

## GOD HAS SPOKEN HIS FINAL WORD IN HIS SON

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Hear a fresh translation of the Psalm selected long ago for the Sunday of the Feast of the Transfiguration:

*Why do the nations conspire, and peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth cause to set themselves (against) and rulers take counsel together against YHWH and against His Messiah.<sup>1</sup>*

*"Let us burst apart Their bonds, and let us continue to cast from us Their cords."<sup>2</sup>*

*He Who is sitting in heavens laughs; Adonai has them in derision. Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and in His fury He terrifies them.<sup>3</sup>*

*"I have set My King upon Zion My holy mountain."<sup>4</sup>*

*I will tell El's decree; YHWH says to Me, "My Son, I today have begotten You. Ask from Me, and I will make nations Your inheritance, and (the) ends of earth Your possession; You will break (them) with (a) rod of iron, as (a)vessel (a) potter dashes them in pieces."<sup>5</sup>*

*"And therefore, O kings, cause them to be wise; be warned, O rulers of earth. All of you serve the YHWH with fear; and all of you rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and all of you perish in (the) way; for His wrath is kindled quickly; blessed are all who take refuge in Him."<sup>6</sup>*

Those words are given to set the tone for this Sunday of the Church Year. They contain some of the most quoted lines from any Psalm in the New Testament. In particular, when coupled with the words of the 110<sup>th</sup> Psalm which we heard about a couple of week ago, they stand side-by-side in the Book of Hebrews as a testimony that God has spoken His Final Word in His Son.<sup>7</sup> They show that the note of this Sunday which is given to sound forth is that, in Christ, God's decree and promise to rule to the ends of the earth is being fulfilled.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 2:1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 2:3.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 2:4-5.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 2:6.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 2:7-9.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 2:10-12.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hebrews 1 and 5.

For our congregations which use the One-Year lectionary series, this is the Day of the year that separates the narratives which declare the Epiphany of our Lord from those which prepare us for Lenten remembrances. In today's readings, our ears, hearts, and thoughts are being moved from God's appearances in mortal flesh to Jews and non-Jews alike. We are being led to recalling anew why the Church, and why you as part of her, need the Savior to have come in our flesh.

Transfiguration Sunday then, is a day of transition. The Gospel reading shows to Jesus' chosen disciples that His incarnate ministry was moving to the end for which He had appeared in human history. That is, Jesus came to die on the cross to pay the price for sin, all sin, your sin, for all time. The witness of the Law – represented by the appearance of the living Moses, and the testimony of the Prophets – represented by the appearance of the living Elijah, are declared to have been seen to give evidence of the Scriptures' promises and decrees concerning the Messiah were being completed in Jesus' presence at that time in history.

Yet, even those eternally living witnesses of the Word of God in His Presence, and all that they symbolized, were not alone in their testimony. Their words, handed down faithfully from generation-to-generation of believers can be beheld framing the message of today's Psalm. That is to say, the first five books of the Bible, recorded by Moses, come before today's Psalm in the Scriptures, and Elijah's words follow.

The second Psalm then, which you have heard so recently, serves to declare on this day that the Christ, Whom you know to be Jesus, is God's answer to humans' conspiring, plotting, and setting themselves against God. That leads us to turn to the first of the Psalm's four divisions, the only one which describes how all those who are apart from the Faith determine in themselves to relate to God.

*Why do the nations conspire, and peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth cause to set themselves, and rulers take counsel together, against YHWH and against His Messiah.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 2:1-2.

*“Let us burst apart Their bonds, and let us continue to cast from us Their cords.”<sup>9</sup>*

That is the only line of dialogue in this Transfiguration Day Psalm that unbelievers get to speak. Theirs is the desire of every person who is apart from God, anyone who hears of the Father’s love for them in sending the Son to be their sin-bearer without the Faith. They yearn for a creation without a Creator. They want to be, in essence, gods in themselves. Theirs is the lust of Adam in the Garden before the Tempter of Man. They ache to be free from YHWH’s lordship. Each and all yearn to master of self. They struggle to throw off the bonds which kept Adam from knowing in his flesh the difference between good and evil. The old sinful human nature, which we all inherit from our father Adam conspires with all other sinners in our sin and actually believes that these words reflect that which we truly want: *“Let us burst apart Their bonds, and let us continue to cast from us Their cords.”<sup>10</sup>*

Though you cannot see the repeated “Their” in the text, you can hear that each time, it is capitalized. Human longing, in the inherited sin-filled nature, is to be free in oneself from the bonds and cords of God and His Anointed One, His Messiah. The Old Nature, your Old Adam, looks to the glory of those words engraved in stone, and will not lift up his eyes. He sees the Law, and says, “I can do it!” If your Old Adam is really refined, he may even think, “Those were for ancient simple people. I live in a time of prosperity, technology, in a land of plenty. I don’t need those rules, because I have all I need without them.” If your Old Nature is really perverse, he can behold those lines and say, “Why bother, we are all going to die anyway. Once were gone, none of that will matter, for we will cease to be.” Oh, the lies we tell ourselves, the lies our culture feeds us, that which the Father of Lies uses to try to murder us that we might fall into an eternity separated from God and His anointed One.

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 2:3.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 2:3.

God, on the other hand, knows us for who we are, Old Adam for who he is, and Satan for who he desires to be. God looks at all the conspiring, plotting, setting ourselves up to be gods, our counseling together against Him and gives His answer. That was seen most clearly when that which Jesus, Elijah, and Moses were discussing came to pass – the death of Jesus in our sins for us sinners. To those who reject Jesus, the Anointed One of God’s all-sufficient sacrifice for sins and sinners, God declares His thoughts:

*He Who is sitting in heavens laughs; Adonai has them in derision. Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and in His fury He terrifies them.<sup>11</sup>  
“I have set My King upon Zion My holy mountain.”<sup>12</sup>*

That declares that God reigns. He is depicted looking down upon the children of man, those who desire to cast off His bonds and cords. God sees our old nature’s desires for what they are. He knows that, in ourselves we want to be free from His Word of conviction, condemnation, and killing – and to be released from His Word of atonement, acquittal and enlivening.

God laughs at such thinking. All the efforts of man to cast God away from himself appear to God as less significant than the efforts of any wasps to keep you from killing them as the weather warms. Oh, they have a sting, but you are still going to “wipe them out.” Think about this reality: our Old Human natures got their sting in when the Messiah was nailed to the cross. Their venom was poured out. It appeared that God was done. But, they, we, had forgotten God’s Word to those who railed against Him as this Psalm declares: *“I have set My King upon Zion My holy mountain.”<sup>13</sup>*

Yes, the Romans, and the Jews of old actually believed, and every unrepentant sinner ever since, if he or she gives a thought to it, believes that they were the ones who put the Man who is the King of the Jews on the Cross, on the Hill, on the Holy Mountain! Yet God declares, centuries before it came to pass, the He is the One

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<sup>11</sup> Psalm 2:4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 2:6.

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 2:6.

Who set His King on His Holy Mountain. Before the foundation of the world, Christ was crucified for the sins of the whole world. Without that reality, when you got done looking at those words under the cross, you would either fall into despair, or have a heart so hardened against God that you would die in your rejection of Him. But to you who lift up your eyes to see the truth in those images, to us who hear the promise in His Word, God, the Anointed King says:

*I will tell El's decree; YHWH says to Me, "My Son, I today have begotten You. Ask from Me, and I will make nations Your inheritance, and (the) ends of earth Your possession; You will break (them) with (a) rod of iron, as (a)vessel (a) potter dashes them in pieces."*<sup>14</sup>

There is the testimony of the Christ, raised up by God to be King, True God and True Man. His words, first spoken in this day's Transfiguration Psalm some one thousand years before they came to be in time, declare the decree, proclamation, command of God forever, "My Son, I today have begotten You." Only one Man, in all of history, has rightly heard those words applied to himself by the eternal Father of all. He heard it not once, as you did today in the account of the transfiguration, but twice. (The first was at His baptism in the Jordan (again the Transfiguration Day readings tie together the seasons of the Festival Half of the Church Year)).

These words of the King telling of God's decree, "My Son, I today have begotten You," are going to be heard by us again, as the Church Year turns to Lent. Then, the devil will taunt Jesus with, "If you are the Son of God..." as he attempts to lure the Messiah from His appointed end. So, even the greatest unbeliever is willing to use the Word of this day's Psalm testimony as he tries to deceive Jesus into falling away from God's decree. What then of the faithful, how do they use the Lord's testimony about His Son, His King, His Anointed One?

You heard earlier in this sermon that the Letter to the Hebrews uses this day's Psalm to declare that Jesus is the Son of God. You, in the Creed Hymn just before this

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 2:7-9.

sermon, confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, as we followed the teaching of the second Psalm. Nathanael, one of Jesus' first followers, when Jesus had declared to him who he was, exclaimed, "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!"<sup>15</sup> Paul, after God convicted and converted him, in testifying before a Jewish synagogue, following the public reading of the Law and the Prophets, quotes this day's Psalm and the declaration that Jesus is God's Son as the fulfillment of the Promise.<sup>16</sup> Further, St. Paul makes it clear that this Psalm declares that the Sonship of Jesus to the Father is made clear in His resurrection from the dead.<sup>17</sup> Transfiguration Sunday has crucifixion and resurrection! Perhaps it also has the ascension and return of the Messiah? Hear the Psalm:

*"And therefore, O kings, cause them to be wise; be warned, O rulers of earth. All of you serve the YHWH with fear; and all of you rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and all of you perish in (the) way; for His wrath is kindled quickly; blessed are all who take refuge in Him."<sup>18</sup>*

Well, there it is, another season or two is being bridged by the Transfiguration Psalm! Jesus, the King who reigned from the Cross, has conquered death, risen from the grave, received His full right as Son of the Father, ascended into glory, and now rules. His Word, accompanied by the Holy Spirit Who was fully poured out on all nations at the Pentecost Feast after Christ's ascension, even now goes forth. It calls you, who are leaders in your households, in your communities, in this world, to hear of your sin and to behold your Savior.

The Psalm calls those who hear and believe to do so with humility. You have been freed to serve the Lord, it is true, in your daily vocations. Yet such service is to be freely offered with the knowledge that you could have been, or could fall back into being, one of the multitudes who stand under God's condemnation. You are called to rejoice in the salvation God has given to you, not in arrogance. Rather, you are called to joy in

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<sup>15</sup> *John* 1:49 *NASB*.

<sup>16</sup> *Acts* 13:33.

<sup>17</sup> Also see *Romans* 1:4, where "the Day," is clearly the day of Jesus' resurrection.

<sup>18</sup> *Psalm* 2:10-12.

trembling for the truth that this salvation, rightness, and holy life in Christ is all a gift. Stand in awe in the Faith: it is nothing you have earned or can in yourselves keep right.

Know that you are freed to truly pay homage to the Son. That is what it means to kiss Him. It is to receive His gifts with thanksgiving, offering to Him your prayers, praises, and thanksgivings. For, except for His grace, God's wrath at the sin which still clings to you would be quickly enflamed. In account of His grace, in the Son, in the King, you are those whom He named millennia ago as the blessed ones who take refuge in Him, in His Word, in His reign. God has spoken His final Word in His Son.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Transfiguration (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 2; Exodus 34:29-35; II Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

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***Soli Deo Gloria***

For why do they conspire, nations, and peoples plot in vain?<sup>19</sup>

They cause to set themselves, kings of the earth, and rulers take counsel together against YHWH and against His Messiah.<sup>20</sup>

“Let us burst asunder the bonds of Them, and let us continue to cast from us Their cords.”<sup>21</sup>

He (Who is) sitting in heavens laughs; Adonai has in derision them.<sup>22</sup>

Then He will word to them in His wrath, and in His fury He terrifies them.<sup>23</sup>

“For I have set My King upon Zion, My mountain holy.”<sup>24</sup>

“I will tell El’s decree; YHWH says to Me, ‘Son of Me, I today have begotten You.’”<sup>25</sup>

“Ask from Me, and I will make nations Your inheritance, and Your possession, ends of earth.”<sup>26</sup>

“You will break them with rod of iron, as vessel potter, dash them in pieces.”<sup>27</sup>

“Now therefore, O kings, cause them to be wise, be warned, O rulers of earth.”<sup>28</sup>

“Serve, all of you, the YHWH, with fear; and rejoice all of you, in trembling.”<sup>29</sup>

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and all of you perish in (the) way; for is kindled quickly His wrath, blessed are all who take refuge in Him.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Psalm 2:1.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 2:2.

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 2:3.

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 2:4.

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 2:5.

<sup>24</sup> Psalm 2:6.

<sup>25</sup> Psalm 2:7.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 2:8.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 2:9.

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 2:10.

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 2:11.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 2:12.