

**Sermon preached at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Kingstowne, Virginia,
by Pastor David Fischler, on Sunday, August 3, 2014**

KISS THE SON

Psalm 2:1-12

In Psalm 1, which was last week, we saw what amounted to the first half of the introduction to this entire Book. As I mentioned last week, there's no plot, obviously, in Psalms. It's not a narrative. It's a hymn book, in fact, but these first two psalms comprise two halves of an introduction to it. In Psalm 1, we're given a picture of what the Lord expects from individuals, that they may be blessed. The very first line of this Book is "Blessed is the man." It then proceeds to say how it is that that man may be blessed or not blessed. In Psalm 2 we have the other half of the introduction. It gives us a more universal picture. It shows us the purposes of God in history and in the destiny of the world, not just in the lives of individuals. That is to say, this is a psalm that is very much about Christ, about God's ultimate plans for the world, and as such, it is both messianic and prophetic. And because we're in that bigger picture it is, also, in the end, about us as well.

The first part of this psalm is verses 1-3, which is about the nations' rebellion. "Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain," is how it begins. I remember when I was in high school there was someone – I have no idea who, I don't think I ever did know – that on a regular basis put what was probably a pretty expensive boxed ad in the *New York Times*. I still to this day know the first line of this psalm because it was the first thing that that ad included every single time. In the King James it asks, "Why do the heathen rage?" Well, that's one way to put it, but the New International Version probably gets it a little closer: "Why do the nations conspire?" Why do all of the peoples of the world come together to plot against their Maker? Now "nations" is an important word because we need to recognize this is not directed only at individuals. This is directed at national entities, not nation states per se, but every tribe and every ethnic group, people of every language. They come together and they rage against God. They are angry that He strips them of their sovereignty, because there is nothing that a nation wants more than to be in charge of its own destiny. You'll sometimes hear people say that one of the most important principles in international law and one of the most important principles for protecting the integrity of American law is national sovereignty. And from a strictly human standpoint that may well be correct. But that's a sovereignty which has to do with the relationship of nation to nation. What's being talked about here is the relationship of all of the nations of the world to God. And the sovereignty that they jealously want to protect is their ability to set their own course, to make their own destiny, to decide what their power and their place in the world is going to be without reference to God.

Well the nations plot against Him. They plot against Him to overthrow His rule and to replace it with their own. Look at verse 2: "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed ones." Because, of course, while we may speak about nations we know that the people who are most

concerned with their power in the world, most concerned with their nation's status and role in the world, most concerned with their nation's wealth and their nation's sovereignty are the people who are going to exercise that for the most part. And those are the rulers, the kings of the earth. These days think presidents and prime ministers, think emirs and kings. Think princes, think dear leaders, think general secretaries. These are the people who don't want their people necessarily in harmony with God. Instead, these are the folks who are fomenting the rebellion, who are conspiring with one another, in the word of Scripture, conspiring with one another in opposition to God and Christ. Now that doesn't mean that every ruler, every president and prime minister, every politician is necessarily a bad person. Most of them, maybe, but not necessarily all of them. It doesn't even mean that there's no such thing as a Christian politician. There are. I've looked for years and I've found one or two, so I know they're out there somewhere. This doesn't mean that the individuals here are being condemned, but it means that as a class the rulers of the world have as one of their objectives – whether consciously or not and probably in many instances it's strictly unconscious – one of their aims is to have control, total control, over their destiny and their nation's destiny without reference to God.

Verse 3 makes clear what their aim is. It's independence. "Let us break their chains." In other words they say to themselves, "Let us break the chains that God would put on us, the Lord and His anointed one." The chains that they would put on us. Let us throw off their fetters. See, the nations and their rulers see submission to God, see dependence on God as slavery and His sovereignty as restrictive of their own. They want the freedom to do as they please and in that regard, who do they sound like? They sound like Adam and Eve. There's nothing original here in the acts of presidents and prime ministers or kings, queens and princes. There's nothing original here. It goes back to the Garden of Eden. Humanity's primal urge, as much as anything, the first sin in the Garden of Eden was the desire to toss God aside and live as they pleased. You can see that at work in all of humanity, not just the powerful and the wealthy or the connected. All of humanity has that same desire to live as we please, to do what we want without regard to God. To live in what we think of as freedom, to throw off the slavery that is involved in obedience to and dependence upon the Lord.

Well, that is what the nations want and the Lord has a response. In verses 4-9 we hear His response and His response is to talk about not the reign of the kings of the earth but rather about the reign of the Messiah. "The One enthroned in heaven laughs, the Lord scoffs at them." I love that. The first response that God has to the rebellion of the rich and the powerful and the mighty and of all of humanity is to laugh. "You people have got to be kidding!" It's the response that we have when we see an anthill in the back yard and it has a little flag on it, right? Have you ever seen this? I saw this in our back yard once. There's an anthill that's got a little flag on it and on the flag it's got three stripes and in the middle of the middle stripe there's an ant. The ants have declared their independence and they have said, "We are no longer going to live in fear of you! We're going to do anything we want. If we want to come into your house and eat your bread, we're going to do that. If we want to come into your house and spread disease, we're going to do that. If we want to crawl up on your dog and then crawl off of him into your pillow at night, we're going to do that." That's what that little flag on the top of the

anthill is all about. I remember when I saw that I laughed. And do you know what I did? I stepped on the anthill. All right, it didn't have a little flag, but I know the ants were thinking that. They were thinking, "Fellas, there are two people in that house and there are millions of us. We've got them outnumbered. We can surround them. We can take these people. We can make that house ours and the government won't even charge us property tax because they won't know that it's ours now." I do the same thing with my cat, anthropomorphise her, too, in case you're wondering where this is coming from. Ants might have that running through their little collective brains. You know ants. I have heard it said, though I don't know if it's true, ants are the only other species on earth that make war. Have you ever heard that? Ants are the only other species that make war. Now for the most part their wars are against one another but just think if they all decided to get together and make war on us. Like I said before, they've got us outnumbered millions to one. What are we going to do? We're going to step on their anthill and that's the end of that problem.

Well, that's God's response to the nations: "You have got to be kidding! Yes, it's true that you outnumber Me (what is it at this point?) about seven billion to one. Do you really think that matters?" Because even though the numbers are unbalanced in our favor the power is unbalanced in His. So He laughs. He scoffs at them. "Ha! The nations!" And then He rebukes them in His anger and He terrifies them in His wrath. I can only imagine when I go out in the back yard and I go to the anthill and my foot is poised above that anthill that they all look up and they point and they say, "The end is near." In the same way, the kings of the earth, at least those that even recognize that God exists, might do the same thing. They might look up and realize there's nothing that we can do. There is nothing that we can do. Isaiah chapter 40 makes this clear when the prophet says, "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are counted as the dust on the scales." All the nations are as nothing before Him. They are counted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness. "It is He who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers." So now you have a choice: you can be an ant or a grasshopper. Big difference, right? "Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness."

Now God's laughing at the nations, of course, is not a funny kind of laugh. It's the laugh of One who is deeply offended. Deeply offended because, among other things, the plain reality of life in the world is not being recognized. You've heard the expression some folks on the Internet of various stripes like to use. They call themselves the "reality-based community." Ever heard that term? These are folks who supposedly look at the world clear-eyed and unbiased and scientifically and they know that yahoos like you and me are just making it up as we go along. To which the Lord says, "You think you know reality, but you really don't. I'm reality." And those who will not reckon with this reality will come to regret it. And the reason they will come to regret it is because when He laughs, when He brings His wrath to bear, He also makes clear, "I have installed My King on Zion, My Holy Hill." He has set His King on His throne, and it is to Him, not their petty presidents and princes and queens, it's to Him that the nations will be subject.

And then, in verses 7-9, the King, the Son, speaks: “The Lord said to Me, ‘You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father.’” This is not a matter of election. This is not a matter of picking someone out of a crowd and elevating him. It’s certainly not a matter of self-choice. This is the relationship between the Father and Son – eternal Father and Son, omnipotent Father and Son. The Father has said to the Son, “You are now King over all the earth.” And the Father has said to Him, “Ask of Me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.” The Father has given into His Son’s hands all that is, and He says, “You will rule them with an iron scepter, You will dash them to pieces like pottery. They will be incapable of standing before You.” So in these three verses the Son proclaims His oneness with the Father, Father and Son. He proclaims that God has given Him the nations to rule over. And He tells us that the Father has authorized Him to break the pride and the rebelliousness of the nations and their inhabitants that they might come to recognize the sovereignty of the King.

So here we are in Psalm 2, written hundreds of years before Christ, and we already have a picture of Jesus. We know that He came into the world as the Son of God and God was His Father. We know that He came into the world as King, even though Jews and Romans both mocked Him. He was in fact the King. And we know, too, that He came into the world authorized to deal with the pride and the rebelliousness of humanity. And He did that on the cross, in exactly the opposite way from what your typical president or prime minister or earthly king would. They would take pride and rebelliousness and they would punish. They would put you in jail. They would fine you. They would execute you until such time as you recognized the validity of the law that they represented. Jesus does not do that, because God doesn’t operate the way that the nations of the world do. Instead, Jesus dies in our place, takes the punishment for that pride and that rebelliousness and in the process reconciles us to God.

And He does that with peoples, not just with individuals, with peoples. That’s why we can look around this room and see not a room full of Jews exalting their Messiah. We can look around this room and we can see black and white and red and yellow. We can see people from at least five continents here. Any Australians here? We missed that. I happen to know there are no penguins here. So there’s nobody from Australia, but look around this room and there are people from five continents in this room, or this congregation. That’s an amazing thing. And that’s something that would have been completely incomprehensible, impossible, before the coming of Christ. So it’s not just individuals who have been reconciled by that death and resurrection. It’s the nations as well. They don’t all recognize that, at least not in their political or social or religious expressions. But the nations of the world have been reconciled, meaning people from every language and tribe and color and race are now able to join the kingdom.

So we have the rebellion and the response. In the final part of this psalm, in verses 10-12, we end as so many of the psalms do, with a warning and a blessing. The nations are warned first that they have been called to be servants of the true King. Verse 10 says, “Therefore you kings, be wise; be warned you rulers of the earth. You are called to exercise wisdom.” To exercise wisdom. And wisdom in one way or another always has to do with relationship, either relationship to other people or to the created order or to the

animal world or even to things – inanimate or manmade. Exercising wisdom means knowing what the proper way to respond to others is. And that wisdom, of course, is exercised above all in terms of relationship with God. They are called to be wise by serving God.

Verse 11 says, “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.” And they’re told to rejoice with trembling, I suspect, because in verse 5 they’re spoken of as terrified. But their terror at this point is transformed. There’s still fear there, but it’s a different kind of fear. It’s not the kind of fear that says, “Oh, no, I’m going to be wiped out.” It’s the fear that says, “Oh, my heavens, I am in the presence of awesomeness! Genuine awesomeness.” And it’s a service which is called to be joyful. They’re told in in verse 12, then, to kiss the Son. And that’s a message not just for the rulers of the world. That’s a message for each of us to kiss the Son. The word “kiss” there is a really interesting one. In the Greek Old Testament – not the Hebrew but in the Greek Old Testament (the Old Testament was translated into Greek approximately 270 BC and by the way it was not translated by Greeks, it was translated by Rabbis, but Greek was the language of the world at that point) – the word that’s used there, *proskuneo*, is a word that’s used for worship. It’s used for worship and it literally means to come forward to kiss. To kiss the Son is to lay ourselves at His feet in reverence and in worship. And that reverence and that worship is in turn a sign of submission, a sign that the rebellion is over, that we have declared ourselves in complete dependence upon Him, that we are His loyal subjects. Of course, it’s easier to be loyal subjects when you know that you’re also children of His household. But children of the king sometimes rebel, don’t they? David found that out with Absalom. But while we’re children of the kingdom we’re also loyal subjects of the king. And to come and to kiss the Son is our way of saying that we recognize that. Those that don’t, they’ll experience only anger and wrath. “Kiss the Son lest He be angered and you be destroyed in your way.” Refuse to submit, refuse to recognize who the actual sovereign is and unfortunately the Sovereign is going to treat you like you treat the anthill in your backyard.

But blessed are all who take refuge in Him. All who abandon their rebellious ways, all who say, “I don’t want to be a slave to the world. I don’t want to be independent, because that’s nothing more than an illusion. I want to be Yours, O Lord.” Those are the ones whom He blesses. The blessings of those who have made that submission, the blessing of those who have given themselves into His hands are countless. One of them is in front of me. The Lord’s Supper is a gift from Him to us. He calls us to His table. He calls us to eat with Him. He calls us to fellowship with Him. He calls us to be strengthened by Him that we might be able to cope with the world as it is. In a few moments we will come to that table where we will, in a manner of speaking, kiss the Son, worship His holy name and give Him thanks for His countless gifts.