

## Psalm 2 | An Eternal Hope

Before I really get into my Easter message, I have a confession to make. And I know this confession will induce shock for some and maybe even shame toward me. This is the confession: that I didn't see the original *Star Wars* movies until I was in my mid-thirties. Now to make matters worse for you *Star Wars* fans, the first *Star Wars* movie – or should I use the proper lingo and say “Episode” – I ever saw was Episode 1. Which I actually enjoyed! Only to later learn from real *Star Wars* fans that Episode 1, for many, apparently deserves to be stricken from any and all credibility in the *Star Wars* universe. Who knew?! Now, for those of you who aren't *Star Wars* people, I know this sounds like a ridiculous confession. And to your point, I hope you see in light of my confession that we actually get each other. Right?!

But I mention that this morning, because I think sagas like *Star Wars*, and the following they inspire, remind us that there's something inherently powerful about an epic story. And even if you're not a *Star Wars* fan, think *Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, or the *Hunger Games*. Stories that draw us in on ever-evolving levels. Stories that dive right into the tension, often the deepest struggle between good and evil. And stories, that, while normally having some sort of “happy-ending,” usually still end reminding us that a hint of conflict remains, suggesting that the fullest story may not be over yet – even if you're already seven sequels in!

So, if you enjoy that kind of epic story, that may help set the stage for where we find ourselves this Easter, where – as a community – today we're not only celebrating Easter but wrapping up our two-month journey through the ancient book of Psalms. Yet for some of us today, I suspect it may feel like we're jumping into the middle of a story, as Psalm 2, the Psalm we're looking at today seems to do just that. Now it may sound weird that we're ending a series on the Psalms with the second chapter of the book – which has 150 in total that many of you have read over the past two months – but what you need to know is that most scholars describe Psalms 1 and 2 as the bookends to the Psalms.

Almost separate from the rest of the book, Psalm 1 – which we looked at on the first week of our series – serves more like a *prologue*, setting the set the stage for the Psalms. And then Psalm 2 acts like an *epilogue* to consider where the story lands *and* where it may still go from here.

So, if you have a Bible this morning, I invite you to follow along with me as we begin with

**Psalm 2:1-3:**

***Why do the nations conspire  
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, saying,  
“Let us break their chains  
and throw off their shackles.”***

Now doesn't that just scream: "Happy Easter!" If you're feeling like, *this seems like an odd place to start an Easter message*, trust me, it was you and me both when I got to this point in my preparation! And yet, don't these opening lines feel somehow true to the story of our lives? Maybe even on Easter Sunday! That while we long for hope in the world, doesn't it seem like the nations around us are constantly conspiring – or a better translation says, "raging". That people all around are plotting and scheming what they think is best for the world, yet no one can agree. That leader after leader of nations or organizations rise up, only to *not* deliver on our fullest hopes and dreams. Or here, the Psalmist says, they even ***"band together against the Lord"***, pushing against the forces of good and wanting to break free from anything that may stop them. Can you relate to that feeling in our world?

This is the tension of the story that begins Psalm 2, but also the tension that seems to still remain at the end of the journey through the Psalms, as, like I said, this is intended to be the epilogue of the story that the Psalms are telling.

Next, we read a response to these opening verses in **verses 4-9:**

***The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
the Lord scoffs at them.  
He rebukes them in his anger  
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,  
“I have installed my king***

***on Zion, my holy mountain.”***

***I will proclaim the Lord’s decree:***

***He said to me, “You are my son;  
today I have become your father.  
Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,  
the ends of the earth your possession.  
You will break them with a rod of iron;  
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”***

This next section describes a divine response to the chaos in the world. It says, ***“The One enthroned in heaven laughs...”*** It almost seems that the divine response is inappropriate here; somehow emotionally detached from the situation – which may tap into feelings you’ve had as though God is far removed from *your* chaos. But I think it speaks to the exact opposite; that somehow the God of heaven is not afraid of the conspiracies and the rage. That there’s almost a lightness to God’s response, as though God “laughs in the face of danger”. But there’s also a fierce pushback to the evil, saying, ***“I have installed my king...”*** That a different kind of king has actually been put in power. That a divine king, higher and beyond the kings of the earth has been installed over and above any and all other kings.

We see this in how the king proclaims the Lord’s decree, declaring that God said to him: ***“You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”*** On behalf of the king, the Psalmist declares that the king that’s been installed is not just any ordinary king but is actually the son of God. And that God has promised to extend his reign – not just to a single nation – but to the ends of the earth. And that anything that could stand in the way will be dashed to pieces like broken pottery. This is a reference to an ancient Hebrew coronation ceremony, where all the enemies of a new king – both personal and imperial – would be written on a piece of pottery and then symbolically smashed on the ground, representing the hope of the new king to overcome their enemies.

Then Psalm 2 ends this way in **verses 10-12:**

**Therefore, you kings, be wise;  
be warned, you rulers of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear  
and celebrate his rule with trembling.  
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.**

The Psalm ends back in the Psalmist's voice declaring both a warning *and* an invitation to the kings and rulers of the world. Calling them to be wise and to serve the Lord. Inviting them to celebrate his rule and worship through the symbol of a kiss. And then the warning and invitation culminate with two possible outcomes: either, **"your way will lead to your destruction"** or **"Blessed are all who take refuge in him."** To be warned that the path of chaos, conspiracy, and rage against God is ultimately a self-destructive endeavour. But also, to be invited into the ultimate conclusion: that blessing is available for all who take refuge in this king's reign.

That's the Psalm 2 epilogue of the story of the Psalms. And doesn't it feel like the neat and tidy "happily ever after" that we all long for?!?

Now, before getting to the "what does this mean for us", especially on Easter, I know that a passage like this – and many of the Psalms we've been reading these last months – is intense, chaotic, maybe hard to understand, even violent in some of its language. But like the epic stories we're most drawn to, when we read these Psalms we must remember the genre of the Psalms, as poems, songs, and even *stories*, all from an ancient culture. Yet, I'd say, not that unlike the poems, songs, and stories of our *not-so* ancient culture – let alone our *not-so* ancient reality of chaos, confusion, and conflict that fills so much of our world and even our up-close and personal lives. It's a context we can actually relate to.

So, the question this morning is: what do we do with a Psalm that leaves us in the tension? That ends the story with unresolved tension and only reminds us of the chaos and tension of our own lives? Especially because, despite the prayer of this royal Psalm, ancient Israel's long line of kings never actually delivered on the finality of the blessing and refuge that Psalm 2 promises?

Well, to that question, I want us to fast forward the story of the Psalms a few hundred years from then to 2,000 years ago, when a new character emerged in the story who people began to wonder whether might be a new king. A character who declared, ***“The time has come... The kingdom of God has come near.” (Mark 1:15)*** A character who people described hearing the voice of God say of him: ***“You are my son.” (Mark 1:11)*** A character who drew people to himself and asked his Heavenly Father that the nations might be his. A character who people then – *and*, people still today – declared as a Divine King. As *the* King of Kings. As the *true* King over and above all other kings.

A king who was then anointed like described in Psalm 2, but not like the ancient kings of Israel who were anointed by priests. No, this king was anointed by a prostitute. A king who was crowned, as all kings are; but not with jewels, rather with a crown of thorns. A king who was enthroned, not on a royal pedestal, but on a rugged cross. A king who proclaimed his decree, not by threatening his enemies or smashing their names, but by saying, ***“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)***, as his hands were nailed to a cross. A king who ultimately conquered his enemies, not by killing them, but by laying down his life for them, conquering our real enemies of sin and death. And a king who we believe reigns today, not by iron-fisted rule, but by supernatural resurrection and the unleashing of His Risen Spirit in the world!

This is the true King of Psalm 2. This is the true King of the story of the scriptures. This is the Divine King of the world who has overcome all chaos and conflict through his death and resurrection. And this is the King who has promised to always be with us – in all of our chaos or confusion – and the King who has sent His peace-bringing Spirit into the lives of those who put their hope in him. This is the King named Jesus whose resurrection we celebrate at Easter and who has promised to return again one day to finish the story of bringing final blessing, refuge, and restoration as the eternal hope of the world!

That is the good news of the story of the Psalms and the good news of the story of Easter!

So, let me ask you, what about your story? What about the epic story of your life? Where are you currently caught in the tension of chaos and conflict in the story you find yourself in? And in the midst of it all, what have you been putting your hope in?

Have you been putting your hope in power and politics, believing at some point we'll find the right political leader who will make everything the way it's supposed to be? Have you been putting your hope in money, but now the chaos of the markets is making your future so uncertain? Have you been putting your hope in maintaining your health and wellness, but as life goes on you see more clearly how time eventually catches up with all of us? Have you been putting your hope in relationships, moving from one to the next, or, trying to muster the perfect marriage or family, only to realize long-lasting relationships are much harder and even can be more painful than you expected? Have you been putting your hope in pleasure and entertainment, always seeking the next thrill in order to escape the challenges of life, yet somehow always coming up empty? Or have you been putting your hope in yourself, believing you have what it takes to live a meaningful life on your own, but often wrestling with an insecurity or inadequacy or incompleteness, wondering whether you're really just faking it till you make it and, at some point, might be found out?

Friends, what if these are some of the *hope-less* conspiracies and vain plots that Psalm 2 warns against? And what if, the invitation toward blessing and refuge that Psalm 2 promises is not just some fantasy fictional story? And more to the point of Easter, what if there's a king who has done all that Psalm 2 promises to do and will do all that Psalm 2 predicts to come, by one day fully and finally bringing blessing and refuge for all? What if that's a king – the King who is the Resurrected Jesus – that we could put our hope in together today? That's my invitation to you.

As is so appropriate on Easter, today we have the privilege of hearing the stories and celebrating the baptisms of five people in our community who have made the decision to put the hope of their story in Jesus.

Putting their hope in *the One* who died for the forgiveness of sins and rose again to conquer the enemies of evil and death. Putting their hope in the King of Kings, whose kingdom of peace, love, grace, and justice is slowly but surely unfolding its epic story in the world. And as we hear their stories, I invite you to consider: what if you were to put the hope of *your story* in this King and His story as well – our Resurrected King named Jesus?

Happy Easter everyone!