



Last week we kicked off our summer preaching series by looking at Psalm 1, a Psalm that focuses on each of us as individuals either walking with God or away from God. In today's Psalm—Psalm 2—the same theme is carried along but instead of looking at the choices of individuals, we are looking at the large sweeping trends and behaviors of nations. The difference in these two Psalms is like the difference between the board games of *Life* and *Risk*.

In *Life* you are given a car. You fill your car with a spouse and children and you drive your car through a very small city making choices along the way. There's something comforting about this because we're given a degree of control of our fate. We make the choices and we deal with the consequence whether good or bad. This is like Psalm 1.

In the game *Risk* you zoom out and see the entire landscape of the world. Instead of a small city, we see continents. Now the choice of whether to eat dinner at the pizza parlor or the burger joint seems small and petty because larger decisions need to be made: is your nation going to war against another? How should you respond to the build-up of armies in Australia if you occupy China? What happens if you are attacked on two fronts? The fate of your nation is at stake. This is like Psalm 2.

What does this have to do with us? We're not ruling nations. Do we have a personal response to the sweeping changes we see in our nation and the nations around the world? Psalm 2 provides an answer to these questions. And while we aren't ruling nations, you'll see that our role is vital.

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" (verses 1–3).

In this first of four sections in Psalm 2, we hear the voice of a narrator pondering the foolish actions of nations: They are conspiring, plotting, rising up and banding together ... all against the anointed. In essence, this is poetically saying that the nations are rebelling against the Lord and the narrator is musing over the foolishness of this behavior. Whereas Psalm 1 described individual rebellion, Psalm 2 describes the cosmic revolt of the nations against God and his Anointed.

Have we observed this through history? Consider the Pharaohs of Egypt. They called themselves gods and ruled their nation according to their laws and desires. Consider the European Kings

during the middle ages. They called themselves divinely appointed to rule over the common people. Other nations have tried to completely eradicate God. Nazism with its occult foundation elevated the master race above all others. Communism outlawed religion with the rationale that only a fool would believe religious teachings. A so-called God had no place in their methodology where the state would be the ultimate authority and collective participation would result in the ultimate happiness for everyone.

Let's bring this closer to home. Do we see this mindset in America today? In California? On the peninsula? Fortunately we don't live in a country where our Presidents think of themselves as deities. Fortunately we don't live in a country that has outlawed religion. We live in a nation established on a high respect for God's Word and God's values. However, looking at the progression of laws and morality in our country, we see a progression away from the holiness of God.

» Since the legalization of abortion, millions of pre-born babies have been legally killed and our nation has white-washed this act in the disguise of "a woman's choice."

» Last month the Supreme Court joined 11 states in the opinion that same-sex marriage is legal and good. Anyone not celebrating the union of a same-sex couple is now considered intolerant and bigoted. Our nation is encouraging and empowering people to a lifestyle that God has said is wrong.

» We are a culture that loves entertainment-based extreme violence and self-fulfilling sexuality. So instead of protecting others and serving others like God's word instructs, we use others as objects for our own twisted pleasures.

Here we see three examples of our rulers and kings (the equivalent to our politicians or supreme court) going down the same path described in verses 1–2. In essence, they are saying the same thing as the people in verse 3, "**Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.**"

This phrase is saying, "Let us break the chains and shackles of God's limitations and God's Word. God is restricting us. Let's live life like we want. Let us determine what's right and wrong. Let's move past our traditional, moralistic past and evolve in our thinking."

In response to these behaviors and opinions of the nations, God speaks next in this Psalm, after the narrator sets Him up.

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" (verses 4–6).

"One" is capitalized here because the reference is clearly being made to God. Note that there is only one who truly rules over everything. In verses 1–2 all the references to the people who are rebelling are plural. The peoples are scurrying and busy and planning. Yet there is one who is over it all, watching from his throne in heaven.

What is God's reaction to the rebellion of the nations? He does not tremble. He is not intimidated. He feels no threat to his reign as the Sovereign. He simply laughs. This is the only reference in the Bible to God laughing and it's not a pleasant laugh. It's a laugh of derision. It's a laugh of scoffing. This is what humans who attempt to throw off God's rule deserve.

Going back to the game of *Risk*, the rebellion of mankind would be like characters on the game board saying, "We want to do things our way." "We make the rules, not you." "We know what's best; we're the ones down here, by the way. Forget you." "We're not doing things your way anymore." "We will make ourselves gods." "There is no one out there ruling over the game. On one exists."

That's ridiculous, isn't it. What would you do in response to such rebellion?

God laughs at the prideful foolishness. Then He speaks in order to rebuke them and terrify them. He tells them, "***I have set up my King on Zion, my holy mountain.***" This king is the same person called "my Anointed" back in verse 2. He is the ruler the nations are rebelling against. Who is this king, this anointed one? The next section of this Psalm gives us the answer.

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" (verses 7–9).

In the first phrase God the Father says, "***You are my son,***" an identical phrase used in the New Testament two times. At Jesus' baptism and transfiguration God speaks, "***This is my Son, whom I love***" in Matthew 3:17, 17:5. This anointed One, this king that the nations are rebelling against is Jesus Christ.

The second phrase, "***today I have become your father***" is referencing the functional relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. There is a special connection between the two. God has full and perfect affection for the Son and the Son has the full and privileged access to the Father.

And with this full and privileged access, Jesus can have the rebellious nations as his inheritance. Meaning that Jesus can have the

world-wide nations, from the beginning of history until the end of time, as his inheritance.

Jesus' power to convert will be so strong that he will be able to break their rock-hard hearts. In fact, Jesus will break them so easily, although they think of themselves as strong, they'll break as easily as a piece of common pottery.

Friday night at his memorial service we celebrated the life of Pastor Steve Aurell. It was said in the service that Steve was a trophy for God. And this Psalm came to my mind. He was a man who had a rock-hard heart for over half his life and when he encountered Jesus, it was like Jesus was a rod of iron and Steve a piece of pottery. Jesus won and Steve broke.

Chuck Colson is another example. Colson was known as the hard-nosed "hatchet man" in President Nixon's administration—a man who was, in his own words, willing to be "ruthless in getting things done." His list of skeptics was quite long. At 41 years old he was at the top of the world, but he knew something was missing. Chuck remembers sitting in his White House office day after day in late 1972, looking out over the beautifully-manicured south lawn, and wondering what life was about.

Soon after, he left the White House to resume his private legal practice. He was meeting with Tom Phillips, president of Raytheon Corporation, and he noticed that Tom seemed more at peace than in the past. When he asked why, Tom said he had given his life to Christ. Two years later, in 1974, when Chuck's world turned upside down from the Watergate investigations and it looked like he might be sent to prison, he met with Phillips again to hear more of the story.

In that meeting Phillips read this section from C.S. Lewis' book, *Mere Christianity*: "There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. ... There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves ... The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility."

Hearing these words, Colson knew, "it was me Lewis was writing about." As he started to drive away from Phillips' home that night, he stopped the car and cried out to God to forgive his sins. (King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 is another great example you might want to read this coming week.)

No matter how powerful a person is, Jesus is more powerful and history is full of supernatural stories of prideful, strong leaders being humbled by Jesus Christ, the Anointed King who rules everyone.

In the last section of this Psalm the narrator provides his parting advice. Imagine that we are overlooking the nations of the world

like we look at this *Risk* board. We are distanced from the day-to-day details, looking at the large scope of the nations.

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 (verses 10–12).

As I ponder these final words and this perspective, I think of this: The eternal reign of King Jesus will not be thwarted. Oh yes, nations will rise that will rebel against Jesus and they might flourish for a while. Schools will remove God from the classroom. Businesses will remove Jesus from Christmas. Cities will remove God's 10 Commandments from public buildings. Legislatures will remove God from laws.

But not forever. If a person were to only look at one of these situations for a small span of years, it would appear that those who rebel against God are just fine. They are not. They are walking down a path that will bring God's wrath. They are, as Psalm 1 says, *"like chaff that the winds blows away."*

The other option given in verse 11 is to serve the Lord and celebrate His rule. Doing this, as verse 12 says, brings God's blessing.

In the beginning I asked, "What is our personal response to the sweeping changes we see in our nation and the nations around the world based upon Psalm 2?"

Sow spiritual seeds, unashamedly. Because the Peninsula is 95% unsaved, the spiritual darkness is palpable. The attitudes of people, their values, their beliefs are not like a follower of Jesus Christ. In this environment, sowing spiritual seeds can be confusing sometimes. Can you think of a situation when a co-worker started a conversation that you felt was inappropriate for you to be a part of and you were unsure if you should stay and listen or walk away? What do you do when non-Christians talk like a non-Christian? How do you show them that Jesus loves them just as they are? Walk away or stay?

I want people to like me and I want to influence people, so I ask myself these kinds of questions. My new approach is this: to respond to their sin with grace and tact while boldly sowing spiritual seeds. Pray for Jesus to win the hearts of your friends and your authorities. If you are in a position of authority, lead and set up policies that glorify God—your obedience of walking the path of righteousness is not only for you, as described in Psalm 1; Psalm 2 tells us it is also for the benefit of others. Leading like God will benefit others. Speak words of truth whenever you can.

Don't take it personally when people reject God. Psalm 2 is clear that Jesus is the Eternal King. The ultimate Righteous One. As a follower of Him, people are rejecting Him, not you. You stand with a huge group of prestigious people who have also been rejected because they stood up for Jesus too. Give them the

room to reject Jesus. It's very rare on the Peninsula for a person to become a follower of Jesus Christ from one conversation. It takes time, a lot of talking and a lot of them rejecting Jesus. Perhaps even your own story follows that pattern. In Jesus' time, every knee will bow to him and every tongue will confess that he is the King of Everything.

Trust God's sovereign reign. It won't take long for worry and anxiety to claim your heart as you take in the news. Our world, our country and our state is filled with so much rebellion against God. If a Godly outcome were our ultimate responsibility, we should be worried, maybe freaked out! But a Godly outcome is not our ultimate responsibility; it's Jesus's. He is the King and He knows how to rule because He's a perfect King.

Plead with God for our leaders... that they would know the emptiness of life without Jesus Christ; that God would use a Christian they know to speak up; that God would speak supernaturally if no Christians are there.

If you want America to be a Christian nation, release the hope to God. Maybe it will happen, maybe it won't. If it does happen, it will only occur through a spiritual revival.

In a 2010 blog in *The Huffington Post*, writer John Shore posted this article, which I'd like to end with.

I, a Rabid anti-Christian, Very Suddenly Convert

The split-second before I very suddenly became a Christian, I couldn't possibly have been less of a Christian. If anything, I was anti-Christian. The religion struck me as ridiculously immature, a way-too-obvious system designed mostly to capitalize on people's guilt: Big Daddy in the Sky knows you did wrong, but will love you anyway if you'll only admit that he's perfection itself, and that you're a wretched, sickening sack of sin.

Then one day I was sitting at my desk at work during a totally typical weekday, feeling regretful about a particularly immature, semi-destructive thing I'd recently done, when this feeling started coming over me that in about four seconds had my undivided attention.

"What the hell?" I thought. The next thing I knew, I was very nearly desperate to be alone somewhere. It felt like warm water was filling me up inside -- but downward, starting at just beneath my scalp. Right about when the "water" had moved from my neck to my chest, I knew that whatever was happening to me wasn't going to stop.

And I could tell it was something spiritual, or psychological -- or something basically non-physical.

"I'll be right back," I said to a co-worker -- and then cut out for an auxiliary supply closet in our office that no one ever used. I flipped on its light, closed its door behind me, and waited.

And what happened, rather all at once, was that I saw what a complete a----e I was. Isn't that awful? All at once, the truth was before me that instead of being a good guy who's basically always trying to do the right thing, I was a selfish, emotional weakling who was always doing and saying whatever best served my own needs at the time.

I hate it when my whole view of myself is suddenly deconstructed and replaced by a view of myself that is so not what I expected.

I hate it when in one second I go from being Batman to being the Penguin.

Actually, though, that wasn't the worst part. By far.

The worst part was that, accompanying that less-than-peachy view of myself, was the very real knowledge that I was never, ever, ever going to change.

Ever. Never. Ever.

I was born as I was. I had spent my life as I was. And I would die as I'd always been: small, selfish, and mean as a pissed-off penguin.

And there was absolutely nothing I could do about it.

I'd already spent my whole life trying to. Miserable mediocrity was the best I could do. I could achieve that only when I'd somehow pulled it together enough not to be a completely craven animal.

On a good day I was the Penguin!

And then here's what happened: I saw my death. I mean, I didn't see myself writhing around after I'd been hit by a truck on the freeway or anything -- I didn't see how I would die. But I did see, in a sort of direct, open tunnel, the disturbingly short distance between where I was, and where I was most certainly going. I saw my mortality. I saw the simple fact that I would die -- and that, as surely as one day follows the next, at the moment of my death I wouldn't be any different from how I'd been at any other moment of my life.

I wasn't going to get better. I wasn't going to become stronger, or wiser, or smarter, or more honorable. It just wasn't going to happen. I was thirty-eight. I was who I'd die being. At best.

Oh, but that was a bad, bad moment for me.

And then my legs disappeared from underneath me. I actually fell on my knees.

In the supply closet.

At my job.

Looking at my miserable, weak future, straight to my miserable, means-nothing death. It was just me and the cold, hard, gray, flat fact of ... me. Which was never going to change. I just did not have the will or means or character to change who I was, which was exactly who I'd always been.

I saw that my life, in any way that could possibly matter, was over.

Then I did something I never, ever do. I started to cry.

Because isn't the whole point of being alive to be someone you'd really want to be?

And what that voice said, from up and off to my left somewhere -- from offstage, as it were -- was, "Isn't this what Jesus is for?"

And just like that, I stopped crying.

And do you know what I knew at that moment -- what instantly imprinted itself upon me? That the story of Jesus is historically true. That it happened. That God, desiring above all else to show the people he'd created that he loved them, became a human, and came to earth, and sacrificed himself, and in every way did every thing he possibly could to show people exactly how deeply and terribly he loves them.

That's what my conversion consisted of: a sudden, sure knowledge that the historical story of Christ is true.

It wasn't, like, wisdom at all. I wasn't suddenly filled with the Mind of God, or anything like that. My soul didn't light up. Angels didn't sing for me. Nothing like that happened. In a way, it was about as boring as learning the year house paint was invented, or that your bank has slightly altered its Saturday hours. All that had changed was that I was now sure that the story of Christ, about which I had always scoffed (if I ever thought of it at all), was true.

Then it was like how, when it starts to rain, you think about the only thing you can think, which is: "Oh. Now everything will get wet."

That's about what I thought: "Oh. Now I'm a Christian."

So I stood, wiped my eyes, opened the door to the supply closet, and went back to work.

And that was that.

One of the responses he got to that blog was from a gentleman named Brent:

You claim that anyone who does not acknowledge the absence of this magic in their lives is lying to themselves. The reality is much more boring than that. I simply don't believe it exists.

How can I "miss" something that does not exist?

In any case, I am glad that your magic has made you happy. As another commenter said earlier, just keep it out of our laws and my kid's school and we'll be fine. :)

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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