

What Makes God Laugh?

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[0 : 0 0] Well, wonderful. Let me encourage you to grab a Bible or get the Word of God on your phone, whatever it is you do, and turn with me to Psalm chapter 2. Psalm 2, this is where we're going to be this morning, so let me encourage you to do everything that you can to get God's Word in front of you.

And as you're turning there, let me tell you about three things that I've watched over the last few weeks, and then I'm going to tell you what connects them. So here's the three things. Firstly, Michael McIntyre's Saturday night show on BBC One.

Secondly, a video that's doing the rounds on social media of a vicar trying to play good King Wenceslas on an out-of-tune octopus.

And number three, Manchester United's defence. So you say, what on earth connects those three things? Here's the thing that connects them really simply.

All three of them recently have made me laugh. Right? Made me laugh. Especially that last one, right? That defence thing of beauty.

[1 : 1 2] So here's a little bit of mental exercise for you to do as we begin. Here's what I want you to think about. What is it that makes you laugh? What is it that makes you laugh? Maybe you want to turn to the person next to you on the sofa, whatever you're doing this morning.

Tell them what makes you laugh. What makes you laugh? Takes us wonderfully into this psalm today. A central question that we're going to think about today.

And it's a question you've never maybe thought about in your life before. And it's this. Right? What makes God laugh? What makes God laugh?

You ever thought about it before? The thing about this psalm, which I find fascinating, is that God is described as laughing.

Is that not interesting? God is laughing. Why is he laughing? Let's read and see, shall we? Psalm chapter 2, beginning at verse 1. Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

[2 : 1 8] 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.

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. Therefore, you kings, be wise. Be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear. Serve the Lord with fear. And celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son or he will be angry.

[3 : 36] 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.

So did you see it? Did you see God laughing? Why is he laughing? Well, let's get into this, Sam. Here's the scene on earth. We learn from Acts 4 that this is David writing in his role as the king of Israel.

And because of that, here's what's going on in the back of David's mind, I imagine. He's got in the back of his mind that the covenant promises that the Lord made to him as king that we can read about in 2 Samuel 7.

Maybe you want to go and do that in your own time after this is finished. It's such a significant part of the Bible. These promises that God will establish one of his sons as king forever.

Whoever, whose rule will bring peace, whose rule will bring rest, and who will build a house for God. And God will be a father to him.

[4 : 47] And he will be a son to God. And you see, David's reflecting. He's rejoicing in these promises. He says, yes, Lord, this is what you said is going to happen.

This is what you said is true. And yet, if that's the thing in the back of his mind, here's what he's seeing in front of his eyes. And it's a world which wants nothing to do with loving and serving and knowing this God.

And wants absolutely nothing to do with bowing the knee and following his king. And here's what they're saying in verse 3. Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

I mean, do you feel that imagery? Do you see what's going on there? What are they saying? They're saying, let's get rid of God and his king. Who is this God that he thinks he can tell us how to live our lives?

Who is this king that we have to submit and go with him, thinking he can lead us into what's best for us? This is the kings and the rulers of the world who are speaking. But I think we've got to see that this is all of us.

[5 : 59] You know, I remember when I was at school, every year, maybe you're like me, every year, we would have the entire school photograph. What would happen is a few weeks later, there'd be a rumor that we'd go around the corridors of the school.

The whispers would go around that the photo was out. So we'd all sprint along the corridor before we'd be told to stop and walk. And we'd eventually get there. The photo was there. Pried a place on the wall.

Sure enough, there it was. All it was was a sea, organized sea. I'll give you that. But a sea of just 800 to 1,000 faces. Tiny little faces. And the challenge was, when you got your place at the front, the challenge was, the game was, to find your face.

Find your face. You looked hard enough at it. For long enough at it, you'd find it. You'd find it. And it's almost as if the psalmist here, he gives us the picture of the world.

Here's the world photograph. And he says, have a look and find your face. See your face. Right?

[7 : 05] Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles. Friends, this is the default song of the human heart. And it's your song right now if you are going against this God and against his king.

Right? Got me thinking of those words. What was it that Freddie Mercury sang back in the day? I want to break free. I want to break free. I want to break free from your lives. God knows.

God knows. I want to break free. And the thing is, God does know. He does know. And David knows. And he feels this as well. He feels the hostility that's coming at him.

Right? Do you hear the pain in his voice? The first and the last word, the first one. Why? Why? Why do the nations conspire and the people's plot in vain?

See the book end there? As if they say, what are you doing? Do you not see the futility of this? I don't understand this. Oh, that you would see, like I do, that a life lived in loving submission to this God, knowing him, is precisely where we will find life in all its fullness.

[8 : 09] The one that we long for, the one that we were designed to live and know. That's the cords that this world is trying to break off. And what we need to see and understand is that these cords of grace, they are cords of grace and love.

You see, that's the scene on earth. Here's a world that's in rebellion against this God, and the psalm moves from the scene on earth to the response from heaven. All right, come with me.

Verse 4. The one enthroned in heaven. That's where God is. There he is. It's his domain, his space. The one enthroned in heaven laughs. So here's God laughing.

What's he laughing at? He's laughing at this scene that he's seeing playing out in the world. Right? Not a kind of ha-ha, kind of laugh. Like Tim Vines just rocked up the heaven's pearly gates, and he's cracking a few funnies.

No, we're to picture God, I take it, like a parent who is staring down at their tantruming child, who's just aggressively hitting their fists in anger into their stomach.

[9 : 18] Right? Just going at their stomach. And the parent's stooping down and watching this, and he's almost smirking at the ridiculousness of it all. Verse 6.

To this scene, God thunders his response to the arrogance of man and says, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.

So this is God's response to what's going on on earth. God is saying that he is going to vindicate and establish his king in front of the watching world, that will once and for all confirm that his plans and purposes that will come to pass through and in this king will not be stopped and will never be thwarted.

In other words, God's going to make a statement. We use that term, don't we, all the time in our world. Talk about making a statement.

Right? We talk about fashion statement. We talk about a mission statement, a political statement when we're going public with something. Well, heaven's statement will come when God establishes his king on his holy hill.

[10 : 41] And we've got to understand that these promises here that David's reflecting on, that they're almost too big for his reign. And he's the best of the best in terms of Israel's king. These promises are too big for his reign.

And it's Jesus Christ then who steps straight into all the promises and the explosive potential that's tied up in the truth about the king of this psalm.

Jesus Christ. What we think about at Christmastime from the line of David. Stepping into these promises. He came. He lived among us.

I love those verses that we get at the beginning of John and his prologue. Full of grace and truth. This is Jesus Christ. Here is heaven's king. His life of service.

His life of humility. His life of love. That we want to know what this God is like. We look at his king. We look at Christ. And at his baptism. The very words of verse 7 here.

[11 : 41] Here is my son declares heaven of Jesus. At his baptism. And again it is transfiguration. God declares. Here is my son. Listen to him.

Here is the perfect king that Israel never had. A life of perfect obedience. Of faithfulness to the word of the Lord.

As he leads God's people. In all out worship of Yahweh. Do you see how the king of Psalm 2. He's got to have a heart like the man of Psalm 1. Heaven's king came.

Heaven's king crucified. Christ died. The king who would go into battle for his people against their biggest enemy of sin and of death. And who shares his triumph with all those who would look to him as their king and as their saviour.

And heaven's king risen. We're not dealing in myths here friends. We're dealing in historical facts. Historical facts.

[12 : 47] There's eyewitnesses. There's testimony to this stuff that Paul would write at the beginning of Romans. That Jesus was declared to be the son of God in power. At his resurrection.

And Christ ascended. To the right hand of the father in heaven. So when God says. Here that he will set his king on his hill.

He is meaning that he will fix him there. In front of the world. Heaven's statement. Is going to be the risen king. The triumphant king. And that's the language of something solid.

And that is the language of something unchangeable. As God establishes his king. You know our girls came up to my office on. I think it was Tuesday of this week. Daddy, daddy, daddy.

Come and see the snowman that we've built. Right. Came down. So impressed. Right. The works they've given the snowman. Right. A hat. A scarf.

[13 : 43] Stones for eyes. Little smile. Carrot for a nose. They've given this thing the works. Was so impressed. Pride of place in the center of our garden. And do you know it's still there.

It's hung around for a few days. Given the snow. It's a bit icy now. But even I can see friends. That given a few hours of rain this morning. I just can watch the thing.

Begin to disappear. You know. Give it a few more days. I'm sure that thing will be completely gone. Now how often is it in our lives. That we spend ages.

Building. And accumulating. And molding. And dreaming of things. That will end up just like the snow. Looking for something solid and certain.

To build your life upon. Looking for something that won't fade away. Think. Looking for something that won't change. With the seasons. We've got to see in this psalm.

[14 : 41] What could be more solid. Than a man. Than a king. Who was verifiably dead. And who came back to life again.

You see. Heaven's answer to the scene on earth. Is the risen. And the ruling. King. Jesus. And he is the one. Who will usher in the age.

Of God's promise to Abraham. That he will bless the peoples of the world. You see the language there. The world. The nations. The peoples of the world. Coming to have life.

In this king. That's what's going on in verse 8. Ask me. And I will make the nations your inheritance. And the ends of the earth your possession. As people the world over. Have their eyes opened.

And become. Alive. By God's spirit. And they pour in to know this king. Welcomed in his family. No forgiveness. Know what it is. The joy of being right.

[15 : 41] Declared right with this God. Through the person and the work of heaven's conquering king. God set his king. On Zion's holy hill.

And so just. As we respond to what we've heard. And maybe as we make our way through. The final last few verses. I just want to ask you two questions. As we respond.

Here's the first one. Do some of us here today. Watching this. Do some of us need to bow down. You see verse 10. The psalmist says.

In light of what God will do. He says. Here's the call. Be wise. In light of what God will do. Your response. Be wise. Make the right response. You know. It was in 1882.

That Friedrich Nietzsche. Famously. Famously. Hedalded. That God is dead. God is dead. Right. Because at the time. It seemed only logical to him.

[16 : 36] That there would inevitably come a day. When there would be no place for Christian belief. In a post-enlightenment world. Well 139 years on. As we've ticked over to another year.

I guess it's a good time to ask. A year. When many of us will be doing our annual reviews. We've got to ask ourselves. How that prediction is going. How is that going? You know.

And in the same week. That one of our national newspapers. The Times ran with the. Headline article. Simply said. Teenagers turn to God during pandemic.

Friends. How is that going? How is that prediction going? Maybe read. I don't know if you've. Been on social media today. Over the last few days. That article that came out. That says that scientists.

Have declared that. The reason that we've lasted so long. Is humanity. Is simply because of luck. Find that intellectually satisfying. Again friends. How is that going? How is that going?

[17 : 31] Here's the prediction. Here's. What Psalm 2 is telling us. Right. That Jesus is not some kind of. Skittle in a bowling alley. And it's only a matter of time.

Before the right person. With the right ball. Comes forward. Takes aim. Looks at it. And throws it. Knocks him over. And bang. We've got a strike. No. Psalm 2 tells us.

That because this king lives. This God. Will never be thwarted. In achieving his purposes. And so the invitation. At verse 11. Is to. Serve.

The Lord with fear. And celebrate. Or rejoice. His rule. With trembling. That's a strange concoction. Of words. Is it not? Celebrate with trembling.

But it's the joyous confession. Of everyone. Who has accepted Jesus. And knows the joy. Of knowing him. And who he is. Right.

[18 : 27] He is my Lord. That's the confession. And I take it friends. That we should always keep the emphasis. On those two words. At the end. Right. He is my Lord. But he is my Lord.

And it's a joy. To serve him. With my life. You know the famous words. Of William. Kuiper. To see the law. By Christ. Fulfilled.

To hear his pardoning voice. Changes a slave. Into a child. And duty. Into choice. The psalm invites us. To come and kiss the son.

Right. The image there is. Of bowing. Before the king. Of coming. And pledging your allegiance. To him. I think quite literally. Kissing the ring. That's on his finger. Because of who he is.

You know. There's a sign above the door. As you enter. Barony Castle Hotel. Down in Peebles. And it simply says. Prepare to meet thy maker. Right.

[19 : 26] I googled it this week. To see if I could find out. The origins of that saying. And I couldn't find a thing. So maybe if you know. You could enlighten me. After this. But what I did find. Is a lady on TripAdvisor joke. About how she was so glad.

Relieved to find out. That was nothing to do. With the food. But that is the warning. Of this psalm. Isn't it? One day we will meet our maker. One day we will have to answer.

To heaven's king. Kiss his son. Or he will be angry. And your way will lead to destruction. For his wrath can flare up. In a moment.

Now for God to be angry. It's not for him to fly off the handles. Or lose the rag. Phrases that we would use. To describe what we would do. It is his settled opposition.

Because of who he is. To all the evil in our world. Now some of us might not like that idea. Of God being angry. But let me plead with us friends.

[20 : 22] If you think about it. That is good news. I take it in our world. Where we are so often rightly angry. At the kidnapping of Nigerian school children.

At people like Harvey Weinstein. And Kevin Spacey. That God is right to be angry. At all the evil. And proud rebellion against him. And his ways in this world.

I mean what kind of God would he be? Think about it. What kind of God would he be if he wasn't? Do some of us need to bow down. To heaven's king. And secondly.

Do some of us need to look up. For the Christian. Here watching us today. Do you need to take stock again. Of who and where your king is.

Right. The king who loves you. Loves you. The king who shed his blood. And who is for you. In heaven.

[21 : 23] At the right hand of God. The king who is praying for you. The king who is all out in his service of you. The king who along with his father. Has given you the Holy Spirit.

To help you. So friends. Here's what we need to do. If that's you here today. Whatever's going on in your life. Know where he is. And know who he is. Friends. We stumble all the time.

He's on his holy hill. We don't have the mental resolve. To face another day in the office. Or to face another day in the house.

Friends. He's on his holy hill. When we are simply emotionally. And physically spent. And we're all out of resources. He's on his holy hill.

When we're facing our darkest hour. Friends. He's on his holy hill. And when even we are on death's doorstep. As Psalm 23 would say.

[22 : 19] The valley of the shadow of death. We need to know. That he is on his holy hill. It's where he is. It's who he is. He's on his holy hill.

I know this psalm is often quoted in the New Testament. One of those places. Is in Acts chapter 5. Right. And the context is that Peter and John. These common men.

With nothing going for them really. Have just been beaten up. Because through them. The risen Jesus has healed a man. And as they feel the blows.

And as they get up. And dust themselves down. They recognize that what they are experiencing. On account of their association with Jesus. They are experiencing the hostility.

That's outlined against God's king. In Psalm chapter 2. In other words. That they recognize. They sense that they are living this. And they go back to their believers. And they fall on their knees.

[23 : 13] And what do they pray? And we fully expect them to pray. Lord protect us. God stop this. But what do they pray? They pray for more boldness. They pray. Lord.

Who is sovereign above all. Help us to keep on. Telling people about Jesus. Quite literally. Let us keep on speaking the word of God. Friends.

That is. What they pray. Why do they pray? Because they realize. That there is a man who is risen from the dead. They realize. That Christ is ascended.

To the right hand of the father. And let me just say. That is our confidence in evangelism. That is our confidence in evangelism. That is why we keep on speaking. Because it's not primarily about who we are.

Right. In our ability. To craft a conversation. In our ability to know the tricks of the trade. In our ability to put on a good show. Right. Let me just tell you. Netflix. What is it?

[24 : 12] \$6.99 a month. Full of better shows than we can put on. What we have to offer to the world. Is the news. Of the king who is on his holy hill. And our confidence.

Is in God's risen king. And our confidence. Is in this God who is sovereign. And our confidence. Is in the fact that nothing will stop him. Accomplishing his purposes. Of drawing people around the world to himself.

As his word goes forth. You know I read a story a few months ago. From a man in the states. Called Jonathan Lehman. And he was telling a story.

About a Muslim man. Called Richard. Who lived in a part of Nigeria. That was dominated by Islam. One day. A Christian friend.

Gives Richard a Bible. Now Richard. As you can understand. Wants nothing to do with it. Nothing to do with it. Throws it in his room. Throws it to the side. But when he did feel it. He realized.

[25 : 09] That it was actually made of really good quality paper. In fact it was made of the kind of paper. That he would use. He would roll up. And use as a smoke. So what he does. Is he tears off some of it. Rips it up.

Puts it in his back pocket. And gets on with his day. Comes to that evening. He can't get to sleep. So he pulls it out of his pocket. Fully intent on using it for a smoke.

And he unravels it. And he reads the words of Psalm 34. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Right. Taste and see that the Lord is good. And for the next few days.

He cannot get those words out his head. Right. Just his head is like a pinball machine. And the wee pinball is going about. Cannot get those words out his head. Taste and see that the Lord is good. So he hunts down this Christian friend.

That gave him the Bible. And he says. You need to explain to me what that means. And so his friend tells him about Jesus. And that night Richard gets home. He falls on his knees. And he prays.

[26 : 01] God help me to taste. And see that you are good. And that very night he accepts Jesus into his life. Because he becomes his disciple. And the reason that Jonathan Lehman can tell that story.

Is because the pair of them were good friends. At Bible College in America. Because Richard and his family. Given what they'd done. Needed to flee. To get over to the US.

Flee from their country. Friends let me just ask you. Why do the guys at Edinburgh CU have any hope of achieving anything this month? Despite the opposition that will come at them.

And does around the campuses around the country. Why have any confidence? Why do we as a church have any confidence as we journey into this year? That people will come to know Jesus. And the Lord will do amazing things through us.

Why do we have any confidence that that will happen? Because God seated his king. On his holy hill. And this God is sovereign.

[26 : 59] And nothing will stop him. Accomplishing his purposes. Of drawing people to himself. As we take his word. And as his word goes forth.

It will not return to him empty. So does some of us need to look up. And remember who our God is. And see Jesus the king on his holy hill.

So Michael McIntyre's big show on a Saturday night BBC One. A video of a vicar doing the rounds on social media. Attempting to play good king Wenceslas in an out-of-tune octopus.

A Manchester United's defence. Friends what makes you laugh? More importantly what makes God laugh? The answer that Psalm 2 gives us.

Is that God laughs. At anybody who thinks that they can stand against him. And stop him from accomplishing his purposes. Through and in. His risen and his ruling king.

[28 : 01] Jesus Christ. And so blessed are all. Who take refuge. In him. Let's pray together. Amen. Heavenly Father.

We thank you so much for your word. That you are a God who has revealed yourself. And thank you so much for the wonderful truths of Psalm 2. And I pray that as your word has gone forth this morning.

And whoever is watching this. And whatever is going on in their lives. Father that you would. By your spirit. Encourage. And challenge. And comfort.

And perhaps even for the first time today. Break into somebody's life. And that they might know the good news of Jesus Christ. So Father we praise you that you are this kind of God.

And help us Lord. Lift our eyes. To look to you. By looking to your son Jesus. And we pray these things in his precious. And in his worthy and conquering name.

[29 : 06] Amen.