

Who Gets the Last Laugh

Psalm 2

Introduction – The Sorry State of Our Nation

Sometimes I think we're in a lot of trouble.

We in Aberdeen, SD are somewhat isolated and insulated from the aggressive secularism that has inundated our nation in the last fifty years. What first manifested itself in Madelynn Murray O'Hare's crusade against prayer in public schools in the early 60's has now reached a point of saturation in our American culture. It seems that everyone's perspective is welcomed except for the Christian's. Consider these current situations:

- Some military chaplains have been disciplined because they pray in Jesus' name and quote the Bible too much.
- Mainstream Media's failure to cover the tragic case of the Somalian Christian mother sentenced to death because of her faith in favor of a soccer player who bit another player's ear.
- The media's labeling of pro-life people as anti-choice and those who support killing babies in the womb as pro-choice.
- Social Studies Curriculum Standards for our children that denigrate our Judeo-Christian heritage in order to promote an "open mind to adapt to our evolving culture."

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- The distortion of Hobby Lobby's actual benefits for birth control that provide all options except four which are believed to kill a fertilized egg.
- Our progressive administration and legislators promising to "fix" their loss in the Supreme Court which protected the religious rights of business owners
- Atheist Bill Maher gets a pass for all his hateful rhetoric against God and Christians while Phil Robertson is suspended from his reality show and Chick Fil-ay founder Dan Cathy is threatened with economic boycott for expressing traditional views about marriage.

Sometimes I think we're in a lot of trouble...

- Acceptance of homosexuality is being forced upon us. We who object are called hateful bigots
- Homosexual lifestyles are presented in movies and on TV as very positive and normal while Christians, if they are depicted, are mentally ill or unbalanced.

- A Colorado baker is sued because he refuses to make a cake for a homosexual wedding. He quits the business instead.
- The Supreme Court throws out the Defense of Marriage Act, opening the door for forced legalization of homosexual marriage eventually in every state.
- Just last week, the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to allow their clergy to perform homosexual weddings.

Sometimes I think we're in a lot of trouble...

- The proliferation of pornography on the internet is pervasive...
- The evil of human trafficking is a horrific reality around the globe...
- Radical Islamists are slaughtering Christians in northern Iraq and seem close to establishing their own terrorist state...

I think we're in a lot of trouble.

But this should not surprise us. This is nothing new. The Scriptures say there is nothing new under the sun...

Text – Psalm 2 – (ESV)

Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves,

and the rulers take counsel together,

against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,

“Let us burst their bonds apart

and cast away their cords from us.”

He who sits in the heavens laughs;

the Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath,

and terrify them in his fury, saying,

“As for me, I have set my King

on Zion, my holy hill.”

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;

today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,

and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron

and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;

be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear,

and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss 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.

A Royal Psalm

Psalm 2 is called “a royal psalm” because it honors the king and proclaims his sovereign rule. It had nationalistic meaning in King David’s day, because it speaks directly about him. David was a warrior king and had conquered many of the surrounding nations. The psalm mocks their futile rebellion and warns them to align themselves with the king’s sovereignty. David, of course, did not inherit the throne or gain it through a military coup. He was chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel. As God’s appointed ruler, the surrounding nations are admonished to align themselves with King David’s rule or face dire consequences. In singing this psalm, the ancient Hebrews rejoiced in God’s work and his ways through their anointed king. David’s reign was the high point of Jewish history.

But the psalm’s greatest fulfillment is found in Jesus Christ – Israel’s Messiah. In his first missionary journey, the Apostle Paul declared in a synagogue in Asia,

“...we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’

Acts 13:32-33

Jesus is called the Son of God. His title does not mean that he is the offspring of God, but that he is the One who has inherited the fullness of God’s Creation. By his resurrection, he has become the sovereign Lord of all, to whom, as Philippians says, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of the Father. King David was only the foreshadowing of the coming of God’s anointed Sovereign, Jesus Christ.

A Futile Drama

In this royal psalm, we see a futile drama that not only played out in David’s day but has continued to be enacted since Christ came. Kings and rulers, by nature, want to be the ultimate authority in their domains. They resent any accountability. It is no wonder that they rebel against God. They view the laws and principles that God has established for our benefit as restrictive and they fight against them. Is that not what is happening in our culture today? We promote so-called sexual freedom and scoff at God’s laws against adultery and fornication. We celebrate homosexuality and marginalize those who believe in traditional marriage. We protect the so-called right to murder unborn children and try to muzzle anyone who protests. The powerful oppress the powerless and cries for justice go unheard. People of conscience are marginalized while truth seems relative to what is convenient. It is as if they are saying, “Let us throw off the shackles of yesteryear and purge our society of bigoted puritanical people.” Sadly, so much of our contemporary American culture is pictured in the first three verses of this psalm.

All the while, God sits in heaven and laughs in scorn at the puny little kings who want to have it their way.

I know this is terrible to admit, but parents, have you ever quietly laughed while your child was throwing a tantrum? I remember an occasion when we were camping and one of our family members – I won’t say who – gave us a good laugh. Our child, who was eight at the time, is very out-going and had made friends with a child from another family. She wanted to spend all her time over at their campsite which we felt was an unfair imposition upon them. When we wouldn’t allow her to go over there she threw a fit. So we put her in time out in the tent.

Honestly, it was hilarious to watch her kick the sides of tent while muttering her protests. We were sitting outside drinking our coffee and having a good laugh – quietly, of course - watching her futile raging at us.

Are you disturbed by the anger of atheists and secularists insulting the church and blaspheming Christ? They're just kicking the sides of the tent. God is in heaven laughing at them in scorn. We get all riled up about the mess our country is in. There is cause for deep concern and I believe that Christians should be active in the social and political realm. At the very least, I believe Christian citizens have the obligation to vote. But let's not wring our hands as if things are out of control and there is no hope for the future. Those who despise God and his ways may seem to rule the day now, but he will have the last say. You see, Jesus has overcome all the powers of evil, shattering them through his resurrection, and he sits on his heavenly throne as the Sovereign Lord. One day he will return in judgment. On that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord. As for his enemies, "he will break them with a rod of iron" and smash them as if they were clay pots. And on that day, he will rule all nations.

“Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Revelation 15:4

An Admonition for All

Friends, those who have placed their faith in Christ as their Savior and follow him as Lord have been brought into his kingdom. We are not aligned with those who futilely rage and plot against God. We are co-rulers with Christ. Ephesians says that we are already seated with Christ in his heavenly rule and reign (2:6). It is true; the Kingdom of God is not yet fully realized. But with the gospel we preach and the love of Christ we share with others, we are declaring that the God-haters will not rule in the end. We are on the side of promise!

So what shall we say to the circumstances in which we find ourselves? Do not despair. Serve the Lord with great respect and rejoice. Honor Christ in in all that you do and say – in the outpouring of your life. That is what it means to bring God’s kingdom here “on earth as it is in heaven.” That is what it means to “kiss the Son.” And then, as the psalm says, you will live in the blessing of the Lord.

Hymn – Jesus Shall Reign

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To Him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown His head;
His Name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His Name.

Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen!

Isaac Watts, 1719