



¹Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ³“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”

⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” ⁷I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss 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.

Psalm 2

Dear Family at Christ Community Church,

In the last week we have been gripped with shock and sadness as we learned of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We have lamented over the suffering the people of Ukraine have already experienced and are likely to experience in the days ahead. We have been overwhelmed by the rapidly changing international scene, quickly changing developments, and the sheer amount of information it seems we need not only to keep up with events, but to understand their background in all its tangled complexity. Perhaps above all, we cannot shake the feeling that the world as we know it is changing yet again, and not for the better.

In all these ways we find ourselves in the teeth of a new crisis that raises many of the same emotions and challenges as we have confronted in the whirling circumstances of the last two years. As we continue to process and discuss these big issues, **Psalm 2** provides us with some Biblical banks of the river that will help navigate our thinking and our conversations so that, speaking the truth to one another in love, we all continue to become more mature disciples of Jesus. Our goal is that the governing principles we learn from this Psalm would further anchor us in the life-giving, hope-producing reality of our union with Jesus Christ as we remember and apply them in our conversations with each other. **Psalm 2** was given to God's people so that we would be encouraged by strong confidence in Him, especially when we are faced with times of crisis. We learn three governing principles from this Psalm that are especially relevant to our current circumstances in the midst of so many events of historical significance:

1) Historical events serve as the *stage* upon which our sovereign and good God has enthroned His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as King of the Nations, Sovereign Ruler over every people and nation.

Verses 4-9 of Psalm 2 tell us of God's decree to enthrone His anointed Son in Zion, His holy hill. Zion, another name for Jerusalem, reminds us of God's presence with His people, from which He sends us out for the life of the world with the gracious invitation to come and see that He is good! In this center of redemptive activity King Jesus sits upon His throne, and He is ruling until He shall put all His enemies under His feet and deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, so that God may be all in all (a theme the apostle Paul picks up on in 1

Cor. 15:25-28). Jesus' enthronement, His possession of the ends of the earth, and His claim upon the nations as His own heritage are historical realities; they happened in history, and they are being worked out in history.

This means that in our thinking and in our conversations (both face-to-face and over social media) about historical events like the invasion of Ukraine we must be the first to lament over tragedy and the presence of death, sin, and brokenness in the world. Far from making us indifferent about suffering, the awesome reality of King Jesus' rule in history reminds us that the things that cause suffering are weighty and required God's own redemptive action to be fully overcome. Jesus came into history to defeat these enemies of life. His victory over them means that we don't have to have each situation figured out or rush to pass judgment on the circumstances before we begin to patiently lament tragedy and weep with those who weep.¹

At the same time, Jesus' kingly rule means that we don't despair. We remember that Jesus is reigning even now and His victory over sin, death and brokenness has already been won. So, we are careful in our thoughts and in our talk not to prematurely call the end of the story—close the curtain on the stage—based on our cynical reading of the latest events.

2) Historical events point to the redemptive *story* of King Jesus' victory over sin, evil powers, and wicked schemes so that people from every nation may be blessed and find refuge in Him alone.

Verses 1-3 of Psalm 2 express the shock and indignation God's people feel when they see His loving rule challenged by the powers and principalities of this world. These wicked rebels hate Jesus' Kingship and do all that they can to break themselves free of it. Before God subdued our hearts we walked in this path too. But, thanks be to God, this is not the end of the story! In history Jesus has overcome this rebellion and the sin and death that characterized all who walked in it so that now all those who put their faith in Him have refuge and salvation by grace in Him.

This means that in the face of major historical events like the invasion of Ukraine, we will be clear-eyed about evil and its commodification of our relationships with God and each other. We will remind ourselves and encourage each other with the truth of what King Jesus requires of us all—that we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him (**Micah 6:8**)—and when necessary, we will be prophetic witnesses against the cultural and political forces that rage against His rule and seek to cast off all limitations and restraint.

At the same time, knowing that the ultimate issue is the recognition of Jesus as King, we will make primary use of the means of grace to enable us to live in and invite others into the abundant life that our King came to give us. Though many agendas in our day claim to be on the right side of history, we will proclaim that living rightly consists only in this: that we spend the whole of our lives in humble dependence upon King Jesus, serving Him with godly fear, rejoicing in His promises alone, and in every way setting our course by the light of explicit and un-pretended devotion to Him. We will make it our aim to persevere in the conviction that He alone shall be our refuge from all that troubles us without and disturbs us within.

3) Historical events testify to the daily *summons* to people from every nation to submit to King Jesus and serve Him as Kingdom Ambassadors of Reconciliation between the Now and the Not Yet.

Verses 10-12 of Psalm 2 declare the call of God upon the people of every nation to kiss the Son—to bow before King Jesus and submit to His authority. Outside of submission to Him there is only the threat of judgment; and who can stand before His wrath? But in submission to Him there is blessing and refuge—life to the full, forevermore. Because we have been given this life by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we now get to serve as King Jesus' ambassadors of reconciliation to a world weary of division, strife, and war.

¹ Biblical lament is a concept we are seeking as a church family to become more familiar with and better practiced in. You may find it helpful to review the *Letter on Wise Biblical Lamentation* that Cameron wrote to us last year. Find it at: www.christcommunitycobb.org/congregational-letters

This means that as we have opportunity in the midst of major historical events like the invasion of Ukraine, we will be quick to return in our thoughts and conversation to the hope of the Gospel. We will seek to be shaped by the story of redemption and encourage each other and our neighbors to see and interpret life in the Gospel's terms. Recognizing that we live in-between the Now and the Not Yet, we will seek to patiently dwell in the tension between all that we have been given and promised in King Jesus Now, and the full experience of life and peace in Him that is Not Yet but awaits us in the age to come.

At the same time, we will hold our interpretations and predictions about the long-term consequences of major historical events like the invasion of Ukraine loosely. We will recognize that, at the best of times, this side of heaven we see in a glass, darkly (**1 Cor. 13:12**). So, we will not primarily aim to be ambassadors of this or that political system, this or that foreign policy, this or that program of socio-cultural reform. Instead, we will respond to the summons to live as Kingdom Ambassadors for King Jesus; unashamed of the Gospel; modeling our attitudes and patterns of speech on the example of our gentle and humble King; and standing firm in the conviction that the part we have to play in the drama of history will last beyond this present moment and be fruitful into eternity only if it is motivated and guided by love (**1 Cor. 13:1-3**).

As we continue to navigate the complexities inherent in thinking about, discussing and responding to the invasion of Ukraine and other major historical events, may the Holy Spirit use **Psalm 2** to help us continue to bear fruit as King Jesus' ambassadors of reconciliation, for His glory, our good, and the life of the world!

In Christ,
Robby