with God. You see, Psalm 2 shows us why rebel stories resonate so strongly with us.
Because that's us. We want to believe that we're rebels fighting injustice. We imagine ourselves standing up against oppression, fighting for freedom.
But Psalm 2 exposes that when we rebel against God and his king, we aren't rebelling against a tyrant. We're rebelling against the king of goodness, the king of justice and mercy.

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[26:36] So we read Psalm 2, we can't simply read God's the good king and one day he'll defeat the bad guys. The truth of Psalm 2 is so much thicker, deeper than that. Far more beautiful.

The rebel world rejects the rightful ruler and through that rebellion it puts itself in mortal danger. But rather than coming to crush the rebels, the king gives himself for them.
He absorbs the judgment. He rises from the grave. He's enthroned. And then he turns to the rebels and he says, come home. Take refuge in me.
Maybe you feel like you've spent your whole life sitting on the throne of your own heart. Maybe you don't want anybody telling you how you should and shouldn't live your life.
Maybe you've resisted God for a long time. Or maybe you think that you've rebelled so much and so hard against God, against the rightful king, that there's no way back for you.
[27:42] Maybe you've been trying to run your own life for so long that you've discovered that sitting on the throne of your own heart is actually a lonely place to be. Well, Psalm 2 says to us, come off your mini throne.

Stop fighting. Take refuge in the king. Because the safest place in the universe is not outside the king's rule, but under the rule of the king that you once rebelled against.
Blessed are all those who take refuge in him. Rebels are invited to become refugees and refugees are welcomed into a royal household. That's the astonishing mercy of this great king.
So while there's turmoil in the world, and there is, while there's wars and conflicts and power struggles all around us, and there are, while governments rise and fall, and we see that all the time, even while cultures around us change, while there's conflict even inside our own hearts as we fight for the right to rule our own lives, the temptation to reject God's good rule.
Psalm 2 says, come to the king, kiss the king, take refuge in him, and be blessed. Let's pray. Lord God, we confess that we are rebels against your good and holy rule.
[29:13] Lord, we want to be the kings of our own hearts and show us, Lord, for the first time, or show us anew today that your rule is good and just and right, that you are seated on the throne and nothing can remove your anointed king.

Lord, we pray that you would help us when we see the state of the world, the nations fighting against one another and rebelling against you. Lord, don't let us succumb to the fear, but let us take refuge in the knowledge that you have set your king on Zion, on your holy hill, over all your people.
And Lord, we ask that you would help us, even in our stubbornness, to come to the king, to kiss the king in submission, and to be blessed by him.
And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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