

Author James

Johnson wrote on the account of the 2012 Olympics in London.

London hosted that particular Olympics, and he told of a weightlifter from North Korea who had set a couple of remarkable records, and the account was kind of the post-event interview by reporters.

Now, this particular weightlifter from North Korea broke an Olympic record, and then he

In the clean and jerk, he smashed a world record.

And so in his interview, he said this.

He said, I won first place.

I won gold medal because the shining supreme commander, Kim Jong-un, gave me power and courage.

Now, you would never hear Tim Tebow say that after a post-game win.

And we might actually laugh at how ridiculous that statement is.

But it's kind of a sad reminder that North Korea remains officially atheistic, and it's kind of an example of a nation in rebellion against God.

I will not give God glory.

But there's also kind of subtle ways in the Western culture, in our own culture, in which we withhold glory from God.

Consider this, Harvard's motto back in the 1600s, Harvard, private institutions,

One of our nation's finest, this motto back in the 1600s was this, Veritas Christo et Ecclesia, truth for Christ and for the church.

Today, not so much.

You know, we see this kind of this quiet...

subtle rebellion in our culture kind of seep in through different cultural doors.

You know, you can think of secularism, which is the idea or the belief that the universe is a closed system, and God, if he even exists, you know, he is outside the system, he is outside the box.

Or moral relativism, this kind of the thought or the belief that humans, we, people, we define truth based on our situations.

You know, this kind of this subtle rebellion against God can seep in in many different ways that just kind of becomes the air that we breathe and we don't even think about it.

But before we wag our finger and tsk our tongue at our culture and our nation, there's all of these subtle ways that individuals, that we...

rebel against God and withhold glory from Him.

Just think about this, just kind of the rampant materialism that we just kind of fall into, or the consumerism that we participate in, or this self-sufficiency that says, you know, Lord, thank you very much, but thank you for this daily bread, but we maybe don't really mean it so much when we pray that at our table.

And so there's all these kind of just little quiet ways that we rebel against God.

I think, you know, as I talk to a lot of people, I do a lot of counseling, I think that a lot of this in our culture, our particular culture, is kind of fed by this constant diet of daily news, where the news, you know, it doesn't matter how factual your favorite news outlet might be, there's just this...

or this tendency to present the events of the world as without reference to God.

God is just kind of absent from our thinking.

And so we kind of maybe watch the news and just articles that we read and think almost, reflexively that it's the politicians or the software engineers or the medical scientists.

They're the ones that have their hands firmly planted on the steering wheel of the course of history.

And so we become anxious and fearful.

and on edge.

And so, this Psalm is such a gift.

Psalm 2 is such a gift to us because it's about God sending His anointed, the Messiah, and setting Him on the throne.

He does rule the world with truth and grace, and He makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness.

So,

Why should we let the nations, the threats of the nations, the boasts of the nations in our world suffocate our faith?

God has a firm grasp on the course of human history.

that he has sent his anointed one to destroy the works of the devil, to redeem a people for himself, and to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found.

So I hope this psalm really strengthens your faith this morning, and we're going to look at three things that just kind of come right out of these paragraphs.

First of all, we're going to see that the nations rage.

We're going to see that

God responds.

And then lastly, we're going to see that the gospel calls.

So let's dive in.

The nation's rage, verses 1 through 3.

What did the nation's rage and the people's 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.

So we see that in verse 1, the nations are seeding against God.

And in verse 2, there's a transition that takes place.

The subject chains to the nations, to their leaders.

And it's as if they're saying this, God just gets in the way.

God gets in the way of our freedom.

God gets in the way of our fun.

God gets in the way of our progress.

Now, this rebellion is not just confined to particular nations.

or particular rulers, it involves all nations and all people.

And you say, Dan, how do you know that?

Because of Psalm 1.

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 go together.

We usually think of Psalm 1, and you would be correct, as the gateway into the Psalms.

But actually, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 are put together because they go hand in hand, side by side.

So we see in the first Psalm that this first Psalm kind of presents two ways to live.

And you know how it opens.

It says this, "Blessed is the man or the one who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in what?

In the law of the Lord."

And on that law, he meditates day and night.

So Psalm 1, the Psalmist is urging us down the path of delighting in the Lord and delighting in his ways.

And Psalm 2 kind of expands on what it looks like to meander and begin to walk down the path of the wicked, only in Psalm 2, it is the path of the wicked gone global.

gone international.

And so now there's this, we see in verses 1 through 3, there's this kind of this unholy alliance against God and His anointed.

By the way, the anointed here in the Hebrew, that word can be translated Messiah in the Greek, the Christ, the anointed one.

And so the reason of their rebellion and their alliance becomes clear of the nations and the peoples.

Verse 3, it's because of this.

He says, let's burst their bonds.

In other words, let's free ourselves from being submissive to God.

We want full autonomy.

And as we were singing about this just a few moments ago, this is the world in which Jesus was born.

Now, how do we know that this psalm is really about Jesus?

Well, the New Testament, this is one of the most frequently quoted psalms in the New Testament, and it's in reference to Jesus.

God the Father paraphrased this, referred to this psalm when he made his declaration about Jesus at Jesus' baptism.

What about the early church in Acts chapter 4 when they were praying?

Their leaders had just been released from prison and they were huddled together and they were praying.

And they prayed from this very song, Psalm 2, and they linked it directly to Jesus by saying this, Acts chapter 4, for truly in this city, they're praying to God, for truly in this city they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed.

both Herod and Pontius Pilate, there's your leaders, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Isn't that a beautiful prayer for boldness?

In other words, they're saying that the rebellion was among leaders, among pagans, among the irreligious,

and among the religious.

They were all united together against God's anointed.

This was the world in which Jesus was born.

But the early church prayed for boldness because they firmly believed that God was steering the course of history.

One night a man was visiting a friend of his in the church.

The man was named Slim Cornett, and

His friend ran a small municipal county airport, and so after the evening service, they went to the little airport, and it was real dark and quiet, and nothing really happening that night.

And so he said, I'm going to give you a behind-the-scenes tour of the airport.

And he says, these switches over here, they turn on the runway lights, and runway lights came on.

These switches over here, if there's a little plane out there in distress, we can turn on the spotlights.

Searchlights on.

Searchlights came on, lit up the Mississippi sky.

And then out of nowhere, as they were, he was showing them this, this little plane just comes out of the darkness, out of nowhere, materializes and lands on the runway.

And they stand there gawking.

as Franklin Graham, the son of Ruth and Billy Graham, gets out of this airplane with the pilot.

It turns out, as they were out there, up there in the Mississippi sky, all of their electrical systems went out, so they didn't have navigation, they didn't have radio, they didn't have lights, and lo and behold, they saw a runway just light up.

As Ruth Graham would later describe this, she said that she and her husband, Billy Graham, had been praying

right at that moment, that God would protect their son who was on his way to Texas and the pilot, and that God would protect them and guide them.

Now, if you're a skeptic here this morning, you'd say, well, that's just a coincidence.

You might say, that's a miracle.

In theology, we would say that that's just God's providence.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, I'll just kind of paraphrase it, God's providence is God's powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and their actions.

And that's the basis on which Ruth and Billy Graham prayed, their confidence in God and His providence.

That's

the basis in which the early church prayed for boldness, that God's hand is firmly steering the course of history, and that is the basis on which you can pray.

Even though the nations rage, God is firmly in control.

The second thing we see this morning here is this, that God responds to this.

He responds, verse 4, do you see it?

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.

I will tell of the decree.

The Lord said to me, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you.

So God laughs at this uprising, this worldwide rebellion uprising, but

He's laughing.

This doesn't threaten him in the least.

God is not enraged like the nations because it doesn't need to be.

He doesn't go out and seek counsel as the rulers are doing because he seeks counsel from no one.

God is not up in the heavens wringing his hands and pacing back and forth.

Rather, he is seated.

in the heavens.

And God is not laughing because he thinks the world's rebellion is a silly joke.

No, God takes sin seriously, so serious that he sent his only begotten son into this rebellious world.

And it's the Son that speaks in verse 7.

And so we have kind of a change in voice between verse 6 and verse 7.

Now the Son speaks, the anointed speaks.

And what he's doing as he's speaking here is he is affirming the words of the Father.

He is 100% in alignment with the Father.

And so what he's doing here in verse 7 and 8 is he is...

He is reciting to us what the Father told him.

So a change in voice here.

And, you know, what does he say?

He says this.

The Lord said to me, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you.

Now, in the context of this psalm, the word begotten here probably means installed, that God has installed him on the throne.

There's a lot of confusion, particularly in this day and age, about what the word begotten is.

You know, in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he sent his

only begotten Son, and there's confusion.

What does that mean to be begotten?

I'll give you an example.

Last week, Lisa and I were back in Virginia at Chesapeake Bay.

We were visiting our kiddos.

It was wonderful.

I was putting gas in the rental car, and all of a sudden, these two Mormon missionaries come whizzing right by me, right there in the parking lot, on their 10-speed bicycles, and they said, hey, do you want to go to church with us on Sunday?

Okay.

And I said, I can't, I'm going to a Christmas service in Florida.

And they almost wrecked their bicycles.

One of the reasons why we don't consider the Mormon church a true church is what they believe about Jesus.

Much like the heretic Arius, they believe that there was a time when Jesus was not.

That Jesus had a beginning point.

They believe that Jesus is a product of divine power.

procreation in heaven, and they would say, if you ask them, is Jesus eternal, they would say yes, but they would mean from that moment forward.

And what we believe about Jesus is that he always was, that the Father, when we say begotten, the Father, God the Father, eternally brings forth the Son, sharing the divine essence with him, that Jesus is fully God, equal in power and glory.

He had no beginning point.

So much so that Jesus is the full representation of the Father.

This is what Jesus said in John chapter 14.

Jesus said, he who has seen me has seen the Father.

So regardless whether we understand this word here in verse 7 about begotten, whether it's installed as a coronation or begotten in the New Testament sense, we learn three things about this anointed one and his statement.

First of all, we learn about his legitimacy, the legitimacy of his rule, that God the Father sent him to rule.

Second of all, we learn about the scope or the breadth of his rulership.

It is a worldwide kingdom, an everlasting kingdom.

Third, we learn about the authority of his rule, that one day Jesus will return in glory and judgment.

He will make the nations prove the glories of His righteousness, and He will strike down the rebellious world like a piñata.

Maybe we should hang piñatas next to our Christmas tree.

The point of all of this is this, that He is on the throne, that He is in control.

And when you, it just seems like that your world is unraveling,

that is unraveling at the seams, that's falling apart, please, when that is taking place, life will hit you in the face.

But when it seems like the world is unraveling, don't turn up the volume of your favorite cable TV show or your news show or escape into your sitcom.

Don't turn up the volume of that.

Ask God to turn up the heavenly volume of his laughter.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the occupied throne of heaven.

One of our professors at Westminster Seminary, Paul Tripp, recounted a story I'll always remember.

When he was a younger pastor starting out in ministry, he was chasing his ministry dreams.

He was serving as a pastor of his church, and things were not going as planned.

Things were hard.

He didn't feel appreciated at all.

The plans were falling apart.

His dream became a nightmare.

So at the end of one of his sermons, he just resigned publicly.

And everybody was kind of filing out, and they were sad, and they were confused, except for the oldest gentleman in the church who hung around and said this.

He said, Paul, we know that you are discouraged today,

And we know that you're a bit immature.

But we haven't asked you to leave.

Where is the church going to get mature pastors if the immature ones leave?

And Paul said this.

God had interrupted my plans.

I knew he immediately was right.

I knew immediately I was running because my dream had blown up in my face.

And I knew right there, right then, that I could not leave.

I stayed on for many years, years of growth in grace and in ministry.

Thankfully, I am not the author of my own personal story.

The question I want you to think about is this.

Is the volume of your anxious self-talk inside your head so loud that you cannot hear God's heavenly laughter?

or the sure promises of His Word.

Whatever you're facing this morning, ask God to turn up the volume, to turn up the volume of His heavenly laughter, assuring you that He is in control, and reassuring you that His promises for you are true.

Well, we see the nations, they rage.

We see that God responds, but

Kind of a shocking twist in the psalm that the gospel calls.

Look with me in verse 10.

Now there, O kings, be wise, 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 the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Oh, don't you just love the way this psalm ends?

Blessed are those who take refuge in

in the anointed.

So again, there's this shocking twist that God offers an opportunity for mercy.

That the rebels, they're called to respond.

And he lays out two incentives here.

There is a danger to avoid and there is a joy to experience.

And the danger to avoid is what?

It's ultimately, it's eternal condemnation and hell.

It is separation from God.

And we see at the end of the history, we know from the New Testament that all authority is given to Jesus, that he'll preside over the final judgment.

And in the final judgment, unbelievers will be condemned to eternal condemnation.

But we know that the believers have already passed through the judgment because of the perfect life of Jesus that he lived for us that we could not.

His atoning substitutionary death is taking our place on that cross.

and his glorious, victorious resurrection.

That Jesus gives us his perfect righteousness that we receive by faith.

And here's the astounding thing.

The one who is described as the piñata guy, you know, in verse 7, that he is going to destroy this rebellious world, the crusher, if you will.

The crusher

voluntarily took the punishment we deserve.

Listen to how the prophet Isaiah describes the crusher in verse 7.

But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities.

And upon him the punishment that we deserved was laid.

It brings you peace.

So this psalm ends with this note.

Blessed are those who take refuge in him.

Think about this.

Think about Noah.

Think about how Noah and Noah's family were saved from a physical flood of God's judgment by entering the ark.

But only Jesus offers you the refuge from the righteous wrath of God and eternal condemnation in hell and all who enter into him.

are His, are safe, are secure, are blessed.

Of course, it will yield a life, change life.

It'll yield a life of serving the King with trembling and rejoicing.

Now, how do you reconcile that?

Trembling and rejoicing, they don't seem like they go together.

How do you reconcile that?

Well, think about this.

When you truly encounter the living God, you discover His holiness.

That's why Moses hit the deck when he encountered God in the burning bush.

He realized that Moses realized that he was not holy before a holy God.

That God is a consuming fire and His holiness will consume all the impurities in His presence.

So,

Here's the thing, if you think you have a relationship with God, the one true God, but you've never had a shocking awareness of your sin, I hate to tell you this, but I must tell you, you've never met the living God.

But get this, Moses was called the friend of God.

Can you imagine?

The friend of God.

That term friend means warmth, intimacy, closeness.

That if Christianity is knowing God better and better and better and better and growing closer and closer and closer and closer, then this trembling, rejoicing dynamic is an ongoing process.

By that I mean this, that God's purity makes you painfully aware of your sin, but his grace and his love draws you closer.

So close that you want to kiss the sun.

Joe Nevison is a retired PCA pastor.

He pastored at Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga area, PCA church.

And he describes a story.

When he was young, he was a teenager, an older teenager, kind of close to 20.

He thought he fell in love with a girl of his dreams named Barb.

And he fell head over heels with Barb, and he was quite smitten.

So he finally got the nerve to ask her out, and he had planned the perfect evening out for
until a pipe burst in their family basement, and it was just a plumbing disaster.

And actually, it was worse than a plumbing disaster.

It was not just a plumbing pipe.

It was the sewage line.

And Joe's father said, Joe, I am so sorry, but there's no date tonight.

You've got to help the family.

So he called Barb and explained the situation.

And he got on his rubber galoshes and he got his buckets and he started bailing.

And 25 minutes later, he was shocked because there were footsteps down the family stairs in the basement.

And it was Barb with rubber boots on.

And he said, that's when I knew she was the one.

And this is how we know that Jesus is the one.

Because Jesus, God anointed, came into the world that he created that we messed up and rebelled against him.

And only Jesus, the anointed, can restore our broken relationship with God.

And only he can fix the mess that we can make.

And that's the one that you want to spend the rest of your life getting to know better and better and better.

That's the one you want to kiss.

And that's good news.