

Psalm 2

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[0 : 0 0] The true story goes of a soldier who was fighting for the Japanese army in World War II, who found himself on a remote island. Hiro Onoda decided to fight the enemy undercover until! After only a few months the war did end and Japan had to surrender to the Americans.

They waved the white flag, it was all over. But isn't it true that sometimes people just don't know when it's time to surrender? They don't know when it's time to stop fighting.

See the surprising thing about this soldier was that after the Japanese surrender he remained on this little island for another 30 years. It was time to surrender, to lay down his arms, but he just wouldn't believe it. He refused and for 30 more years he fought his own little private war. He attacked island villages, he clashed with local troops, he even ignored the Japanese airdrops of leaflets that told him we've lost. It's time to surrender. He thought they were just American propaganda. He raged and he plotted and he set himself up to win a battle that he'd already lost. Now when I hear that story I'm never sure whether to laugh or to cry. Isn't that story so funny but at the same time it's so tragic isn't it? But some people just don't know when it's time to surrender. And wouldn't it be funny, wouldn't it be so tragic if people like you and I this morning could treat God in the same way that that soldier treated his enemies? Well isn't that the message that God gives to us in this psalm, Psalm 2 today? This psalm amazingly says that that is what is going on. Just have a look down at the words there in verses 1-3.

The nations rage the people's plot in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves and take counsel against the Lord, banding against the Lord together. You see that soldier was one exception wasn't he?

One little rebel all on his own. But instead of this just being one exceptional man who's slightly confused on his own little island all in his own world, the writer says that this is happening, this rebellion is whole scale throughout the whole world. It's international. Fighting God all over the world.

[3 : 0 1] the nations rage. The nations rage. The people's plot. The kings of the earth set themselves, rulers council together. From the least to the greatest. A global effort against the Lord. Now we may think as we look at the world, is that really true? With all of its religions in the world, with all of its ways of trying to worship God, we might think, is that really true? Is the world fighting against God, against the Lord? It looks like we're all trying to desperately get to him, doesn't it?

Not fight against him. Most people maybe don't feel like they're fighting God. There's no problem. But the psalmist gives us a clue to why that is really true. Look at verse 2 there. The psalmist says, actually he's quite specific here, that the God we're attacking and fighting against is the Lord. That word in big capital letters there. He is the God of the Bible. People aren't against their own inventions of God, are they? But the Lord, the one true God. And clue number two is there. He also says that they're against his anointed, his king. That's King Jesus.

So you might find actually that it's okay to talk about God in a general sense and believing in him and worshipping him. There isn't so much plotting against God in a general sense, is there? But talk about the God of the Bible and talk about his king Jesus and people start to get a bit uppity then, don't they? Talk about him being the ruler of our lives and the anger starts to show then, doesn't it? Jesus is the king. The problem is with the Lord, the God of the Bible and his anointed with Jesus. Now look at what the world naturally says about them. Look at verse 3. It says there, let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cause from us. That is the world's motto.

We don't want the Lord through his king, King Jesus, to rule over us. It's a world full of little rebels against God. And I wonder if at times, like me, you felt that inbuilt desire to rebel against King Jesus. Even though I know he's my king, I want to dethrone him in my mind. I'd wanted to think of him, even this last week, as more of a mascot or a butler or an advisor or an agony aunt or a

bodyguard than a king. I thought to myself in this past week, well I know Jesus is saying don't do this thing or do that thing over there, but actually I don't really like what Jesus says to me, thank you very much. I'll dethrone him. And I'll say in my heart, let's cast his cause away from us, from me. But this psalm, it shows us, doesn't it, that however politely we say no to Jesus' rule, that is a very, very rude thing to do, to say to a king. That is actually fighting talk. Let's do what I want, let's fight him. But we all do that, don't we, in a world full of rebels. But maybe we just don't know when it's time to surrender. And just for the next few minutes, I want us to see how this psalm takes us through three issues about what it means to rebel against this king that the Lord has set up, King Jesus.

[7 : 25] Because rebelling against the Lord, his king, firstly is farcical. Farcical, it's a posh word, isn't it, for funny. It's a farce. Now, I think it was last year I overheard a conversation between a church minister and an astrophysicist. Now, it sounds a bit like the start of a joke, doesn't it? But the minister said to this astrophysicist, listen, I've got this sermon to prepare next Sunday, and I've been thinking about how big is the universe that God has made?

How big is it? Can you, as an astrophysicist, let me get a grip on that? He said to him, listen, is it a bit like putting a one-pound coin on the centre of a football pitch? Is that how big the universe is compared with the world? A little one-pound coin. Well, the astrophysicist said, well, not quite. It's more like if you get a one-pound coin and put it in the middle of Australia. But then multiply the size of Australia with a number that starts with seven and has 50 zeros after it. That's what the earth is compared with the universe. One little pound coin in the middle of a massive, massive Australia. So just imagine that little pound coin with seven or eight billion tiny little people on it, all shaking their fists at God, at the God who made that massive Australia, who sits in the heavens on the throne. Well, what would you do? It's probably what God does, isn't it? Look at verse four. He who sits in the heavens laughs. He laughs. One little pound coin in the middle of Australia, full of little rebels, raging and fighting, shouting up at God, waving their fists at him, setting themselves up against his king. It's totally farcical, isn't it? It's funny. That's why this psalm begins with a really good question. Why do the nations rage? The writer just can't get his head around that, can he? It's so farcical that we little human beings should do that.

Now, it's a bit of an easy target really, but this psalm tells us that God finds new atheism, that sort of thing. People like Richard Dawkins, I've never met him, he might be a lovely man, but God finds what those people say utterly ridiculous. It is ridiculous when we in our tiny human intellects think that we have anything to blame God with, anything to plot against him with, anything that makes us think that we're better than him. God even laughs at rulers and kings and presidents who do that. It's farcical. And if I'm doing that in my life, I really need to think about how small I am. And how big and how great God is. And how farcical, how funny it is that I would try to fight him in my life. In some area of my life where

I'm kicking against him, or I'm trying to control everything in my life. Well, I need to remember that he is great and I am so small. He is wise and I am not. He is the Lord. Jesus is the king and I am not, thankfully. Rebelling against the Lord and his king, Jesus, is farcical.

It's funny. But you know, the second thing that this psalm shows us is that it's futile. It's a futile thing to do. It's a pointless thing to do. Just have a look down with me at verse 6 there for a second. God responds to this rebellion and he says, as for me, I've set my king on Zion, my holy hill or my holy mountain. Now just think about concrete for a second.

[12 : 09] After it's set, there's nothing you can do about it, is there? We were thinking this morning with the kids about when builders accidentally walk through concrete when it's still soft, but afterwards you can't do anything about it, can you? It's set. You can't move it. It's set in place. And God says to us that that is true about Jesus as king. You can try to rebel against him. You can try to move him out of the way as king of your life. You can do what you want to do. You can do what you want to do. You can do what you want to do.

You can do what you want to do. You can do what you want to do. You can do what you want to do. You can try to kill him and crucify him. That's been done, hasn't it? And it was futile. You're wasting your time. It's futile to try and rebel against my king because he is set as my king in Zion. The announcement made about this king in verse 7 to 8 is that the Lord is his father. He says, you are my son. He's the prince, God's very own son. So he's crowned as a king, but not as an ordinary human king who can be toppled. No, he is God's king. He's installed, set as ruler. He's the outright ruler of the nations of the ends of the earth in verse 8. So to spend my life, to spend your life kicking against the rule of

God's king, Jesus, it gets you nowhere. God has made him unrivaled champion of all that exists. Ruler of the ends of the earth. Ruler of the nations. Ruler of you. The preacher, S.M. Lockridge, said about Jesus, that's my king. He'll have no successor. There was nobody before him. There'll be nobody after him. You can't impeach him and he's not going to resign.

God has set him as king and there's no changing that. One little coin in the middle of a massive Australia. Not only is that farcical, it's futile. It is very, very hard work trying to fight against God's king. The more we live our lives under our own rule, the more hard work it gets. I wonder if you've met people like that. Maybe we feel like that ourselves this morning. Life is just one big worry. Day after day, it's a slog. When you walk down the street, perhaps to work, people just look tired, don't they, walking down the street. One person famously said, if you want to feel anxious, just pretend you're in control. Fighting against God's king, the one that God has set in place as king is really, really hard work because it's futile.

Denying his rule is like trying to hold an inflatable ball, isn't it, down underneath the water. You can rage, you can plot, you can rise up against him in your life, but eventually he will rise up as king. And it will get you nowhere. It's futile. But ultimately, this psalm teaches us finally that rebelling against God's king is fatal. It's dangerous. Not only is it farcical and futile, but for us, for us, it's no laughing matter. It's fatal. The situation would be really, really funny, wouldn't it, one pound coin in the middle of Australia, if it were so tragic.

[16:24] Now, I don't know if you noticed, as Rachel read this psalm earlier, there are lots of things in here that might actually surprise us about Jesus, about King Jesus. For those of us who are living for Jesus, we know him, don't we? We love him. And we know Jesus to be a loving and patient and kind and forgiving king.

He is the one who eats dinner with sinners, isn't he? He welcomes sinners and he forgives people who ask for mercy gloriously. But look at some of the words that this psalm uses to describe King Jesus here. Verse 5, he will speak to these nations in his wrath. He'll terrify them in his fury. Verse 9, God speaking to King Jesus says, you will break them with a rod of iron.

There's a warning to us in verse 12, kiss the son, lest he be angry, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Perhaps that doesn't sound like the Jesus that we like to know, does it? Doesn't that sound harsh? Anger, wrath, fury, wrath? Why does the psalmist speak like this? Isn't he the God who's patient and kind and slow to anger? Was it a couple of years the Jubilee celebrations were? I can't remember, I've lost track of time, but if you saw all of the celebrations on TV, the Queen was centre stage, she wasn't she. And usually there is a day, isn't there, during those kind of celebrations where there is a big procession down the Mall and the Queen is waiting on the balcony at Buckingham Palace.

And most people generally quite like the Queen, don't they? They even love the Queen and lots of people are there waving their Union Jacks and celebrating the Queen's rule. It's a happy occasion when there's that procession. So there are lots of guards and soldiers that process down before her and really we just think they're for show, don't we? But just imagine that on one of those processions there were some people in the crowd, perhaps terrorists, who didn't love the Queen at all. But actually they hated her. And as she went past they begin to throw eggs at her, they sneer and insult her. And then somebody even tries to assassinate the Queen as she goes past.

[19:25] They rage against her and plot against her rule. Now what do you think those soldiers would do then in that situation? Well, I would have thought they'd jump into action, wouldn't they? Or at least dozens of sort of secret agents with earpieces would rush out of the crowd and pounce on the rebels.

And they would be exercising the Queen's wrath on rebels. They would have to carry out her rule, her rightful rule by force. Now would that make the Queen happy if they had to do that? No, wouldn't.

She wouldn't get any pleasure out of it, but it would be the right thing to do. She is the Queen, the rightful ruler. And God speaks about wrath and punishment because the reality is that there are people and there will be people like that when Jesus returns. They will not welcome him with arms wide open.

They will continue to hate him and his rule. So in that moment Jesus must carry out his rule by force. He says in this psalm it will be like the force of an iron bar shattering a piece of pottery. It will be fatal for them. It will be shattering for them, for little rebels. Have a look again at verse 12. Kiss the sun, it says. That's a great image, isn't it, of somebody bowing down to a king, kissing the

hand, surrendering to the king. The psalm warns us, surrender now to this king, lest he be angry and your way lead to destruction. It would be so funny this psalm, wouldn't it, if it weren't so tragic. A couple of years ago Emma and I were on holiday on the south coast walking on some cliffs and it was a lovely day and there was a light breeze, the sunshine, blue skies, lovely. But as we walked along these cliff edges there were signs that said stay back, sheer drop, something like that and there was a sort of picture of a man falling over this cliff. And I thought well that is a bit harsh, isn't it? Here I am, I'm enjoying my nice walk on these cliff edges and what's to stop me just having a closer look?

[22 : 04] Who are these people spoiling my walking fun, spoiling my view of this 30 foot drop on the other side? But of course that was a loving warning, wasn't it? From those sign makers, the Lord here is not being harsh. He's not being mean, he's giving us a loving warning. He's saying it's a foolish thing to do, to rage against me. And in the end it will shatter you. You're heading for destruction if you're doing that. It's fatal. You know in reality maybe our Queen can't really do all that much, can she? She can't actually stop the newspapers ruining her holidays, let alone terrorists. But King Jesus is not like that. He will finally stop all rebels one day. How funny it is and how pointless it is and how very tragic it is when we try to rebel against God's King, King Jesus. How fatal it is.

So as we close, how should we respond to this? How should we respond? Do we carry on fighting a battle we've already lost against King Jesus? Well here's the response. Look at verses 10 to 12. The only response we're given in this psalm, the only real response is to surrender to King Jesus. To surrender to him. To bow down before him and to kiss him and to admit, Lord you are my King. Look at the end of verse 12. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. What a different psalm this would be without that line in it at the end. It says there that instead of fighting him we can actually take refuge in him. The rebels can find refuge in God. We can surrender to him. And amazingly his terms are if we do that we'll be blessed. Isn't it funny that the only place this psalm says we can go to escape God's King is to go to God's King. The only way we can escape Jesus' wrath is to run to Jesus himself and take refuge in him. It's

God's amazing grace. Instead of losing our lives, we gain everything by finally surrendering to him. The story goes, I think we've heard this. I think we've heard this before in church, but the story goes of a wealthy man and his son who were collectors of expensive artwork from Picasso to Raphael. They had it in their own private collection. But the son was called to military service in Vietnam and sadly died in battle, leaving his father and his collection in his collection in his home. One month after his death, a fellow soldier trapped down the father with a portrait of his son that he'd scribbled on the battlefield in Vietnam. The picture of his son then for the father took prime place amongst all of the great works of art in the house. Eventually the father died as well and an auction was held for all of these great works of art. And the bidding began with the scribble of the man's son. It wasn't a great piece, so the asking price was only a hundred dollars. Those at the auction who'd gone there to buy the Picassos began to complain, we've come for the important artwork. We want Raphael and Picasso.

The auctioneer, the auctioneer shouts, who will take the son? Anyone for the son? We start at a hundred dollars. No bids. When eventually an old man who sat at the back of the room said, I'll give you ten dollars for it.

[26 : 49] Ten dollars, going once, going twice, sold. There was a sigh of relief, now we can get on with the real auction. But the auctioneer put his coat on. I'm sorry, the auction is now closed, he said.

When I was called to conduct the auction, I was given a stipulation by the deceased owner. I wasn't allowed to reveal this until now, but the stipulation said that the only painting up for auction would be the scribble of his son would be the scribble of his son.

Whoever bought that painting would inherit his entire estate. The man who loves the son, he told me, gets everything.

If you kiss the son, you get everything. You see, Jesus is your king. You can fight that as much as you want.

But you'll get nothing. It's futile. It's fatal. But God is giving you the golden opportunity now to surrender to him, to receive him as your rightful king, to put the crown of your life back on his head again.

[28 : 09] To kiss him and to run to him as your refuge. And when we do that, gloriously, God says, you will get everything.

We're told to submit to Jesus as our king in this psalm, aren't we? Not just because it's the right thing to do or to avoid the fear of God's punishment through him, but of the extraordinary promise of the blessing we get by surrendering to him and receiving him.

Of the freedom and thrill we get in saying, Lord, not my will, but yours be done. Having Jesus as your king is no bad thing, let me say.

It's a glorious thing. After all, it is such hard work living in rebellion against King Jesus because the things or people we treat as king instead can't really live up to that task.

They can't rule over us and protect us and care for us properly as a real king should. Jesus is the Lord's king who he has set on his holy hill.

[29 : 35] But isn't it the case that so often people don't know when it's time to surrender? Am I fighting when I've already lost? Wouldn't that just be farsical?

Wouldn't that be funny? Wouldn't that be futile? Wouldn't it be pointless? Wouldn't it be fatal? But wouldn't it be such a blessing to take refuge in him?

He who gets the son gets everything. Let's pray.