

I Have Installed My King, David Turner All Souls

The fallout from the Prime Minister, David Cameron's mild Easter comments in favor of Christianity and its role in our national life and tradition has been remarkable in one sense and yet entirely predictable in another. Yes, of course, I recognize, even in a congregation like ours, there'll be a spectrum of views. Some of us will have said good on him. Others of us, like the Archbishop of Canterbury will have found it moving. Some of us, probably more cynically, will have thought that the Prime Minister is getting to his knees as elections loom. So, there'll be a spectrum of views. I recognize; that's not really my point. More telling, perhaps, than the PM doing God, was that collective response by 55 public intellectuals in a letter to the Telegraph, accusing him of fostering alienation and division in society, of fueling, innovating sectarian debates? What is it about gentle Jesus, meek and mild, that gets people so. That triggers the energy in these 50 people, talented, able, bright people, to get together to marshal their views, to write in, and to get a letter published in that way. What is it about Jesus that gets to people? Well, I've been thinking about that quite a lot.

[00:01:37.850] - Speaker 1

And Psalm 2 is a sobering place to be as we reflect on this because it plunges straight in to this debate with the key question, why verse 1? Why is there such noisy hostility against verse two, the LORD and his Anointed? Here is a Psalm, friends, to strengthen your worldview, to help you make sense of history, to give you the big picture, to teach us some realities. Imagine if the PM had gone on to cite verse 12 at the end of the Psalm, *Kiss the Son or he will be angry, and your way will lead you to destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.* That doesn't play too well. It offends. They'd not have been talking about wishy-washy, touchy-feely Anglicanism if the Prime Minister had added that verse. The men in suits, not to mention the men in white coats would have been coming quietly to lead him away. And yet here is the word of God in a breathtaking passage, outrageously stating that there is one king whose kingdom will never fail and whose power will never wane. And it asks every one of us, what will your part be in this story?

[00:03:17.560] - Speaker 1

Is this the story you're living in? That's the question that Psalm 2 poses us. Well, the scholars think that Psalms 1 and 2 set the scene together for the whole Book of Psalms. Do you really want to know what makes for the good life, human flourishing? Here it is in these first two Psalms. It's there in the first verse of Psalm 1, *blessed is the one.* It's there in the last verse of Psalm 2, *blessed are all.* One, Psalm 1, is individual and personal. Psalm 2 is public and cosmic. Psalm 1 says you need to know where you're as an individual. Psalm 2 says you need to know where history is going. If you're to have a worldview and to be a together person, you need to understand that the world has been promised to the Messiah, whom God has enthroned as his King. And you know, that in biblical thinking is probably the most important piece of evidence any human will ever receive. The Psalm, of course, has an original context. It may have been written as a song to celebrate coronations and coronations for the kings of Israel from David on. One view is that it's applicable to the life and times of each.

[00:04:48.920] - Speaker 1

And of course, there's an immediate application, an application to the struggles and the wars and the local difficulties of each of the kings as they came in. And certainly, God had called the nation of Israel, his son. He called the various kings, his sons, and so on. We see all that in the Old Testament. And yet, as the 18 or so quotations from the New Testament of this very Psalm put beyond any doubt, this is looking beyond David and all the other kings of Israel to degrade David's greater son, as we'll sing in a moment. First Christians had no difficulty at all in seeing this Psalm's fulfillment in Jesus. The King of Kings, and they were surely right to do so. There was and is no mystery about the identity now of the Anointed One of verse 2, or the King of verse 6, or the Son of verse 7. What matters now is what we learn of him and all that that means for our understanding of contemporary reality. The way the world is. Well, the 12 verses of the Psalm, as you probably know, fall readily into four stanzas. We hear four voices or speakers weaving their way through these four verses or passages, and we receive four shocks.

[00:06:19.180] - Speaker 1

Here's the first. These are sort of little PowerPoint pictures in the psalmist's writing to help us understand things as they really are. And the first verse we hear is what I call the voice of the world in verses one to three, Christ rejected. *Why, verse one, do the nations conspire or rage and the peoples plot in vain. The kings of the Earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and his Anointed saying, 'Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.'* Notice who the rebellion is directed against. There's nothing imprecise about this. It's against the LORD and his Anointed. Hebrew, the Messiah. It's Jesus who is the problem. Here at the outset of the culture is the very heart of the human problem. There is, in the very being of every individual, a deeply embedded stubborn refusal of God's authority in Jesus Christ. That's the human problem, isn't it? If you want a one-word definition of sin, there it is in verse 2. It's that little word against, against the LORD, against his Anointed. That's at the heart of sin. We're plotters, rebels by nature. Our natural inclination is to say "No" to God.

[00:07:56.490] - Speaker 1

And you know that in your own heart. The heart of everything that goes wrong in the world, our hearts that are struggling against the LORD and his Anointed. And that's not just an individual issue. It touches politics and finance and law and academia and culture. Michael Wilcock puts it well, "There is scarcely," he writes, "a commercial or intellectual or cultural interest anywhere in the world which would not resist Christ's claims on it." The reason? It's hinted there in verse three. Do you see that? Here's the world's attitude. Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles. Who wants to be shackled by religious rules and regulations? Who wants their human freedoms curtailed by this yoke? Even though, remember, Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." People don't believe that. Can't you feel the accusatory in these words? Here's what the world thinks. Christianity will somehow limit my freedom. It'll somehow reduce my autonomy. It'll somehow diminish my life. It's the devil's most successful lie ever that

what God does for our well-being, that he gives us for our protection, the laws he prescribes that are for our good, we regard as chains to bind us.

[00:09:30.130] - Speaker 1

Rather than, as they are, a framework to liberate us. That's the world's problem. That's why the psalmist begins, *Why?* There's a note, not of puzzlement, but of indignation and astonishment. He's shocked. It's all so senseless and bizarre and so utterly pointless. Do you see that? *The peoples plot in vain.* Why would 55 intellectuals who owe their every breath to their Creator so resent the assertion of Jesus' name in the public square? Well, glance on for a moment. Keep a finger in Psalm 2 and glance on for a moment to Acts 4, page 1096, because it's interesting, we've got here an authoritative exposition, if you like, of Psalm 2 in the early church. And it's an exciting little episode, Acts 4:23. Peter and John report back on some trenchant opposition which they've experienced. And the church in turn understands the implications of that day in the light of this psalm. It's to this psalm that they turned for comfort and confidence and consolation. Do you see how it goes? Verse 25. Let me read from there. *You spoke by the Holy spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David, then the psalm, 'Why do the nations rage?*

[00:11:02.880] - Speaker 1

And the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his Anointed one.' Here's how it worked out then, verse 27. Indeed, *Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, LORD, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.* That's how the early church saw Psalm 2 as a framework within which to interpret events that were happening around them. They understood the implications of their day in the light of this psalm. That's where they turned. See, there's nothing new in this conspiracy of opposition to King Jesus. It's been around for a long time. Society, we, can cope, yes, with Jesus, the philosopher, or Jesus, the example, or even Jesus, the moralist. But I don't want a king. That's the problem. And that's what Jesus is. And that's why there's a difficulty. That's why there's resistance. Ultimately, of course, pointless resistance. We will not have this man reign over us, they said when he was around.

[00:12:40.140] - Speaker 1

And nothing's changed. Survey church history and you see that. Opposition shouldn't shock us or faze us. There is a profound resistance in human beings to knowing the truth and the truth that sets us free. That's why the world is so often in the mess it is, and our own lives are so often in a mess of turmoil and confusion. So, here's the first voice and the first shock in the psalm. The psalmist point is that all who do not submit themselves to the authority of Christ make war on God. It's that serious. It's very solemn. It's very serious. It's the settled point of the psalm. There are no neutrals. There are no non-combatants. The first stanza addresses the politicians and the world leaders and the opinion formers and the culture

shaper. It also addresses the Anglo-Saxon protestants and the nominal churchgoers and the decent Muslims and the Orthodox Jews and the person who says, "I admire Jesus, but I won't make him LORD." Problem is, he is LORD already. And that's what complicates this. You're living in the wrong story if you won't make him LORD. You've just not got it yet. The second voice we hear in verses 4 to 6 and I call this the voice of the sovereign LORD, Christ appointed.

[00:14:34.780] - Speaker 1

The shock in the second stanza of the passage is there in verse 4. Do you see it? *The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The LORD scoffs at them.* The Jerusalem Bible puts it well, *the one who's thrown is in heaven sits laughing.* It sounds almost blasphemous, doesn't it? It's bold language. It's meant to shock us and unsettle us. What's God's reaction to human rebellion? Answer: he's not fazed. What is God's reaction to the aggressive onslaught of the new atheists? Or the rejection of Christ in much of public life? Or those regimes that are opposing Christian people? Or the chattering classes who love nothing more than to make fun of the church and all its imperfections? Is God running around and saying, "What am I going to do?" All these groups seem so powerful, don't they? Does any of this cause a ripple in heaven? No, it doesn't. Because the psalmist says God can hardly speak for laughing. I remember seeing a dad and a toddler in the street having an almighty rough. And the toddler was screaming at his dad and swinging his fist and all that. And the dad had the toddler at arm's length with a straight arm, and he was killing himself laughing.

[00:16:13.000] - Speaker 1

That's the flavor of this. Of course, it's anthropomorphic language. Of course, it's anthropomorphic. But that's the flavor. God's not laughing because it's funny. It isn't funny. No, it's not. It's the opposite. Verse 5 shows us where it's all heading to rebuke and wrath. And those are deadly serious things. No, he's laughing at the sheer absurdity of all this human rebellion, which is so pointless. He's laughing at these specks of human dust, asserting themselves against him. At these flees attacking the elephant, at these midges trying to blot out the sun. As if any of this will affect the outcome of the story told in verse 6. I, and it's emphatic in the Hebrew, *I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.* You know, in the death, resurrection, the ascension of Jesus, our coronation, the ultimate coronation, the coronation to which all these coronations of Israel looked forward. A coronation planned before the foundation of the world has already occurred. Jesus is on the throne. God himself has unilaterally appointed Christ to rule everything. Everything. In a good line from Walter Chantry, we are rightly reminded, "The foundation of our world is in a quiet throne room in heaven.

[00:17:55.960] - Speaker 1

The King is installed. Keep your eyes there." Sometimes, honestly, in the modern world, it's the only thing that will help keep you sane when we face what feels like opposition. God's not canvassing support. He's not campaigning in an election. He's not begging men and women to make Jesus LORD. He is announcing that he personally has long since settled the matter. It's dealt with. It's decided. It's a done

deal and that gives us confidence, doesn't it? And it gives us peace. And it gives us hope. You see, a plea to human beings to make Jesus King, would just be as absurd as a plea to obey the laws of gravity. Please don't float off into space. What's going to happen? Remember what Paul says in Philippians 2, God has exalted Jesus to the highest place and given him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is LORD. Whether you like it or not, Jesus is King. God has said it. It is so. His plan for the world will not be put in jeopardy. You bow to him willingly? One day we all will, willingly or not.

[00:19:34.410] - Speaker 1

There are our first two voices. The voice of the world, Christ rejected. The voice of the sovereign LORD, Christ appointed. Here's the third voice in verse 7-9. The voice of the enthroned Messiah, Christ commissioned. Can you see that? At verse 7, a new voice speaks to engage us. It's the voice of the LORD's Anointed himself. He's going to tell us something we don't know. We're listening in. Something that is beyond time and beyond sense. Back before the foundation of the world, before there was a world to save, before people, before sin, in the councils of the Godhead, a decree of God is spoken. And it's absolute, and it's inviolable, and it describes the will of God. And it will happen. Yes, God had promised Israel that they would be his sons. He said that to David in 2 Samuel 7 and other places. But these promises were always destined for bigger and greater fulfill in the life of great David's greater son. Verse 7, *He, God the Father, said to me, the Anointed one is the me, you are my Son.* Words quoted as if to underline how special Jesus was at his baptism, at his transfiguration, and then in Acts 13:33, of his resurrection.

[00:21:08.700] - Speaker 1

This is sonship in a new realm. There couldn't be greater intimacy than is painted for us here. As Romans 1:4 reminds us, Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. And in the decree of God, he's been given something by his Father. And this is a Father who delights to give. Think of the things the Father has given us. He's given us his Son. He's given us grace. He's given us eternal life. This is a Father who gives. What has he given his Son? Verse 8, do you see it? *The nations, the ends of the earth.* It all belongs to him. In this stanza, we see not just the legitimacy of his reign, he's the Son and heir, verse 7. We see the scope of his reign, verse 8. But also, more seriously, in verse 9, we see the force of his reign. Do you see that, too? Do you see what Jesus is told to do in verse 8? *Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance.* Jesus faced the cross with all the anger and the nails and the opposition and the abuse and the separation from his Father.

[00:22:32.810] - Speaker 1

As he did that, who did he have in mind? Well, John 17:24 tells us that it was those you have given me. As Jesus hangs on the cross, you and I were in a very real sense in his mind. Can you believe that? We're part of all that if we're his. And if you doubt that this reaching out to the nations is actually taking place, look around you in this room tonight and see the nations that are represented even in a small

gathering like this. I read this week that in 1949, there were thought to be a million Christians in China. Today, the figure is thought to be nearer 50 million. And experts who know what they're on about predict 160 million by 2025. And some feel that by 2030, there may be more Christians in China than in the United States. And this is officially an atheist country where Mao thought he could obliterate religion and believe he'd actually accomplish that. Well, what's behind all that if it isn't the Lordship and rule of Christ and the fulfill of this promise? Is there any answer to aggressive secularism, to militant Islam, to the iron grip of Buddhist ideology?

[00:24:06.850] - Speaker 1

Can these things ever be broken? Here's the key. Here's why all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus. The nations are his inheritance. Even the rebellious ones of verse one. The Father tells him to ask for them. And he does. And the intercession of Jesus, that asking by Jesus, is quite literally the hope of the world. He is the way, the truth, and the life for humanity. Do you believe that? Verse 8 is probably one of the great missionary verses of the Old Testament. There could be no greater vision than that anywhere in the Bible. Well, the shock of this stanza is there in verse 9. There's an uncomfortable fierceness about the alternative, which unsettles us, if we're honest. There's an amnesty for rebels going on which will not last forever. There's a time coming for a calling to account that is unavoidable when his enemies will be crushed. And that's a solemn word. And Revelation 19:15 quotes this verse as it speaks solemnly and shockingly of the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God, actioned by the one who is called King of Kings and LORD of LORDs.

[00:25:41.860] - Speaker 1

Who can stand on that day? Christ's throne holds ultimate terror. If we're foolish enough to reject his kingship and his authority, who would want to risk doing that? Who would want to live in that way? It's the height of madness, isn't it? Given what we've read here. And then the final voice we hear is the voice of the psalmist himself. Verses 10 to 12. Christ rescuing. If the first three voices we've heard in the psalm spell out some realities, if they outline the predicament, the final call in this final stanza calls for decisive action. Psalmist becomes a preacher. If this is all true, therefore, what follows? There's an appeal in verse 10 Be wise. Be wise. And he starts at the top. The kings and the rulers and the conspirators of verse 2. But his appeal ultimately is to all of us. For we're all in a way like little kings, aren't we? Little rulers who like to call their own shots and make their own decisions and be in charge of our own destinies and all that. And there's a dual incentive here in verse 12. There's danger and delight in equal measure as the psalm comes to a close.

[00:27:15.870] - Speaker 1

There's a danger to avoid anger and destruction. And also in the last line, there's a blessing for all who take refuge. So be wise, verse 10. *Be wise*. The mark of the wise person is that they can listen to warnings. Unwise people don't listen to warnings. In the light of this king's staggering authority and daunting power, what are we to do? Verse 11, *serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with*

trembling. Verse 12, *Kiss the Son, in homage and submission and affection*. We live in a bit of a kissy society in London, don't we? How many people have you kissed in the last week on one or other cheek, or both, maybe? We do a lot of kissing of one another. I like Clive James' little quip, you know, kissing, social kissing. He says, "Where each of you gets a nose in the eye." We do a lot of that. But you know if you've kissed the Son. You know if you've kissed the Son. You're not in any doubt about that. You know whether you've done that or not. It's not something about which you're confused or muddled. What's the alternative? Well, roll on to my second and final passage in the New Testament, Revelation 6.

[00:28:51.760] - Speaker 1

Glance on to page 1238, just for a second, because here the camera rolls forward to the end of history and the end of the story which is prophesied here in Psalm 2. Verse 15 of Revelation 6. Do you see it? We're back with the kings of the earth. Look at this. *Then the kings of the earth and the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, this is about us, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come and who can withstand it?'* It's a sobering thing to know that there is something called the wrath of the Lamb. And who can stand on a day like that? What do you do in the day of God's wrath? Where do you run to on that day? Where do you hide? Well, the last two words of Psalm 2 give us the answer. Not in caves or under rocks.

[00:30:18.200] - Speaker 1

You take refuge in him. Our natural instinct is to run from God. The place of safety is in the LORD himself. And that's what Psalm 2 spells out so movingly. Jesus is the refuge, the rescuer for people fleeing from final judgment. Why is that? Because in Jesus, the judgment is exhausted. There's no judgment left when you're in Christ. He has taken it. Bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place, condemned, he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah! What a savior! That's what's so amazing about the gospel. And here's the shock of this final stanza. You escape from God by escaping to him. You flee God's anger by hiding in his mercy. You can't flee from Jesus, but you can flee to him. And that's the wonder of the gospel. And if we come to him, that wrath, which can flare up so quickly as it did with the money changers in the temple, it's gone. It's gone forever. And that's a wonderful reassurance. The King who reigns is the Lamb who died for us. Well, let that sound, too, friends. It's there to convince us as we listen to the voices of the world and the Father and the Son and then the Spirit through the psalmist, of the futility, the ultimate futility of rebellion.

[00:32:04.050] - Speaker 1

It takes us nowhere. Of the reality of judgment. It's a frightening thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Of the authority of Jesus, who holds the whole of history and the nations in his hands, and of the joy and safety of refuge in him. Because there's no better place. And there's no more fulfilling or thrilling place to be as a human being than in the safety and refuge of Jesus. And the question tonight is, where are you

in this story? Have you been caught up in the embrace of the LORD's Anointed Son. Have you kissed the Son? Let's be quiet for a moment.

LORD, make the glory and beauty of Jesus sweet to us. Deepen our love for you and our will to serve you. Help us to buy in to all you disclose of yourself here in Psalm 2. Give us the courage and confidence that you are the LORD of history and that the nations. Be our refuge and our security, now and always for your glory. Amen.