

### The Lord and His Anointed

“What in the world were you thinking?” When we are young, and sometimes when we are old, we can do some dumb things. Maybe there was a time when you thought you could lick a freezing flagpole, or jump your bike over several friends lying on the ground. One of our members as a child tried sliding down a roof in hopes of becoming airborne and flying across the yard. We do some dumb things, things that may even end with a trip to the emergency room. And then we heard it from our Mom, “What in the world were you thinking?”

Our Psalm today begins with a similar thought. **“Why do the nations rage? Why do the peoples grumble in vain?”** The leaders of the earth, the people of the earth, are doing something dumb, something unbelievably dumb. **“The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers join together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.”** How do they think they can win? A T-ball team playing in the World Series has a better chance of defeating the Almighty God. It is senseless to oppose the Lord and his Anointed.

Today we focus on Jesus being declared the Anointed, the One God the Father chose to be our Savior and our King. Opposing him is pretty dumb. Let’s see why, as we consider The Lord and His Anointed.

First we need to remember what “anointed” means. In our First Lesson, Samuel anointed David to be the king of Israel. Pouring oil over someone’s head signified that the person was set apart for a particular role, whether priest or prophet or king. Even today the king or queen of England is anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury before the crown is placed on their head.

If we think of Jesus’ baptism, it may seem like anything but a royal coronation. John the Baptist was in the wilderness, outside any town, with ragged people who were filled with sorrow over their sin. John washed their sins away by God’s power, just as today our sins are washed away in Holy Baptism. And then, amazingly, Jesus came along. John tried to stop him, but Jesus insisted that he be baptized too. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, with no sins to confess, was baptized as if he were one of us sinners. This was part of his work of saving us, by making it clear that he was the Substitute for us sinners.

But then his Baptism took a very different turn. God the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove, and God the Father’s voice announced that Jesus was the Son, the One God loves, the One who pleases God.

This was like a royal decree, unfurled and dramatically read for all the people: “Hear ye, hear ye, this Jesus is the Anointed One.” Later Jesus would enter a synagogue, take a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read, “The Lord has anointed me to preach good news,” words that he had come to fulfill. Thus Jesus would be called the Christ or Messiah, titles that mean, “Anointed.”

**“The kings of the earth take a stand, and the rulers join together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.”** The New Testament applies these words to King Herod and Governor Pontius Pilate and priests Caiaphas and Annas—powerful leaders who put aside their differences to conspire together against Jesus. They claimed they were just getting rid of a troublemaker. But they were actually desperate to preserve their power. Jesus was a threat. People were starting to follow him. And even though the Jewish leaders knew Jesus had

performed wonderful loving miracles, they hardened their hearts against him. That's what happens when you refuse to admit you're wrong—you harden your heart and fall deeper and deeper into sin.

**“Why do the nations rage?”** Because they refuse to bow before the Lord God. We see it today in the “heavyweights” of this world who oppose Christ, whether famous professors who reject Christianity as foolishness, business leaders who insist on cheating, politicians who lie and speak degrading insults. All these people think they are like gods, and they refuse to follow Christ.

But we see this in our own lives. Romans reminds us, “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.” Even the great Apostle Paul admitted that he kept doing evil. When we disobey God, when we act lovelessly or think selfishly, we are rebelling against the Lord.

The rebels say, **“Let us tear off their chains and throw off their ropes from us.”** They want to do things their way, not God's way. We can so easily view following God as slavery. We don't want to follow his Law. We envy those in the world who ignore God's will and follow their own lusts. And we reject the Gospel. We don't like that idea that we must believe in Jesus, because that means admitting I'm not good enough. And none of us wants to admit that we're wrong, and that we need a Savior.

Thank God that he speaks words to us like this, words that point out our sin so that we repent. And thank him that he then tells us that about the Anointed One, the perfect Son of God who was baptized as if he were a sinner, so that he could take the place of us sinners. In Jesus we are forgiven of all of our sins.

When we see the opposition of this sinful world, we might despair. Sometimes you may just want to give up, say, “there's no sense fighting the immorality that just gets worse.” If you have gray hair you might even thank God you won't have to see what your grandchildren will have to face.

But then you look up to heaven and see God's response to all this evil: **“The one who is seated in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. Then he speaks to them in his anger, and in his wrath he terrifies them. I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.”**

What a contrast—sinners are so busy fighting against God, it's like a beehive of immorality; and all the while the Lord is sitting calmly on his throne. Martin Luther said that we need to fix our hearts on our God in heaven, so that we can take the trials and adversity of the world and laugh at them.

The Lord is in charge. He installed his King, who rules this this world for our good, and who will judge the world on the Last Day.

Jesus speaks the next verses of the Psalm. **“I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me: ‘You are my Son. Today I have begotten you.’”** Groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims say Jesus is lower than God, but in fact he is God. Jesus was not a man who was adopted by God, he was **“begotten”** of the Father. In the Nicene Creed we say he was “begotten, not made.” Jesus is true God himself.

And that is the key to our hope. If Jesus was just a man, even a very good man, he couldn't pay for our sins. God himself had to take on our human flesh and go to the cross in

order to be a valid sacrifice that could pay for the sins of the whole world. And because Jesus paid for the sins of the world, you can be sure he paid for your sins.

And then he rose from the dead, so that we would know, not only does God love me now, God will love me forever. In fact, the Lord loves me so much, he is going to take me to live with him in heaven.

In our Psalm, the Father says to Jesus, **“Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession. You will smash them with an iron rod. You will break them to pieces like pottery.”** Yes, Jesus will return to judge the world. We who believe in him will live in heaven, while those who do not believe will be punished in hell.

How do we respond? **“So now, you kings, do what is wise. Accept discipline, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.”** We want to listen to what our God says. “Wise up,” in other words.

When he talks about “rejoicing with fear,” it at first sounds odd, but we Christians can understand. We fear the Lord—we recognize how great he is, how perfect, and how little we are, how unworthy. And yet he loves us.

We are sinners and saints at the same time. When we think of our sin, we tremble; when we think of what God did to save us, we rejoice.

**“Kiss the Son, or he will be angry, and you will be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. How blessed are all who take refuge in him.”** In the Middle East it is an honor, a sign of royal favor, to be allowed to kiss the king rather than merely bowing. This is a way of showing your true love and obedience to the king.

Our Psalm ends with a warning and an encouragement. God is angry with those who reject him, because they are trying to save themselves. But he encourages us to take refuge in him, by believing in the Son who saved us.

Sometimes we do dumb things. Fighting the Lord and his Anointed One is the worst, the most futile thing one can do. Instead, we take refuge in Jesus, who was Anointed to save us. And we tell others, our friends who get caught up in sin, we tell them it is futile to oppose Christ by disobeying him. But he came to be their Savior too. And when those friends repent, we encourage them to take refuge in Christ and be blessed eternally.

Trust in the Lord and his Anointed. Amen.