

Psalms of the Son

II - I Have set my King on Zion - Psalm 2

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, says the Psalm, and say: "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords from us." As we hear this, it is hard, is it not, not to notice how well the words of the Psalm correspond to what we can observe in the world around us, a culture obsessed with the idea of absolute freedom, eager to shed the shackles of the ordinances of God, not only those taught in Holy Scripture, but also those taught by the very nature of things, and obvious to any and all kinds of common sense.

We could dwell at length at specific examples of this, and point to particular manifestations, and name all the bad guys, or at least some of them. No doubt some of us would enjoy that; talk about how bad others are offers an opportunity to savour the sense that we ourselves are so much better. We shall not, though; for the point and purpose of Christian preaching is never for Christians to feel good about themselves and their own goodness, as little as that which faithful Christians seek in preaching, and what they demand of their preacher, is whatever they themselves enjoy hearing. It is *unfaithfulness* the holy Apostle Paul predicts, when he writes that *the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up teachers for themselves and turn their ears away from the Truth.* What a Christian seeks in preaching, and in Church, is not entertainment, not affirmation and assurance of his own goodness, but rather the Truth of God, His Word of His salvation, and His salvation itself, which He gives to His Christians in the Word and worship of His salvation.

As satisfying as it might be to sinful nature in us to dwell upon the evils of others and feel good about ourselves, it is not what Christian preaching is meant to do for us. So let us just observe that we can easily relate to the frustration expressed in the Psalm: *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?* It seems so silly, what we see in the world around us, in common culture, and in politics; it seems so obvious that the contempt for common sense that has become so common is really rebellion against reality itself, unbelief and ungodliness aside. Less obvious is it, but no less true, that it is actually rebellion against the *Author* of reality.

Whether or not those who rebel are aware themselves, and most likely most of them are not, as they are not even aware of His *existence*, it is the bonds and cords of *His* authority they seek to break and cast off when they seek to overthrow what is normal, and natural. For the contempt for common sense so common in contemporary culture comes from the counsel of the evil one, in the hearts and minds of those who belong to him, against the Lord and against His Anointed: *Let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords from us!*

And although any one with any sense of common sense must be bemused at what is happening, it cannot but be even more frustrating for Christians to see it; for Christians are aware that all these attempts to overthrow all things obviously good and right are not only contrary to common sense, but also to the will and ways of God.

Nevertheless, the faithful need not be fearful or frustrated, for both are foreign to the faith; and in faith we know already, and we certainly should know, that anyone who goes up against God cannot but come out on the losing end. As we hear it: *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Yes, for as He also says it: As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.* He had already then; He has even more so now. Yes, for although, at the time when the Psalm was given to the people of God, the king He had set on Zion was most likely David, God had more in mind; the Psalm points to someone far greater than David or any other mere man, and greater, even, than the greatest of angels. For, as we heard it earlier, of the Letter to the Hebrews, *to which of the angels did God ever say: "You are My Son, Today have I begotten You"?* - as the Psalm says it, that the Lord says to the King He has seated upon Zion.

Ultimately, the Psalm points to our Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, God Himself from eternity, by whom all things were made, the one whom even God calls *Lord*; as we also heard it, again, of the Letter to the Hebrews: *You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

He is the King God has set on Zion. *He rules all things by His Word of power*, as the Letter to the Hebrews also says it. And He is the one who shall judge the living and the dead, ultimately, in the end, and destroy all His enemies utterly and entirely. *Ask of me, as the Lord says it in the Psalm, and I will make the nations Your heritage, 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.*

Again, anyone who goes up against God is bound to come out on the losing end. In this Christians should take comfort, knowing that the rebellion against common sense and all that is obviously reality is not only that, but also, ultimately, rebellion against the *Author* of reality, even if the rebels themselves do not realise that is that.

Not so much, really, that we should rejoice to think of the enemies of God being destroyed in His judgement of eternal death and damnation. Although that thought might seem somewhat satisfying for a moment, also, at times, and although, in His final judgement, God will indeed be doing good and making all things well, the thought of any one of God's beloved creatures, even your worst enemies, having to endure the eternal agony of Hell, well, it should be dreadful to you, and tragic, and certainly when you give the thought a little thought, and it will be, unless there is something seriously wrong with you. God Himself is not pleased at that thought; as His Prophet Ezekiel was made to write it down for us: '*As I live,*' says the Lord God, '*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*'

Therefore the Psalm also presents a call to *repentance* to those who rebel against the Lord and His Anointed, or His Christ, as it is the Greek: *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.*

Those who rebel against reality are rebelling against the Lord, and against His Anointed, that is: His Christ, who is Lord of all things. And so, they have all reason to be in fear of what they have coming to them from Him who is not only Lord of all things in *this* world, but also, as He has said it, *after He has killed, has the power to cast into Hell*. It would be better for them to turn from their ungodly indifference and ignorance, and from disobedience and defiance. They should be wise and think twice, and amend their ways and surrender to the will of God, as His will is made known in Holy Scripture as well as by the very nature of things, and common sense. *Now, therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear.*

This would apply, though, not only to the rulers of the earth, but also to those who only seek to make themselves the rulers of those around them, or of their own lives; and *they* should be warned, also, and *they* should be wise, who are kings and rulers only in their own minds. So it would apply to you, also, would it not?

Well, it would.

You should turn away from your indifference and ignorance. You should listen and learn from the Word of God what is His will, and what are His ways. And you should abandon all defiance and disobedience and submit to Him instead, in the obedience of faith.

The obedience of *faith*, yes; as the Psalm also makes it clear to us which kind of obedience it is that God chiefly demands of His creatures: *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way*. In other words, acknowledge Christ as king, as one would, in those days, acknowledge the king with a kiss. Now, to acknowledge Christ as King is to acknowledge *His Kingdom*, who, after He has provided purification for sin, has taken seat at the right hand of the majesty on high, the heavenly Judge who has Himself suffered all judgement for those condemned by His judgement, in our stead and on our behalf, who upholds all things by His Word of power, and who, by the power of His love, with His Word of His love and what His love has done for sinners, calls and draws sinners into His love, and makes sinners to surrender to His love and believe His promise of full forgiveness for all sin, of rescue from eternal death and damnation, of eternal life with Him in His heavenly Kingdom, in the fullness of His goodness and His glory.

The reign of the King the Lord has set upon His holy hill is His reign of *salvation*, in His Church. As Saviour will He have Himself served, in the worship of faith. *Serve the Lord with fear*, as the Psalm says it, *and rejoice with trembling*. He commands that we believe His promise and rejoice in His salvation, in the assurance that we belong to Him, for we do, just as He declares it. *Ask of me*, as the Lord says it to Him in the Psalm, *and I will make the nations Your heritage*. And He who has Himself paid the price and penalty for the sin of all sinners now pleads for us before the Father, as our heavenly High Priest, and brings in remembrance the price He has paid for us, and claims us as His own, because we are that.

In all this He calls us to rejoice, although *with fear and trembling*; you should not be casual about His salvation, as if it were to be taken for granted that you belong to Him because you are so good and godly. For it is not that. His salvation is given to you out of the greatest love of all, by Him to whom sin is utterly abominable, who has nevertheless taken all sin upon Himself, for us sinners, and made it His own, who has the power to cast into the Hell that is His judgement against sin, but has Himself borne all judgement for us.

Blessed is He that comes, in the name of the Lord. *Amen*.