



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his
anointed, saying,
³ "Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles."
⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
⁵ He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶ "I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain."
⁷ I will proclaim the LORD's decree:

He said to me, "You are my son;
today I have become your father."
⁸ Ask me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."
¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and celebrate his rule with trembling.
¹² Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Let me reintroduce you to an antiquated word: 'realm'. It was a common term back when nations were governed by kings, queens and other potentates. Today, we hardly use it. My Webster's Collegiate Dictionary first defines it as a 'kingdom' and then secondly as 'a sphere or domain'. The first is a sort of political definition. Our nation is not governed by a monarch. Our government is, in President Lincoln's immortal words, "of the people, by the people and for the people". I sometimes worry that party politics in our country are becoming like a conflict between monarchies, but that is a topic for a different discussion.

The second definition of a realm as a 'sphere or domain' is more existential than political. By existential, I mean it sets the boundaries of how we understand possibility. It gives us the parameters of reality. God created us to live in a realm where God's will is foundational. In the book of Genesis we read (briefly) of this realm. With Adam and Eve, sin became the overriding human condition and moved us into a realm where an individual human will seek to reign. Christ came to defeat that realm of sin—and defeat it He did! In the book of Revelation, we read of the establishment of this realm.

Let me put it another way from the perspective of time. Adam and Eve lived outside the boundaries of time. When Jesus returns, we will be freed from the boundaries of time. But for now we live within the boundaries of time and that means we live in both the realm of God and the realm of self (sin). We live in two realms at the same time. Neither is completely our own and neither is completely alien to us.

In Psalm 2 the psalmist (who may or may not be David) shows a profound awareness of both realms.

He begins with the vanity and futility of most human endeavors —what Nietzsche has called the "will to power".

¹ Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ³ "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles."



The struggle we are having with COVID-19, the overblown rhetoric of the election, the burning question of how to live in racial equality and the difficulty of distinguishing legitimate protest from wanton violence and destruction, are all indicative of this realm of self-direction and self-righteousness. But the Psalmist speaks of another realm.

⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ⁶ "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain."

The new realm brought about by Jesus is foreseen and foretold even though these words were written 1000 years before the first Christmas.

⁷ I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father. ⁸ Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

The world more and more only recognizes one realm around us—the realm of self. At St. Luke's, we are committed to living as a real, active dynamic expression of the other realm—the realm of God. From this realm we proclaim God's word. We proclaim it as a word of law which condemns our allegiance to the realm of self, which we so often seem to prefer.

¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. ¹² Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.

These harsh words drive us to the other realm—the realm of God. Here we hear the words of God's mercy and forgiveness. We hear the gospel words of reconciliation and of peace. St. Paul summarized this realm in Romans 6: 22-23:

²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Is it any wonder that Psalm 2 ends so simply?

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

In Christ's service,
Pastor Brian Shirey



Post Scripts:

- † Our lessons for this Sunday, September 27, the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost are:
 - First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32
 - Psalm 25:1-10
 - Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-18
 - Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32
- † I am so thankful for the people who have helped us to make Centennial Hall an easier space in which to worship in our necessary and ongoing exile from our Sanctuary. When we began to worship there we hoped to do so for such a short time and that all we really needed were the bare necessities. Now we have candles, paraments for the pulpit, altar and cross. So thank you to all who decorated Centennial Hall with church-like things. Thank you to all who decorate Centennial Hall with your presence at worship. And thank you to all who cannot be in Centennial Hall on Sunday morning, but decorate it with your thoughts and especially your prayers!
- † I will be on vacation for two weeks in October (8-22). So there will be two weeks in October when these little articles will not appear on our website. Again, thank you for your patience.