

Psalm 2 [NIV]

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together
against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, ³ "Let us break
their chains and throw off their shackles."
⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at
them. ⁵ He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his
wrath, saying, ⁶ "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy
mountain." ⁷ I will proclaim the Lord's decree:
He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your
father. ⁸ Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You will break them with
a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."
¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the
earth. ¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with
trembling. ¹² 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.

We're in Psalm 2 today, if you'd like to turn there in
your Bible or pull that up on your phone. Or, maybe
you just want to recite it from memory—in Hebrew!
However you want to do it: the book of Psalms, Chapter
2. We'll get there in a minute.

Once upon a time, there was a "preacher," "a
speaker," or "a caller together of people"—that's what
the word *ecclesiastes* means; it's the English
transliteration of the Latin transliteration of the Greek
translation of the Hebrew word *koheleth*, which means,
"speaker or preacher or assembler of people."

Anyway, once upon a time, there was a *koheleth*—
traditionally thought to be Solomon, King David's son—
who was very smart, very wise. You remember he
prayed for the wisdom to be king, and God gave him
wisdom that amazed the world around him. He was so
wise, he had gray matter to spare, so with some of his
excess brain, he gave himself to trying to describe the
big picture of life—the ultimate meaning of life.

And the book we call *Ecclesiastes* is the result of that
effort.

And, because of *our limited* amounts of gray
matter, the only part of the book most of us will
remember is where the speaker declares, right at the
beginning of Chapter 3, "*There is a time for
everything—and a season for every activity under
heaven.*"

If you are able to remember 1965, you heard the
musical group, the Byrds, sing about it. (To everything
—turn, turn, turn...)

That was the Bible, not the Byrds.

"To everything there is a season," and then the
writer goes on to list those times: a time to be born and
a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest, and
on and on down a substantial list.

"And the secret to understanding the big picture of
human life," the speaker says, "is to embrace this truth
and to pray and work toward aligning *our* understanding

of life's times and seasons with *God's* understanding of
times and seasons."

When does *God* think we should plant?

Well then, that's when we'll plant.

When does God think we should harvest?

That's when to harvest.

When does God say we should keep things? That's
when to keep things.

When does He say we should get rid of things?
That's when we'll have our garage sales.

It is in finding *His* thoughts on these matters and
then acting according to them—*aligning* ourselves with
Him—that is how we will fit best into God's world.

And it's up to us to make those decisions.

You see, we can insist on planting according to *our
own* thinking and wisdom and timing—*sure*, we can do
that. But if our thinking doesn't align with God's
thinking about planting, all the planting in the world
isn't going to amount to anything.

And sure, we can harvest when *we* choose to
harvest. We have that freedom. But if we do it at a time
that doesn't fit with *God's* time for harvesting, we're not
going to harvest anything but disappointment.

In the way God has set up this world, there is a
time—a right time—for everything, and as we will
submit ourselves to God's timing, that's when all can be
well with our souls.

But if we won't submit to His timing of things, we'll
just wind up getting mad and frustrated and wasting
huge amounts of time pushing against mountains that
simply will not be moved.

So, if we want to have peace of heart in life, we need
to figure out what God is doing—how God is working,
and then join Him in doing that.

Now, we may not like it; and we may not
understand it.

History tells us how, far more often than not, God
acts in surprising and sometimes even shocking ways in
our world, so it's very possible that we won't
comprehend all the ins and outs of exactly what He's up
to.

I mean, we're not God—and least most of us aren't.
Which is precisely where faith and trust in God
come in—to trust Him in what He's up to.

Following God—following Jesus—means getting
past just knowing *about* Him or even *knowing* Him. It
is about trusting Him about even those things which we
don't understand. If we don't get to that point in our
faith, we just get more and more confused and angry
and frustrated, and we'll wind up hurting other people.
Some have even given up on God, not because God
failed them, but because God did something they didn't
like or agree with or understand.

Which is really ridiculous, when you think about it. I mean, who's really in charge here?

"Who is – *really* – in charge here?"

And here is where we get to the *koheleth's* main purpose in writing. This is the big picture – the ultimate meaning of life. This is what every human being has to come to grips with – the correct answer to the question, "who is really in charge?"

And that is actually the very issue that is addressed in Psalm 2. (You wondered if we'd ever get there, but here we are.)

Most scholars view the first two chapters of Psalms as a double-sided introduction to the rest of the book. In fact, some believe that Psalm 1 and 2 were originally written as one unit, since they seem to flow into each other and cover similar topics.

Psalm 1 speaks of the blessedness that will come to the *righteous person* and also of the *misery* that will come to the *unrighteous person*.

Psalm 2 speaks of the blessedness of a *righteous nation*, and also, again, the *misery* that an *unrighteous nation* will have to endure.

And, of course, the conclusion is that if you want to experience God's *blessings*, either *personally* or *corporately (nationally)*, then you have to acknowledge that *God* is the one who's *really in charge here*. You have to acknowledge that it is God's way that is right and that leads to good and peaceful persons and peoples.

And if you won't do that, then you're going to find yourself constantly swimming upstream.

Whether you're a person or a nation, you'll be forever fighting the tide in this life and in this world.

You will be constantly trying to move the unmovable.

But beyond that, if either persons or nations *continue* to *insist* upon *pushing back* at God's will and way, then they, sooner or later, will face, not just His *resistance*, but His *wrath*, because even though God is *tremendously patient*, He simply *will not tolerate wickedness* forever.

On the personal level, if you look back at Psalm 1, verse 4, after lining out the blessings that will come to those who trust God, the Psalmist then writes, "*Not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away. They will not stand in the judgment, nor in the assembly of the righteous. No, the way of the wicked will perish.*"

And then in Psalm 2, verse 9, on a national level, the psalmist says that those nations which will not yield to God, "*will be ruled with an iron scepter and will be dashed to pieces like pottery.*"

You see, there is no secret about what will happen to those who keep on resisting God. He spells it out very clearly.

But, because of God's immense *patience* with both *people* and *nations* and because He doesn't bring judgment and its costs immediately, there are some who simply won't believe that these consequences are real.

They don't believe that all of that could or would ever actually happen.

And so, they – both people and nations – continue to do as they please. They continue to push back at God.

That's the reality of our world. We all know that. How does God respond to this?

Have you ever tried to train a young animal: a puppy or a kitten or a human?

I'm not equating the three.

Personally, I think that, of the three, dogs are the easiest, and I'd say it's a toss-up between cats and kids.

But regardless, here's how it goes, let's say, with a puppy. Puppies like to chew on things, but you can't have your dog chewing on everything, right?

So, you come into a room and your brand-new puppy turns around, looks at you with his head cocked to one side, his eyes wide, and a piece of your mail – junk mail – in his mouth. He's been chewing on it. What do you do?

You chuckle and say, "OK, buddy, you're going to have to learn that you're not going to chew on my stuff."

Now, you see, you can laugh at this, because, although right now this dog thinks he can do as he pleases, you know very well that he is going to be convinced otherwise. You know that, in order to have order and peace in your home, your dog *will be broken* of this habit.

You can laugh, at this point, because you are in no way *intimidated* by the dog.

You know that you are not, in the least, willing to let this behavior continue.

You have no thought at all that this dog is going to change your mind about how things are going to go in your home.

You know there is absolutely no chance that this dog is going to get his way in this.

You can laugh now because, even though the dog may not understand it at the moment, you know you are the master, and he is the dog; and there will *never* be a *reversing of those roles*.

It is your confidence in who you are, in your authority, in your total power over the dog, that allows you to laugh at this attempt at insurrection, you see, because you know that it will never succeed.

Now, where the situation goes from here is rather up to the dog, isn't it? That is, it depends on how quick a learner the dog is.

If you teach the dog well, but the dog doesn't learn, and then it winds up chewing up your mail that had your paycheck in it, and next your best pair of shoes, and then the corner of your couch – and then the arm of your baby daughter.

OK, you're not laughing anymore, are you?

Now, this is serious.

"Hey now, those were my running shoes."

"You destroyed the arm of our leather couch?!"

"That's it – I've had it!"

In spite of your warnings, and in spite of the fact that you're doing all you can by way of training, and because the rejection of your authority is continuing, and because the trainee here is grasping neither the rules of your home nor the fact that you are the boss, your response has to change, doesn't it?

It's not that you're not a good trainer — you are!

It's not that you're not a patient person — you are!

And — it's not that you don't love the dog and want to be in relationship with the dog. You very much want to share your home with the dog — that was the idea from the very beginning.

But when the dog refuses to accept the rules of your home —

When the dog will not be trained to see who's in charge —

When the dog becomes destructive —

When the dog becomes harmful to even your own offspring — I mean, when is enough, enough to get rid of the dog?

Now, certainly the analogy has its weaknesses, but I think that is just the sort of progression we see in God and in His dealings with nations there in Psalm 2.

These nations of which the psalmist is speaking, these are nations which are rebelling against God's position and authority.

These are nations who want to do what *they* want to do. *They* want to define right and wrong on their own terms, and so their leaders get together and begin imagining that they *can simply do* as they please, and they begin making and working out their plans to do just that.

The image is one of people who may have begun in ignorance — ignorance of God and ignorance of who's in charge here — like a new puppy that doesn't know the rules of the house.

But then, instead of learning, these leaders and nations moved on to rejection and then to defiance and then to open rebellion and sedition — against God.

The story of Babel comes to mind.

How does God respond to that?

We see it there in verses 4 and 5 where the Psalmist says, "*The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath.*"

Can you see the progression there? God moves from *laughing* to *scoffing* to *rebuking* to *terrifying*.

That's how God responds to the untrainable "puppy nations" of our world.

But it starts with laughing. It starts with laughing, and I think that's important for us to remember that it is laughter that defines the reality.

Because here's the reality — from God's perspective, here's the reality: to think, even for a moment, that any earthly king or nation,

no matter how big,

no matter how powerful,

no matter how rich,

no matter how determined...

To think that any earthly king or nation could ever succeed in usurping the place and rule of God in His world is as ridiculous a notion as a puppy taking over the rule of a person's home.

The idea of a nation, any nation, even threatening — let alone managing — to kick God off His throne: that's just not going to happen.

The idea itself is laughable.

That's what God thinks, and that's how God responds to threats against His rule of His world.

Now, if nations and rulers don't learn their place before God, it is no longer in any way a funny matter, and God's response changes.

But the ridiculousness of the idea doesn't change, and God laughs at the very thought that it could.

Now, as I said to the children [in the children's time some minutes ago], there are different ways that God smiles and grins and laughs. There are different things that amuse Him.

But I want us to notice this cause of His laughter today, because it says something to us, as Kingdom of God people.

We are Kingdom of God people, right? If we are in Jesus, we are citizens of His Kingdom.

And we are His Kingdom people before we are "Wilmorons" or Kentuckians.

We are Kingdom people before we are Americans or Nigerians or Kenyans or Italians or Indians or whatever your home nation.

We are Kingdom of God people before we are white or black or brown or green or any other color we happen to be.

We are Kingdom people before we are even Earthlings or Martians or Neptunians or wherever some of you are from.

If we are in Jesus Christ, we are Kingdom of God people before we are *anything — anything* — else.

And the King of our Kingdom laughs at the idea of any other king or kingdom climbing up and unseating Him from His place of authority, in our world and in the lives of His people.

Any entity that challenges His rule will fail. God is so certain of that fact, that He laughs at the very idea.

And, so can we.

There are some who thought President Trump would manage to usurp God's rule in our world. But he did not.

There are some now who think a Biden presidency will usurp God's rule in our world. But it will not.

Some of you have lived in places where *real* dictators and terrorists and utterly godless people have ascended to power, and I'm not denying they can make a real mess of things while they're there. They certainly can, and they have, around our world.

But did they usurp God's rule in our world?

They did not, and they cannot and they will not.

God laughs at the thought of it, and, again, because He laughs, so can His people. So can His people.

That's one reason I've put something funny, or at least something I think is funny, in every week's Saturday update.

It is *not* that all we've been through is a joke. Not at all.

But we have to keep our sense of humor about the bigger picture here. We have to see with a wider lens, because that's what speaks to the reality of who's really in charge here.

It's not the president.

It's not Congress.

It's not the Supreme Court.

It's not Mayor Rainwater.

It's not the virus.

It's not the constitution.

It's not me, and it is not you.

It's the God of Heaven and Earth. And, as this Psalm tells us in a prophetic way, it is His Son – the Savior.

"Therefore, you kings," the Psalmist says in verse 10: *"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—"* Prophetic, you see? "Realize Jesus for who He really is and pledge your allegiance to Him, *"or He will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for His wrath can flare up in a moment."*

"But blessed are all who take refuge in him."

In whom are you taking refuge today?

In President Biden?

Or maybe in whoever comes along four years from now to try to replace him?

The reality is, no matter what happens here, the true King of this place has not changed, and we pray that all temporal leaders of people and nations will realize this, and not resist God, but instead, embrace Him as their own, true King.

We pray for that for their own good and blessing.

And we pray for that for ours as well – and even as we do, we can laugh, right along with God, at the thought that any one of them might unseat Him and in some way take His place.

God is going to prevail. His purposes are going to prevail. He has not yet, and He never will allow any puppy leader or puppy nation to take over what belongs to Him.

Prayer: Father, help us, all of us, from President Biden all the way down to us sitting here; help our nation to

see that You really are the King. Help us to be so confident in that knowledge that we can laugh, right along with You, at the notion that anything otherwise could ever come to be. This is Your house. This is Your world. You own it. You made it. You bought it. You are redeeming it, and it belongs to You. We acknowledge that this morning. Help us to acknowledge that in the way we live, in the way we think, in the way we look at the days and the weeks and the years that You have given us, that we might do something important, and that we might invest our energies well, for the sake of Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Closing Song: *This is My Father's World*

Benediction:

I guess I was in college, when Rich Mullins was writing songs. There's one song that I always think of when I read Psalm 2: *While the Nations Rage*.

Why do the nations rage? Why do they plot and scheme?
Their bullets can't stop the prayers we pray in the name of the Prince of Peace.

We walk in faith and remember long ago how they killed Him
and then how on the third day He arose.

Well things may look bad and things may look grim; but all
these things must pass except the things that are of Him.

The Lord in Heaven laughs—He knows what is to come.

While all the chiefs of state plan their big attacks against His
anointed One.

The Church of God, she will not bend her knees to the gods of
this world, though they promise her peace;

She stands her ground—stands firm on the Rock.

Watch their walls tumble down while she lives out His love.

Where are the nails that pierced His hands?

Well, the nails have turned to rust, but behold the Man.

He is risen—and He reigns in the hearts of the children rising
up in His name.

Where are the thorns that drew His blood?

Well, the thorns have turned to dust, but not so the love He
has given.

Oh, it remains in the hearts of His children who will love while
the nations rage.

Let us love in the face of the raging nations around
us. Let us love.