

The Thing That Never Changes

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[0:00] Okay, folks, have we got Sam 2 open in front of us? Yeah. This is golden. And this is just what we need at the start of the year as we set out as a local church. Because this gives us a wonderful vision of the kingship of Jesus.

And there's nothing else that we need more this morning than a greater view of who he is. So here is Jeff Bozos. Is that how you say his name?

I'm never sure. The owner of Amazon. One of the richest men in the world. And he's actually considered one of the smartest men in the world. And he did an interview recently with the Harvard Review.

And he said this in the review. He said, people always ask me, what I think is going to change most in the next 10 years? To be honest, I'd probably ask the guy that question I've ever met.

What do you think is going to change most in the next 10 years? And my wallet would be listening to his answer. But here's what he went on to say in this interview. He said, no one ever asks me what's not going to change in the next 10 years.

[1:07] Because you find that answer to that question, what's not going to change over the next 10 years. And that's a place to ground your life. He said this, let me put it to you, that when it comes to building a business, that the answer to the second question is way more important than the answer to the first.

Fascinating, isn't it? And it makes complete sense, logical sense when you think about it. It's not rocket science to build our lives on the things that aren't going to change.

Which takes me right to Psalm chapter 2. Psalm 2. This has become one of the most precious texts in the Bible for me. And my weary soul that so often drifts and doubts.

Because this is all about the one thing this year that's not going to change. And the invitation here is to come and see what God has done. And build your life on it.

And it's not so much an invitation, actually it's a declaration to the world about the kingship of Jesus. Because in a world that seems increasingly chaotic, day by day it seems to be that, isn't it?

[2:23] Increasingly chaotic. And in a culture that seems angry or sometimes just plain indifferent to the Christian faith, particularly this time of year, my soul needs to know what Psalm chapter 2 has to say to us.

So come and warm yourself by the fire of this psalm. And take a huge breath. Huge gulp of air of the thing that it's telling us.

So why don't we read it together and then we'll get into this together. Here's the one thing that's not going to change in this psalm. See if you can spot it. Psalm chapter 2 says this. 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.

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.

[3 : 39] 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 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. And God will bless the reading of his word this morning.

Friends, here's two things that this psalm has for us. Two big lessons. Here's number one. It's that the world's rebellion is not unexpected.

[4 : 42] So Acts 5 tells us that this is David writing this psalm in his role as the king of Israel. You might not see that. You might not see any kind of author underneath the psalm, but that's what Acts 5 tells us.

This is David writing. And that's not just a throwaway comment. It's actually really important for understanding the psalm and everything it's got to teach us. David's writing this as the king of Israel.

What that means is that in the back of his mind, he has the promises, the covenant promises that God made to him in 2 Samuel chapter 7.

Now that's a massive chapter of the Bible. Here it is. It's the promises that God makes to David. That God will establish one of his kings, one of his sons rather, as king forever.

This is what God promises David. And his rule will bring peace. And it will bring rest. And God will be to him like a father.

[5 : 44] And he will be like a son to God. And David's mulling on these wonderful promises that God makes to him. But you see, if that's what's in the back of his mind as he writes this, see what he sees in front of his eyes.

He's looking on at a world that wants nothing to do with the Lord. Do you see it? Verse 3, come and see it. This world wants nothing to do with God and it wants nothing to do with following his king.

It's why we get the word against twice there. Do you see? It just means downright hostility. Verse 3, here's what they're saying. Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.

Do you feel that imagery? It's a fist shaking in the direction of God. That's what's going on here. Let's get rid of God. Who is this God thinking that he can tell us how to live our lives?

And here the puzzled pain in David's voice. What does he say? Do you see the word that comes up there? Why? Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

[6 : 58] So David looks on what's seen on earth and the rebellion that's happening against God and he's saying, what are you doing? Do you see the vanity? Do you see the futility of it all? Oh, that you would see that life lived in loving submission to this God is precisely where we'll all find the very fullness of life that we crave and that we long for and the one that we were created to know.

Oh, that you would see that the cords that you are trying to throw off are cords of grace and of love. And that's the scene that David sees on earth. And then we get the response from heaven.

Do you see it? And this is the second big lesson that this psalm has to teach us. The world's rebellion is not unexpected. But friends, the throne of heaven is not unoccupied.

Have a look at verse four. Come with me. Do you see it? Now, here's a question for you. Have you ever wondered what makes God laugh? Probably didn't come up around the Christmas table conversation, did it?

But have you ever wondered it? What makes God laugh? And this is your answer. And it's not a ha-ha kind of laugh like Peter Kay's just rocked up at heaven's gates and told a few funnies.

[8 : 21] This is more like a parent staring down at a tantruming child who's hitting their fists in anger into their stomach and they're smirking at the sheer ridiculousness of it all.

That's what God makes of this scene on earth. Do you see verse six? God thunders his response to the arrogance of man. What does he say? He says, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.

So God's reaction, what God's going to do in response to the scene on earth is to vindicate and establish his king in front of the watching world.

And in so doing, he's going to confirm once and for all that his plans and purposes since from all eternity will never be stopped.

In other words, God's going to make a statement to the world and his statement will come when he establishes, do you see the language here? You've got to see it. He establishes his king on his holy hill.

[9 : 33] So God's response to the rebellion on earth is to establish his king on his holy hill. You with me so far? This is about to really heat up. So you've got to get with me, yeah? This is what God's going to do.

But the thing is, David's saying this and I probably imagine he's thinking to himself, this is way too big for me. Way too big for me. And it's Jesus Christ who steps into all the promises and all the potential that's tied up in the true king of this psalm.

He is the king from the line of David. At his baptism, and we're going to see this in a few weeks time as we get into Matthew, at his baptism, God the Father uttered the very words of verse seven there.

Do you see it? Here is my son. Again at the transfiguration, here is my son. Listen to him. King Jesus.

Four things we need to know about King Jesus. Four quick headlines. Number one, heaven's king lived. Jesus is the perfect king that Israel never had.

[10 : 45] Perfect in his faithfulness. Perfect in his obedience. Perfect in his righteousness. If you scan your eye back to Psalm chapter one, he is the Psalm one man.

Number two, heaven's king crucified. Jesus the king who went into battle for his people against their biggest enemy, sin and death, sharing his triumph with them.

Number three, heaven's king rose. Paul would write this, and we're doing it this morning at the beginning of Romans, that Jesus was declared to be the eternal son of God in power.

And number four, heaven's king ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. That's where he is right now. And so when God says that he will set his king, what it means is he will fix him there.

That's the language of something solid, something unchangeable. So heaven's answer to the scene on earth is the risen and ruling King Jesus.

[11 : 58] And he is the one who will usher in the age of God's promise to Abraham to bless the peoples of the world. Do you see the overtones of that in verse eight? Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

See, if you're a Christian here this morning, have you ever thought about the fact that you are part of the inheritance? People of the world coming to know Christ for themselves, finding life in his name, forgiveness in life.

You are part of this inheritance. We are part of this inheritance. to be declared right with this God, to be welcomed into his family through the person and work of heaven's all-conquering king.

Do you see the scene on earth? The world's rebellion is not unexpected, but the throne of heaven is not unoccupied. And so see, as we just make our way through these last couple of verses, let me just change the angle a little bit and just throw out to us two questions for us to think about.

Here's the first one. Friends, do some of us need to bow down? Have a look at verse 10. You see, we are living in a day when we're not short on information.

[13:22] You know, I read a stat the other day that 500 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every single minute. we're not short on information in our world.

You can Google anything and it will give you an answer to anything. But we are short on our world, in our world, on wisdom.

With the facts that we have making the correct decision. And of course, what are Psalms 1 and 2? They're often called the gateway to the Psalms. Offering us that worldview, offering us that perspective, that pair of glasses that we can take, put on, and walk through the rest of life that the Psalms present us with with them on.

The Psalmist says, in light of what God will do, in light of the fact that he's seated as king on his holy hill, be wise. Respond rightly to what he has done.

Do you know it was in 1882 that Nietzsche famously heralded the fact that God is dead? Right? 1882, because he believed that there would inevitably come a time when there'd be no place for Christian belief in a post-enlightenment world.

[14:46] But if my maths is right, forgive me if I'm not, but 143 years on, it's a good time to ask how that prediction is going.

Is it not? And to ask it in the same year that Bible sales in the UK went up 14%, did you know that? Contrasted with the wider non-fiction market which is said to be faltering, got to ask how that prediction is going.

And it's Psalm 2 that tells us that Jesus is not just some kind of skittle in a bowling alley and it's just a matter of time before the right person with the right baubles, the right thing and strike and game's over.

What Psalm 2 is telling us is that because this king lives, God will not be thwarted in accomplishing his purposes. He's not Do you see how that's the thing that's not going to change this year?

Because our king is enthroned, nothing is going to stop him accomplishing this purpose of making the nations his inheritance. Does that not encourage you in evangelism? And encourage you to keep going and witnessing to your friends and family?

[16:04] And the invitation verse 11, friends, if this is you this morning, if you think I don't know this king, would not be a great thing this year to explore. Have a look at verse 11.

Here's the invitation, the wisdom. Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

And it's a strange painting of words if you think about that, isn't it? celebrate with trembling. And yet it is the joyous confession of every Christian who has found life and joy in knowing Christ.

He is my Lord. And I take it we should put the stress on both of those words. He is my Lord, my master, my saviour. He is my Lord.

He is my personal saviour. These are personal saviour. And the image there of bowing before the king, kissing his ring is just one of pledging your total allegiance to him.

[17:15] You know, a number of years ago we used to go on a church weekend, some of you will remember this, to a place called Barony Castle down in Peebles. And there was something above the entrance of the door to Barony Castle that always made me laugh. just above the castle door, if you remember this, it just said, prepare to meet thy maker. As I really believed, I didn't have a clue what it meant, I went on Google and tried to find out, I was delighted that I had nothing to do with the foods from somebody on TripAdvisor would tell you that.

But that's the warning of this psalm, isn't it? Prepare to meet thy maker. one day we will have to answer to heaven's reigning king.

And for God to be angry is not for him to fly off the handles. That's what I do, that's what we do, isn't it?

And we have to remember that God isn't like us. God is the all-wise, God is the all-knowing, God is the all- eternal one, God is the all-just one, God is not like us.

[18:27] So for God to be angry is his settled opposition because of who he is to all the evil in the world. And I don't know how that sits in you this morning, maybe for some of us that makes us quite uncomfortable, but can I suggest that the idea of God's wrath is really good news.

I take it in our world where we are so often rightly angry at another airstrike going on in Ukraine and at people in news stories like Jeffrey Epstein, that God, and that's just the ones we know about, right?

That God is right to be angry, he is right to be against all the evil and the proud rebellion against him and his ways in the world. Flip it around, what kind of God would he be if he wasn't?

But what the psalm tells us, friends, is at the end of the day we will have to give an answer to heaven's reigning king. And the question really simply that Jesus will ask will be something like, what did you make of me?

The decision is either Jesus has taken that penalty for our sin, he has incurred God's wrath on himself in our place on the cross, either Christ has died for our sins and given us life, or we will have to pay for our sins at the end of the day in answer to him, our king.

[20:05] Verse 8, we like to think we're invincible, but in that day, bowing before King Jesus, if you don't know him, do you see the warning, verse 8? To this evil rebellion that exists, it will all be dashed to pieces like pottery.

So folks, do some of us need to bow down before heaven's king? Second question, do some of us need to look up?

And here's my hope, this strengthens many of us this morning, perhaps who are walking faithfully with this king. king. What I mean by that question is, do some of us need to recalibrate ourselves and take stock of where our king is?

The king who loves us. The king who shed his blood and is for us in heaven. The king who is there, who's praying for us. Nothing will happen to us this year out with his sovereign say so.

Along with his father, he has given the Holy Spirit and Christ is there praying for us. Do you see where your king is this morning?

[21:31] We stumble, we get weary, we fall, but he's on his holy hill interceding for us, praying for us, holding our lives. We don't have the mental resolve to face another day at work or at home.

But he's on his holy hill. When your day is at work and at home, they just feel mundane, they feel pointless, you think, what's the point in going on?

He's on his holy hill. When we're facing our darkest hour, he's on his holy hill. When we feel like we can't go on another day, he's on his holy hill.

When opposition comes against us because we follow Christ and we don't know what's going on, it feels like the world's against us, he's on his holy hill. When that friend and family member feels indifferent to the things of the Christian faith, he's on his holy hill.

And when there's wars and chaos in the world, he's on his holy hill. Friends, you see the one thing that's not going to change this year is that he's never going to be toppled from his place in the holy hill.

[22 : 37] does that not give you great encouragement and strength to know that it's not about me, it's not about our ability to navigate our way through life, it's about who Christ is and his love for me and that nothing will separate me from his love.

You know, this psalm is often quoted, one of the places in the New Testament is Acts chapter 4. In the context, Peter and John have just been beaten up and as they feel the blows, they recognise that what they are experiencing on account of their association with Jesus is everything that's outlined in Psalm chapter 2.

They make that connection. It's amazing actually when you read it that they recognise that they are living this, they are experiencing the opposition that Psalm 2 is talking about and they pray not, Lord protect us, they pray, Lord give us more boldness to keep on speaking and you read it and you think how on earth did you get there?

Because I would be praying, Lord protect me, Lord make this stop. They pray for more power to keep speaking and going. How did you get there? The answer is that they realise that there's a man who's risen from the dead and nothing will topple him from that throne.

That's our confidence in evangelism. Friends, do you see how that's the reason we keep speaking? Do you see why it's the reason we've got any confidence this year of people coming to know Christ in our community, our friends, our neighbours, our family members, the people that you go to uni with every day, that you rub shoulders with every day at work, any confidence that God will bring some to faith.

[24 : 24] nothing to do with us, we've just been faithful and doing the job that Christ has asked us to do. It's not in our ability to put on a good show, it's not in our ability to find out the tricks of the trade.

Listen, Netflix will do that way better than we can. What's the one thing that we hold out to the world? is that God has seated his king on his holy hill and nothing will stop him accomplishing his purposes and we minister, we witness for him in the slipstream of his victory.

So do you see, friends, how that's the one thing that's not going to change this year? Whatever comes our way this year as a community, whatever comes our way individually this year, what's not going to change is he is never going to be toppled from his holy hill.

And God's plan to gather the nations into one people under the lordship of Christ, that plan is bang on track. And just to be close, let me tell you about a book that was massive when I was at uni.

A number of years ago, I'll give you that. But when I was at uni back in the day, this book, this 2003 New York Times best seller that sold a million copies all around the world, millions of copies all around the world called The Da Vinci Code.

[25 : 54] Why it was so big is that people always, I remember they used to come up to me and say, here's the book that's going to blow the hole on the side of Christianity, exposing the cover-ups, exposing the myths.

And here's my favourite article that I read on the BBC News a few years ago. It was about an Oxfam bookshop in 2007 in a place called Swansea, who put a notice in their window that said, and if you've got good enough eyes you can see this, we're all trying to do that, aren't we, in our phones, but we can do it.

It says this, you could give us another Da Vinci Code, surrendered by a pile of Da Vinci Codes, but we'd rather have your vinyl.

And that sign sparked an idea in the mind of a local artist called David Shrigley. What he did is he thought, I'm going to get a hold of as many copies of Da Vinci Code that I can get.

So what he does is he finds out where the Oxfam bookshop keep all the reserves and he phones up this recycling centre where all the unwanted books go and he asks them, how many copies of Da Vinci Code do you have?

[27:05] They respond to him and say we've got an almost unlimited number. So he says I'll take the lot. What he does is he gets the whole lot together and he pulps them and he turns it into a piece of art.

So do you see what's going on there? Do you not love that? This book that was meant to take God down is now pulp. Friends, God has done it before.

The Babylonian empire, empire, the Roman empire. Do you think anyone living in those days thought that God would outlive those empires? Probably not.

God has done it before and God will keep on doing it throughout history. Why? Because he seated his king on his holy hill.

The opposition on earth is not unexpected. the throne of heaven is not unoccupied. The end of history is not uncertain.

[28:12] Here's the last thing I want to say if you look right at the end of the psalm. I hadn't noticed it until this morning so I've not scripted this we'll just run with this. See the word at the end there? It's actually the word that you get at the beginning of psalm one and at the end of psalm two.

Do you see the word? What's the word? Blessed. Now roughly translated that word means happy. Now you know how we talk in our age about our happy places.

Yeah? Happy places. The wisdom that psalm one and psalm two are offering us this morning is that your happy place make it at the feet of your king.

So tomorrow as you open your Bible cup of warm coffee, warm coffee in your hands, is as you open your Bible, as you read about who we are in Christ, as we think about his victory, as we bask ourselves in that, despite the chaos that's going on in the world and perhaps in our lives, the invitation of this psalm is to make that our happy place.

You see it? Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Let me pray.

[29:28] Amen. Father, we just want to take stock this morning of the fact that you are God in heaven and we are on earth. Lord, would you forgive us for the small pictures we have of who you are.

Lord, that you are not just like a bigger version of us. you are our creator. You are our savior. You are the one who is eternal.

You are the one who knows all things. Father, would you forgive us when we have small thoughts of you? And so, Lord, it's our prayer that this year would be one where we leave it at the end with a greater view of who Jesus is than when we came into it.

Lord, would you increase the horizons of our minds as we grasp something more of the greatness of his victory. So, Father, I pray that wherever this has landed on our lives this morning, I pray that your spirit would be at work teaching us wonderful things about who Jesus is.

And so, Father, as we turn our attention now to communion as well, Lord, may we savor something more of the sweetness of the victory that he's purchased for us on the cross. So be with us, Lord, as we finish our time together.

[30 : 52] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.