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Series: Summer in the Psalms
Message: The Nations Rage

Transcribed Message
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Psalm 2

There was a day when we didn't have 24-hour news. People watched the news twice a day, at 5:30 pm and 10:00 pm. Imagine such a time. Usually 5:30 was the national news, and 10:00 was the local news. Picture this. A husband and wife are sitting and watching TV. It's almost 5:30. And one of them asks, "Should we watch the news at 5:30 and get indigestion? Or should we wait until 10:00 and get insomnia?" That's probably still appropriate for today, except we can watch 24 hours a day and get both indigestion and insomnia at any hour of the day. I believe the psalmist speaks to that and he asks what in the world is going on in our world. It was Robert Browning the poet who said in that famous line: "God is in heaven and all is right with the world." And we want to ask him, what world are you living in? Where in the world do you make the observation that all is right in the world? We would certainly agree that God is in heaven, but we would also agree that all is not right in the world. It hasn't been right in the world for a very long time.

In fact, since the fall of Adam and Eve in sin and disobedience against God, that history of humanity has been one of strife, conflict, failure to follow the words and the will of God, and war. There are 32 different conflicts that are taking place all around the world today. How do we respond living in such a world as we do in 2023? Are we moved towards despair, depression, indigestion, insomnia? Or is there something else for us? Is there another way? Thankfully, those aren't our only choices.

We are looking at Psalm 2 this morning. We're going through different psalms this summer. We're calling it "Summer in Psalms". We're turning to Psalm 2 this morning and as we turn to Psalm 2, I want to say to you that we're not turning to some ancient words 3000 years old that are not relevant to our day and time. In fact, I would suggest to you that any passage that we might turn to this morning, there is hardly one that would be more relevant especially for this weekend of the July 4th celebration of our

own country than the words that the Holy Spirit gave to David back in Psalm 2. Look at this with me. Those that defy God will be broken, but those who depend on Him will be blessed. There it is. We have another choice. If you were with us a week ago and we looked at Psalm 1, we had a choice. Here we have another choice. Brokenness or blessing.

Let's begin by just looking at those two psalms that start off the Psalter, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. They are introductory psalms. Remember, we said these are like the entryway to this huge mansion. 148 rooms, in fact. At the entryway to this mansion, there's this gigantic doorway with two large posts on each side. One of them is entitled Psalm 1 and the other is Psalm 2. Until you understand and step into those psalms, you don't really benefit from the other 148 that are a part of the Psalter. So, we look at these two together as introductory psalms to all of the rest of them. Psalm 1 begins with blessing. Psalm 2 ends with blessing. Psalm 1 ends with a warning. Psalm 2 begins with a warning. Psalm 1 we have the godly appreciating and delighting. Josh and Lowell did such a great job these last two weeks of pointing us to the word and helping us to delight in God's word. That is what is captured here in the Psalter. In Psalm 2, it is the ungodly that despise the word. They have no delight in the word. They don't seek out the counsel of God.

Let's look then at the reign of the Lord's anointed in this second Psalm. Let's look at the second Psalm by way of introduction and note a couple of things. This is, as we talked a few weeks ago about all the different kinds of psalms, this is called a royal psalm, a messianic psalm. What we have here is a psalm that David has written. When I say David has written the psalm and you look in your Bible, you don't see a superscription or a title to this psalm that the editors have put there, helping us know that it is a psalm written by David. So how do we know that David wrote this psalm? What is the best answer you can ever give to anyone when they ask you a question like that? When they ask you, how do you know so-and-so? What is the best possible way to answer the question how do we know that David wrote this psalm? You say, the Bible tells me so. The best answer you can ever give that question is the Bible tells me so. The Bible does tell us in not the psalms, but in the book of Acts.

In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John have just been released from prison. The church has come together and had a prayer meeting. Then, when Peter and John came together with them, they turned to the psalms. The second psalm. As they lifted their voices and prayers to God, they reflected on the truth of that psalm. It's a beautiful picture of what the Scriptures speak to us. And in that 24th verse of Acts chapter 4, we read that David wrote this second psalm. So there we have it. The focus is on the coronation of the king. That's what this psalm is about. That's why it's called a royal psalm. Historically it would have very likely been the coronation of David and other kings. It is often thought, and I think it would be correct, that this psalm was read at the coronations of all of Israel's kings. What a great psalm to speak to the people and the king at his coronation. David likely experienced this, but it's not just David. That's the point. There's so much more here. It is for the coronation of the king, but it's also for a greater King. David's greater King. The greatest King of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we call this a messianic psalm. It's looking prophetically into the future and saying there is one that is coming that is greater than David. It far exceeds David in his kingship, in his royalty. And it is of course none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It's looking forward to the greater one.

And then the second thing that I would have to note is this is one of the greatest quoted psalms in the New Testament. Isn't that interesting? When you think of the different psalms, particularly some that are favorites to us and ones that we are very familiar with, that we have memorized and quoted, and here is Psalm 2, which is one of the most quoted of all the psalms in the New Testament. It is quoted in Acts chapter 4 and Acts chapter 13. It's quoted in Hebrews chapter 1 and 5. It's quoted in Revelation 2, 12, and 19. And there are allusions to it in other places in the New Testament. That is fascinating to me. In your mind, just go back to Acts chapter 4. In Acts chapter 4 when Peter and John had just been released from prison, the context is that of persecution, right? There's persecution. It happened to Peter and John when they were told to quit preaching the gospel. The government thought they had already taken care of Jesus by crucifying Him. They didn't want to hear any more about Him so they threw Peter and John in to jail. Where do you go as the people of God when you're dealing with persecution and rejoicing in the fact that God is your deliverer and your strength? Do

you know where to go? You go to Psalm 2. That's what they did, and they looked at what the psalmist had recorded so many centuries before.

One of the great things about teaching in the Psalms is this. Sometimes, but not always, the psalmist himself is giving you the outline. I didn't have to work really hard this week at putting together the outline because the psalmist has already done that for us. We're going to see that in these stanzas. Remember, the psalms were to be memorized and sung. Here in the Hebrew parallelism, we have the understanding that we have four unique stanzas in which God is going to move us through these different themes so quickly from one to the other. Let's quickly jump in and look at the first one.

The view from the world and the voice is one of defiance. "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.'" This is a view from the world, a view from the nations. It is a voice of utter defiance against the God of heaven. The speaker is the nations. The psalmist David is obviously giving us the initial question here – why? A simple question. Why do the nations rage? That question is always penetrating, piercing. Why? We ask that question often about many different circumstances. David uses that here. He no doubt had experienced this very thing first hand. We know that when he came to the throne and when he was inaugurated as the king, there were vassal states around him who immediately said let's test the king. Let's test David to see what he is made of. They tried to revolt against him and of course David crushed them. In one sense, he is again looking at history. He is looking at his own life experience, but it's going to be much more than that.

This coup against Israel's new king was one thing, but what we're reading about here is another kind of conspiracy. This is the mother of all conspiracies. This is the greatest conspiracy of all. Verse 2 says it's against the Lord and against His Anointed. *Mesheach*. The Messiah. The Anointed one. The Christ, as we would have in the New Testament. It is against Him that the nations are rising up.

The mood is one of shock. The mood is one of shock. It's one of unbelief. That is why when David asks this question, the nature of the question why here is one of amazement. It's one of indignation. It is one of incredulity. It's not a rhetorical question

that expects an answer because there cannot possibly be an answer that could be put forward as to why would the nations of the world try to revolt against God of heaven. It is unthinkable. It's too amazing to be answered. Why would anyone be so foolish as to even try it? How can you rebel against the God of heaven?

The word *regash* is rage. It is a picture word. The nations rage against God. it speaks of the turbulence of the sea. Daniel used this exact same word when he described those who sought to do him in and revolt against him and his leadership while he was in Babylon. It speaks of a noisy, tumultuous gathering. There is a *regash* against God, the God of heaven.

The synopsis is the state of rebellion against God. There is a state of rebellion against God. What do we know about the state of rebellion against God? Here's one thing that we know. We know it is the history of humanity. We know it's the backdrop of the storyline of the Bible. The Bible is the redemptive story, the rescuing of humanity on the part of a good and gracious God. But that rescue is against the backdrop of man's rejection of God, in revolting against God, raging against God. This is the act of rebellion against God which is depicted all through Scripture. Just go through the storyline of this universal, organized, determined rebellion on the part of humanity against God. The very first indication of that, once you get past Genesis 3, is in Genesis 10, the tower of Babel. We will do something so great that we will reach to the heavens. We don't need God. We will be our own God. Take from Genesis 10 all the way to Revelation 19 and 20 and at the very end of the millennial reign of Christ, the greatest time in the history of the world, the greatest experience in human history, and at the end of that reign of Christ called the millennial kingdom we have an uprising inspired by Satan himself against the King. That's the storyline of the Bible. The synopsis of Psalm 2 is there is a state of rebellion against God. People want to be free from God's sovereign rule.

They come together, the psalmist said, and they ask what's holding us back? What's really keeping us from being all that we can be? What's keeping us from reaching our full potential? What is keeping me from being really happy and being who I really want to be? It has a modern ring to it, doesn't it? It's the heart of man against

God. The answer to all of those questions is the law of God. It is the word of God. It is the person of God.

We will break His bonds. These cords that bind us is the way they describe the word of God and the purposes of God. God is harsh. God is restrictive. God is unfair. How can you possibly as a Christian live your life under that kind of oppression? Just think this past week or so when the SBC (Southern Baptist Convention) and the PCA (Presbyterian Church of America) did the same thing. They are reaffirming what they believe the Bible teaches about the role of men and women within marriage, within the church. The mockery from the world, the derision from the world was so predictable I could've written all the stories myself. They look at us and they go you people are functioning with cords that bind you. You're in bondage. Oh, to be free from all of that and to live and reach your fullest potential. That is what the world says.

Carl Truman in his excellent book *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* talks about the two greatest influencers of the 19th, 20th, and 21st century being Freud and Karl Marx. Both of those men hated Christianity. Both of those men hated Christ. Both of those men hated anything about the word of God. To this day, they are still the greatest influencers outside of the faith on the world and the way the world thinks. Freud and Marx. Penetrating into our academic circles unchallenged. Filling the minds of young students and young people with every imaginable lie against the teaching of God, the ways of God, and the wisdom of God. Promoting every kind of sexual perversion in our world. We live in a time of spiritual insanity. That is what the psalmist is saying right here.

Do you recognize the world that you live in? Of course you do. You watch the news at any time of the day you want and you get indigestion. You get insomnia because you see the nations raging against a holy and righteous God, thinking all the time that they're in pursuit of some freedom that God is holding back from them, some restriction that they could experience if it were not for God. My friends, if you keep your eyes too firmly fixed on the things of this world and this earth and the machinations of the nations raging against God, you will be depressed. You will be discouraged. You will be in despair. You will experience indigestion. You will have insomnia.

One of the besetting sins of the church in America for a long time has been just that. We have our eyes far too firmly fixed on the things of this world. Jesus said it best. Set your affection on the things above, not on the things on this earth. Some of you are pursuing the things of this world with such vigor and such energy that you're forgetting that this is all passing away. This is all passing away. We are best equipped to touch this world with the gospel when we're heavenly minded. We're the most earthly good when we're most heavenly minded. That's exactly what God has called us to. So that first scene is the nations ranging against God.

Now look at the second scene. The second scene is the view from heaven and it is a picture of divine indignation. Divine indignation. Look at verses four through six again. "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.'" Look at this. What a contrast. What a contrast between the nations agitated and in turmoil raging against God ... and the God of heaven seated quietly in total and complete control. Have you noticed that as you read your Bible how often the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is right there before you? the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. In so many of the pages of Scripture, in so many of the stories that we read, so many of the accounts of so much of the doctrine of Scripture speaks to us of the sovereignty of God. Psalm 115 – our God is in heaven. He does all that He pleases. Picture that. The nations are ranging against Him and our God sits in the heavens and He does all that He pleases.

The speaker in this second scene is of course God the Father. Notice the word Lord. It is a capital L but everything else is small caps. That is the word *Adonai*. That is the word master. That is the idea of the sovereign one, the one who is ruling over all things. Actually, in this statement of verses four through six, you see both the transcendence of God and the eminence of God. The transcendence of God speaks to us of the fact that God is beyond our capacity to even understand. God is majestic. God is literally in the heavens. He created all of it. There is the transcendence of God that takes us beyond even our capacity to comprehend His greatness and we bow in humility before that.

But that's not all. These Scriptures also speak of the eminence of God. The eminence of God speaks to the fact that His King is on Zion's holy Hill. That is Jerusalem. That's the Temple Mount. He's among us in that sense. He's present. We can know Him. We can understand His revelation to us. There is both transcendence and there is the eminence of God.

Now notice the mood on the part of the Father towards the nations is one of derision. There is no panic in heaven. Jot down Isaiah 40 and begin at about verse 15. If we had time we'd go to Isaiah 40 and begin at 15 and read all the way through to about 26. But that is just an incredible expression on the part of Isaiah, the prophet, of the greatness of God. There is no one like Him, Isaiah says. He is the greatest of all. There is in Scripture something of the humor of God as He interacts with these nations that rage against Him. This idea that God sits in the heavens and He laughs. He is looking at their feeble efforts and He's saying this is the best you've got? This is all you can do.

Think of the different ways the story in Scripture recounts this. For instance, remember when the Ark of the covenant was captured in the days of Samuel and the Philistines took it home to their country. They made the mistake of taking the Ark of God and putting it in the building where their fish-god Dagon was. The god that they had made with their hands and had put in place. They worshiped Dagon the fish-god. What happened? The next morning they came in and there's Dagon flat on his face before the Ark of God, giving a sense of obeisance and worship even in that analogy to the very Ark and the presence of God. They set the guy back up and probably rationalize in their minds it was a slight tremor and he fell over, not connecting what the Ark of God brought into their very presence. They put him back in place and the next morning they go and Dagon is on his face flat before God again. This time his head is broken up and his arms are broken off and they say there's a problem here. They get rid of the Ark. They make plans to get the ark out of there. They understand.

Or how about when you think in terms of Nebuchadnezzar boasting before everybody how great he was? And God said, let's just see how great you are. Why don't you go out there in that field for about six years and just eat some grass for us all? Or how about Elijah and the prophets? Elijah calling out on behalf of God against Ba'al and

he says maybe he's asleep and you have to wake him up? or maybe he's gone to the restroom? All of these pictures are reminding us of Psalm 2 and the fact that while the nations *regash* and rage against God, God sits in the heavens. There is with God no panic, no fear.

In fact, the synopsis would say to us God doesn't even get up. He speaks, verse 4 says, while He sits. he speaks and he just simply sits. Now most presentations of any importance, somebody stands up and speaks. I guess there are probably instances where someone teaches the word and sits, but most of the time we understand the teaching of the word is a time when somebody stands up and presents God's truth. We stand. There is an important presentation to be made at work and somebody stands up. If it's something significant, important we stand, don't we? God sits. God sits in the heavens. Or maybe as a parent or as a child, or maybe you remember being a parent and child, both of these experiences, when you're calling out to one of your children to do something. Maybe they're actually within visual sight of you, and you children and young people ever imagine anything where your mom or dad are trying to get you to do something and they're calling out to you. They've given you a very clear and explicit command and you respond ok, I will. They want it done at that point, and after a couple of admonitions what happens? They get up. And that's never a good thing when your parents have to get up and come to you. God doesn't do that. God sits in the heavens. He says I have set my King. God's kingdom is not a democracy. It is a theocracy. and God puts His man in place – the King Jesus. God wants us to know that He has established His King. There is no panic in heaven. Spurgeon said: "God's Anointed is appointed and He shall not be disappointed. All man can do is rage. He cannot overthrow the sovereign King."

Third, the view is still from heaven but now it is a picture of a secret decree. Look at verses seven through nine. "I will tell of the decree: The Lord has 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.'" This is God the Son speaking now. The nations, God the Father, and God the Son. This particular set of verses 7, 8 and 9 are the ones that are most often quoted in the New Testament. Psalm 2 as we said but

this particular group of verses are the ones that are turned to the most. The rightful king assesses and asserts his right to rule. It is the language of enthronement. It is 2 Samuel 7 when God entered into a covenant with David. We know there are different biblical covenants. God entered into a covenant with Abraham. He entered into a covenant with Moses and the people of God. He entered into a covenant with David. He said David, you're my man. Your house is going to produce the kings that are going to reign and rule over Israel. Yours is going to be a permanent kingship. Your kingdom is going to extend for all of eternity. That is such of the promise being literally brought to life here.

The mood is one of great confidence. It is a voice of devotion to the Father's will to the Father's work. Psalm 40 verses 7 and 8, I've said before, are Jesus's life verses. I have come to do your will, O God my Father. That's what Jesus is living out for us here. I will tell of the decree, verse 7 says. When he says I will tell, that is just a phrase that says pay attention. Pay attention to this. I'm going to tell you something about this decree. What is the decree? What decree is he talking about? The eternal decree of God. God has made certain decrees in eternity past. The Scriptures speak of them. They're the secret decrees of God. They are not known until they come to light. But in eternity past, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the councils of the Godhead issued certain decrees that would take place in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. This is the eternal decree of God.

What the Father has ordained is understood in the synopsis of this section of verses. It is simply this. Jesus is Lord. That's right. Jesus is Lord. What has the Father decreed? What has the Father ordained? He has decreed and ordained that Jesus is Lord. Now you go back to Acts 13 and verses 33 and 34, these verses are quoted again by Luke in the book of Acts. You know what he is talking about when he talks about the fact that the Son has been lifted up and Jesus is Lord and there is the decree of God? Do you know what he is making reference to? The resurrection. The resurrection. The glory and the exultation of the Son who experienced a death on the cross for us but didn't remain there as we've already sung. God raised Him again according to the eternal decree and has exalted the name of Jesus that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. That's exactly what the psalmist speaks of here.

When we read as we do here today I have begotten you. Today I have begotten You. In what sense has Jesus been begotten? We know the cults like these kinds of verses. They like to go to these verses and say what does it mean that Jesus is begotten by the Father? It doesn't mean anything in relation to His origin. When we hear the word "begotten", we immediately go to origin or we go to beginning as in terms of life. but John 1 says in the beginning was the word (Jesus), and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made. So if everything was made by Jesus who is Lord, it can't possibly be a statement today I have begotten You about Jesus's beginning. Some people believe it may be a reference to the incarnation but I think probably what is in view here is His kingship. It is His coronation. The exultation that occurred at the resurrection raising Jesus and declaring that He is Lord. That's what is happening. Verses eight and nine are really a fulfillment of the Lord's prayer. Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Thy kingdom come is being realized when Jesus establishes His kingship. Matthew 28. All authority is given to me under heaven and earth. That is what Jesus said. We've already seen that great declaration.

Look at the final scene. The final scene, the view is back on earth and it is a solemn exhortation. Look at verses 10 to 12. "Now therefore, 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. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him." It doesn't tell us exactly who the speaker is here. It is not made known to us specifically. Some would say it is David. I think it could be the Holy Spirit. So that you have nations, you have the Father, you have the Son, and you have the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit we know speaking through David. Acts 4 already told us that. But just the pleading of this set of verses and the exultation of Christ fits beautifully with the work that the Holy Spirit does. The speaker may very well be that.

The mood is one of urgency. The mood is one of urgency. Listen. Just think again of the setting. Why do the nations rage? Why is it that humanity apart from Christ

lives every moment of every day raging against the rule of God over their life, whether explicit or implicit? That's the heart of fallen men and women.

This setting of the nations raging against God and you come to the end of this Psalm and here is the grace of the king. Here is the grace of the king. It might be describing you and maybe again that was something of your past and you're rejoicing that it is not in your present. But there could be somebody that's listening and this is your present experience. Listen. this is the word of the sovereign Lord of the heavens. Even in the face of your raging, He is saying to you something of words of grace and mercy. He says be wise in your mind. Serve the Lord. He is appealing to your will. Kiss the Son. He is talking about our heart and our love. There's pardon, and hope, and safety. He's pleading for full surrender.

The synopsis. Be blessed or be broken. That's it. Verse 12. 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." The psalm begins with leaders counseling together against God and His anointed, and it ends with the psalmist giving counsel to those nations and individuals in saying give up your foolish revolt. Turn from your pride. Humble yourself. Turn away from your rebellion and imminent destruction. Trust and put your refuge and hope in the King. There is no refuge from God. There is only refuge in God. Those who defy God will be broken, but those who depend on Him will be blessed. Just as with Psalm 1, there's our choice. Blessedness or brokenness.

What do we take away? My friends, our hope is in God alone. Our hope is in God alone. Our hope is not in Washington DC. Our hope is not in our current president. Our hope is not in any future president. Our hope is not in Congress. Our hope is not in our material things. It is not in our job. It's not even in our spouses, our children, our parents, our families. There is only one place deserving of our trust and that is of course the Lord Himself. Therefore, it is our joy and delight to draw attention to King Jesus. That's what we do as a result of this. Joy and delight in obedience to Him and to His word.

That, for every one of us, begins in the same place. It begins in the gospel. It begins with the gospel. The gospel simply means good news. It is what God has given to this church and every one of us to believe and to share with everybody else that we

come in contact with. That gospel and that good news is that that we have sinned and fallen short of what God requires. But He did something about that. He sent Jesus His Son who died on the cross for our sins in our place. All that God asks us to do is to lay aside our works, our efforts and to trust in what Jesus did and what Jesus did alone. That's the deal. It's a free gift of the grace of God. Believe it this morning.

Let's pray. Father God, we are so thankful for King Jesus. We are so thankful that we can put our refuge and hope and trust in You and in Your son and in Your provision. I pray, Father God, if there is someone listening who has never trusted Jesus as their Savior, cause them to see that their sins can be forgiven. Their indigestion and insomnia and anxiety and worry that fill this world can be replaced with peace that passes understanding through Jesus Christ our Lord. In whose name we pray, amen.