

God's Anointed One, Jesus, is Both Savior and Judge

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

The Psalm appointed for reading at this Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord prophesies the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. The New Covenant texts that use this Psalm (according to reliable sources, Psalm two is used more than any of the other 149 Psalms), use it to declare God's Messiah, His Christ. Those readings declare that the Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

This day's Psalm unequivocally declares that God's Anointed One, Jesus, is both Savior and Judge. Therefore, this Psalm declares yet another Epiphany of our Lord. This Sunday follows earlier Feast and Sunday accounts of Jesus' appearance as Infant King to the Wise Men of old, God's testimony of Him as His Beloved Son in His Baptism, His revealing Himself to be the Bridegroom of His Church at the Wedding at Cana, (and other divine manifestations that may be declared in longer Epiphany seasons). Those other, "appearance of our Lord," Epiphany days prepare us to realize that today's Christ-Prophecy Psalm fittingly falls on the annual Sunday that has for centuries served for the Church's ultimate proclamation of Christ's revealing His hidden glory to sinful people.

As this is a Feast Day of Christ, in this place, our helpful tradition has a Psalm Hymn replace the reading or chanting of Psalm. Today, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed" provided a nice sung summary for this day's theme. That is,

Jesus is God's Anointed Son Who appeared in the flesh: He is the One Who would begin His majestic reign on earth as Savior and Judge as He rose from the dead!

Beginning with today's Psalm, printed in our bulletins on page seven, and its sung declaration from hymn 398, the daily readings move our hearing from God's Messiah Who was to come, to God's Messiah Who has come, to God's Messiah Who will come. They repeatedly proclaim to us God's Christ, Jesus. They reveal that He is both Savior and Judge – given by Him for all peoples for all time, but most especially for the household of God on earth. That is made up of those who have been sealed with His Covenants – given to and through Adam, Noah, Moses, David, and Jesus – they are you who have been sealed in His Name.

The second Psalm is a fitting Psalm for this day, and for this year. For we continue to behold nations – their leaders, and peoples – continually reasoning themselves away from God's clear Word. They willfully place themselves under Christ's Judgment, for they continue to reject Him as Savior. The lament expressed by many of you, in particular this weekend as Tucsonans - Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and others - recalled the life-giving Word's declaration that all human life is God's gift to be treasured. That divine revelation nations, peoples, and their leaders continue to set aside as they strive to honor the god of self. Angst over that is not new, though the circumstances that occasion it may change from time-to-time. It was expressed three thousand or so years ago through timeless words that may be declared this way:

Why do they conspire, nations, and peoples plot in vain? They cause to set themselves, kings of earth, and rulers counsel together against YHWH and against His Messiah [saying]:

*"Let us burst asunder Their bonds, and let us cause to cast from us Their cords."*¹

Saint Peter, about whose confession of Jesus as the Christ our Wednesday congregation heard, (when he was with John and others of the infant New Testament Church), Peter declared that the words of this day's Psalm were first given through the Israelite King David. A survey of his kingly life events can lead one to think he was writing about an event in his life. Even so, as Jesus the Christ witnesses elsewhere that the Psalms testify to Him: the Psalm must declare Him to the faithful. That includes King David! Therefore, the Psalmist's words are about God, specifically Christ Jesus. They also speak against anyone who opposes Him and His Word – even the greatest and mighty of all humans in any time are not exempt.

To be clear: that includes the U.S. Supreme Court and their rulings against human life from conception to humanly unaided death; the Congress of the U.S. and its laws that fail to uphold and support human life; and any President of the U.S. who refuses to enforce laws and ordinances that sustain and order human life for the good of all the country's citizens. It also includes you, if you fall into the temptation to believe that you have the right to determine the time and manner of your death, or the death of anyone. (That is, unless you are appointed as a judge or jury member in a capital crime trial. There is a divinely appointed First Use of the Law. If you have forgotten what that means, return to your Catechism and the Scriptures that underlie it). In every case, know

¹ Psalm 2:1-3.

that this day's theme is also for you, to bring you comfort when you have failed in keeping God's Word of Life:

Jesus is God's Anointed Son Who appeared in the flesh: He is the One Who would begin His majestic reign on earth as Savior and Judge as He rose from the dead!

Just as Christ Jesus rose from the dead to the glory of the Father, so too will be raised all who faithfully bore His Name in this life into death's dark sleep. They are those, you we pray, who not only behold Jesus as Judge in their sins, but as Savior from them and the death that they bring. That understanding helps us understand that Transfiguration Sunday is always a life Sunday! It declares the hidden life of Christ that will be revealed in the faithful to all creation when the living Christ returns in His glory. This day declares the majestic glorious appearance of Jesus as the living Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, and it all began in our hearing with these words:

Why do they conspire, nations, and peoples plot in vain? They cause to set themselves, kings of earth, and rulers counsel together against YHWH and against His Messiah [saying]:

"Let us burst asunder Their bonds, and let us cause to cast from us Their cords."²

The Word of the Day reveals that - even at the time of His glorious appearance on the mountain to three reliable eyewitnesses who would later bear their good confession of the faith into death - the Scripture reveals that nations, peoples, and their leaders were conspiring against Him. They plotted to take His life, which they reasoned was for the betterment of their, and their countrymen's lives. They said, as the

² Psalm 2:1-3.

unfaithful still say of God and His Word of Life: *Let us burst asunder Their bonds, and let us cause to cast from us Their cords.*³

In the only statement the unbelievers make in this day's Psalm, they declared their will to be free of God, His Messiah, His Work, and His Life. To enact their desired freedom to remain in sin they would bind Jesus. They would take the Word of Life and hand Him over to death. In the end, they have received that which they desired, separation from the Author of Life.

That day, Scripture elsewhere informs the faithful hearer, Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah knew about that. Peter, James, and John overheard the Savior, the Lawgiver, and the Prophet as they were discussing Jesus' coming death in Jerusalem. We do not have an exact record of all the words of their conversation. Even so, we may teach that all of them would have fully known the second Psalm's Word of Law and Gospel proclamation. From that, they would have been intimately aware of God's reaction to the conniving and scheming of His enemies. After all, the well-known Psalm two declares:

*He sitting in (the) heavens laughs; Adonai has derision for them. Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and in His fury He terrifies them, [saying]:
"I have set My King upon Zion My holy mountain."⁴*

That speaks of another Epiphany of our Lord. It reveals King Jesus in His full glory. In the Mind of God, which He continues to reveal through the proclamation of the Scripture He inspired, the Christ had already been crucified before He cast down the

³ Psalm 2:3.

⁴ Psalm 2:6.

foundations of creation. Through His revelation, He continues to announce that Messiah was also raised from the dead before time began! The eternal Word broke into time. It declared the time when the Anointed One of God would begin to speak judgment to unbelieving nations, peoples, and their leaders.

In Christ's crucifixion, this fallen world, the devil, and all unrepentant sinners were judged. His death destroyed death's eternal hold on those who would hear, tremble, and fear on account of their sins. The news of His death as sin-bearer for all would cause the faithful to rejoice that they continually hear that He has redeemed them, you, from all sin.

Look to the image of the Cross. Remember that He was lifted high to bridge the gap between you and God. Hear that He did all that was needful to atone for – to cover over – every stain of sin in you.

Then remember that in Christ's resurrection, His just reign began. At that inauguration, you were declared right with the Father. There is much more, but so little time today – though Jesus accomplished all of that long ago, His death and resurrection remain present today. (This you repeatedly declare whenever you partake of His Holy Supper).

The Word of life that kills and enlivens continues to go forth in order to convict sinners in their sins, and to call them to new life in Him. That is the Epiphany of our Lord in which all have lived since His ascension to the right of God. Such Law and Gospel appearances of our Lord will continue until the Last day.

Then, at Christ's last and eternal Epiphany, those who did not turn from their sins by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's convicting and acquitting Word, will receive His eternal fury. That is true, for He once, and for all time, has set His King – Jesus – on His Holy Mountain. His rule even now goes forth through the Word.

Remain in the Word that you not spend eternity in terror at the mere thought of being in the Presence of the Living God! Receive His Presence in His Means of Grace. Remember that, through His gifts, you reign with Him even now in His kingdom of grace. Rejoice that God has prevented you from enduring eternal terror from Christ's judgment foreshadowed in the majestic glory that shone forth from Jesus' face and clothing on that holy mountain. Hear that God's Word ring out. It calls you to hear the Messiah of the Psalm, the Jesus of Scripture. Recall that each Epiphany season you hear, in Psalm or song:

I will tell the decree: YHWH said to Me, "My Son, I, this day, have begotten You. Ask from Me, and I will make nations Your inheritance, and Your possession (the) ends of earth; them You will break with (a) rod of iron, as (a) vessel (a) potter dashes in pieces."⁵

In those words, you hear again the declaration from heaven proclaimed into the ears of three men who were moved to cower in fear. This they did even as the majestic cloud of God's glory enveloped them and they had beheld Jesus' radiant Presence. The earth and all its fullness are the Lord's. He rules it through His Word, and because He rose to life from the dead, you know that He will accomplish all His Word proclaims. In the third division of the Psalm, you again hear the basis for today's theme:

⁵ Psalm 2:7-9.

Jesus is God's Anointed Son Who appeared in the flesh: He is the One Who would begin His majestic reign on earth as Savior and Judge as He rose from the dead!

God, in the second Psalm, beseeches His Messiah to ask from Him the authority to rule all nations, everything to the ends of the earth. God, on the Mount of His transfiguration, implores His Christ's followers to hear Him. God, in the Person of Jesus-gloriously transformed, reaches down to them in their terror. He touches them out of His glorious epiphany. He calls them to rise up and fear not. What image of God epiphanying in a similar manner toward you in your sinful state does that bring to mind?

At this table, the Anointed Judge and Savior comes in Word and Sacrament. From it and from its extensions (the chancel rail) God touches you. He calls out to you who bow down and/or kneel in His Presence to turn away from fear at your sins. He declares again that He has taken them from you. He will invite you to rise, and fear not, for all that has separated you from God He will have again removed from you.

Because His first transfiguration day disciples were faithful to His command, all generations since have heard that He is raised from the dead. The Son reigns on earth as our Savior Who has judged, in Himself, the sins of His faithful ones. That leads us hearers of the Word this day to the conclusion the Lord gives through His Psalmist:

"Now therefore, O kings, all of you cause to be wise; all of you be warned, O rulers of earth. All of you serve the YHWH with fear; and all of you rejoice with trembling. All of you kiss the Son lest He being angered and all of you perish in (the) way; for is kindled quickly, His wrath; blessed are all taking refuge in Him."⁶

⁶ Psalm 2:10-12.

History records that the prophecy of the second Psalm continued to be fulfilled throughout the decades, centuries, and millennia of Christ's New Covenant reign. History records that there was once a Christian Empire in Europe and the Middle East. We witness that there remain dwindling remnants of Christian based-mores on this continent.

Even as those pass away, God's "therefore" that promises life still rings out. God's Anointed One, Jesus, remains both Savior and Judge. His appearances, His epiphanies, veiled under Word, water, bread and wine, still raises up those who serve Him with fear, and rejoice in trembling. You will carry Him, His life, this day into your world in your persons. Who knows how people will be touched by your hearing God's call to repentance this day? We pray that they too will be blessed, as you are, by taking refuge in Him.

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

January 21, 2018

Pastor Michael H. Merchonise

Soñ Deo Gloria

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⁷ *Psalm 2:1-3.*

⁸ *Psalm 2:6.*

⁹ *Psalm 2:7-9.*

¹⁰ *Psalm 2:10-12.*