

Communion Weekend

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Date: 11 November 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Let's once again join together in prayer. We're going to bow our heads for a few moments. Our Father in heaven, we pray that as we reflect now on how prophetically the Psalms, they shed light on the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray to be caught up in that light and in that glory, to gaze at His glory this evening. We thank you for the promise that one day that those who trust in Jesus one day will, with the new bodies, the glorified bodies that we receive at the resurrection, we will gaze forever at the Lord with whom we will be.

But meanwhile, we thank you for that glimpse that we have in this world through your word and we pray that you'll bless it to us now in Jesus name.

Amen. Psalm 110. I just want to read the first few verses with you again. Psalm 110. The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion. You will rule in the midst of your enemies. Your troops or your people will be willing in the day of battle arrayed in holy majesty from the womb of the dawn.

[1 : 3 3] You will receive the due of your youth. And so on. When I read this psalm, it reminds me of taking a photograph with a digital camera of a scene.

You know how you take a photograph and you can see on your screen, you can see the various elements in the photograph coming into focus.

And if you shift it from left to right, for example, you'll see the camera's desperately trying to focus on the individual components in front of you.

When I read this psalm, it's like you're desperately wanting to focus on the elements, the individual details of the psalm.

And we could spend all evening this evening and more than that, talking about the individual elements that you find in it. For example, who is Melchizedek?

[2 : 3 6] What does it mean, the womb of the dawn? What does it mean? Your troops will be willing on your day of battle?

And so on and so forth. You're tempted as you're reading it to home in on the elements, the little details of the psalm. But what I first want to do this evening is to get the big picture, the whole scene, because it's only when we get the big picture that I think we get the context that allows us to dwell on some of the details.

And I want us to set the record straight from day one, from the very beginning, by looking at it in a messianic light. In other words, by recognizing how Jesus not only fits into this psalm, but he actually takes the central place in the psalm.

But first of all, I want us to see how it divides into three. The whole psalm divides into three. The first scene is in heaven, wherever that is, where God in his majesty and in his glory is located, if we can use that word.

It's in heaven, which we can only determine by faith as we read the details given to us, given in the Bible. But it's in heaven.

- [4 : 08] And there's a conversation taking place in heaven between the Lord and my Lord. So the first scene is a heavenly scene, but it has an earthly consequence.
- Because as the Lord speaks to my Lord, it has a consequence. There's a result that takes place on earth where God's enemies are.
- So it's a heavenly scene with an earthly consequence. That's the first thing. The second scene in the psalm, from verse 3 to 4, is a scene on earth.
- A scene with heavenly perspective. So whilst we are looking at the people who are in God's day of battle, arrayed in holy majesty, whatever that means, we'll see that in a few moments, the whole thing is looked at from the point of view of heaven.
- This is God looking down on the earth. And this is what he sees. So it's an earthly scene from a heavenly perspective.
- [5 : 23] That's the second part of the psalm. The third part of the psalm unfolds to the end. And again, we have an earthly scene, but this time with a heavenly ending, with a glorious finality to it.
- Where God will judge nations, heaping up the dead, crushing the rulers of the whole earth, and symbolically drinking from the brook in victory because he has ultimately triumphed over all the evil of this world.
- And by the way, if the final part of this psalm makes you feel uncomfortable, if you don't like the judgmental places in the Bible, then you won't like parts of the New Testament, parts of revelation, parts of even the teaching of Jesus, which are judgmental because Jesus has the ultimate right to judge the world.
- And this psalm we have to listen to because this is God speaking. And he's telling us what will finally happen to this world when he judges it and when he destroys all that is evil.
- Now, we're going to leave the last part out because there's no time to go into it. I want to concentrate on the first two scenes. The heavenly scene with the earthly consequence and the earthly scene with a heavenly dimension.
- [6 : 53] That should be fairly straightforward. I think that should be enough for us this evening. And I want to end this evening by focus on the character of God's people as we prepare our hearts to remember the Lord's death tomorrow.
- So the first part of the psalm is a heavenly scene. And we know that right away because it contains a conversation between the Lord, the Lord. You notice the word L-O-R-D, capital letters.
- That always means Yahweh in Hebrew. It's the living and true God of Israel, the God of the Bible, the only God there is. And he is speaking to this mysterious character called my Lord.
- So the first question we have to ask, in fact, the essential question we have to ask is the question that will set the psalm in context is who is the Lord speaking to?
- Who is Yahweh speaking to? My Lord. My Lord. My Lord. My L-O-R-D. This time L-O-R-D is in small case. It's in lower case.
- [8 : 05] L is capitalized. But the rest of the word is lower case. So here's this mysterious character that is in conversation with Yahweh himself.
- The Lord. God the Father. And I'm not going to waste any time this evening in identifying who this mysterious character is. The New Testament makes it absolutely clear in the passage that we read.
- Here is the words of Peter. He quotes this very opening verse in reference to Jesus who has risen from the dead and has now ascended to be with the Father.

Peter makes no, there is no dubiety with Peter whatsoever. He identifies this character. So in the light of the New Testament, the interpretation of this psalm becomes immensely easy.

The Lord is speaking to my Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is speaking to Jesus. Except it's not the baby Jesus.

[9 : 15] And it's not the teaching Jesus. It's not the Jesus walking on the water or feeding the 5,000. It's not even the crucified Jesus.

Neither is it the risen Jesus. It is the ascended Jesus. After completing everything that the Father had given him to do, here is an announcement, the announcement that seems to me to encapsulate everything that Jesus did in coming into the world.

His birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. And now finally comes this triumphal command, sit at my right hand.

It covers everything. Everything. Because what it means is that everything that Jesus came into the world to do has now been accomplished.

Which is, of course, to secure our redemption, our salvation. It is all done. He has secured it. He's done it.

[10 : 31] The work of our salvation is completed. And when he returns to the place of glory, the place where the Father is located, and who knows, I'm using these words without even understanding what they mean, except we know that heaven is a real place.

God says to his own son, sit at my right hand. Because in so commanding him, he is recognizing that the sacrifice that he offered up to God, the sacrifice of himself, has been fully accepted on our behalf.

He is the Lamb of God. He's taken away the sin of the world. He's paid the price of our guilt. He's done it all for us. Everything that the Father commanded him and commissioned him to do in this world, he has completed it perfectly.

Our salvation is a done deed. And we rest our salvation on him and on him alone. Sit at my right hand.

In triumph and in glorious victory. And we believe that to this day, Jesus sits at the Father's right hand as God and as man.

[12 : 02] Don't ever think, by the way, don't ever be mistaken into thinking that when Jesus left this world, when he was transported, if we could use that word, when he ascended up to heaven, that he left his humanity behind him.

He sits in heaven tonight in our nature as God and man, as our representative, as our great high priest, as our advocate with the Father.

I could say so much about his intercession. And there's so much in the New Testament about his intercession. And we don't give enough thought, do we?

We're commanded to think, quite rightly so, about how he died for us. And we'll be doing that specifically tomorrow around the Lord's table. We're commanded to do that. But we're also to remember that Jesus is alive.

And he sits today at the Father's right hand for us. The New Testament also goes on to say that we sit in him. We are united to him in heaven.

[13 : 10] Now, there's a mystery if ever there was one. But one which deeply affects the way in which we live in obedience to him this evening. So, the first scene then is the heavenly scene, where God the Father, he commands his Son to sit at his right hand as a consequence, as the final act.

But yet, despite our thinking that it is a final act, it's actually only the beginning. This is not the end of the psalm.

The psalm opens with Jesus' ascension. So, whilst we think of Jesus' ascension as the culmination of everything that he came to do, in another real sense, it is only the beginning.

And that's why the psalm begins. This is the foundation. There is a great future ahead that is marked out by Jesus' death and his resurrection and his ascension.

The psalm is going to go on and describe how our redemption is not only accomplished, but it is applied.

[14 : 26] It gets put into practice in this world. Now, if what I'm saying is true, and if the psalm begins with the ascension, and it ends with final judgment in the world, then do you realize what we're looking at here?

However, this psalm actually prophetically describes to us the whole of the New Testament. It begins with the ascension, where Jesus sits at the Father's right hand, and it ends with a judgment, the final judgment.

What comes in between? The whole of the New Testament, including where you and I are this evening. And that's what makes it so relevant.

The whole Bible is relevant, but it's when you look at it like this, in the light of the New Testament, all of a sudden we think, well, we've got a part in this. Actually, we're part of it.

And that's where the connection comes. And I hope that that connection is made living and made real for each of us this evening, as we see ourselves and our own part in this.

[15 : 36] But God the Father doesn't stop with the command to sit at God's right, at his right hand. He then makes a promise. He says this, the Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion.

The scepter, of course, is the symbol of rule and authority. This rule and authority extends everywhere. Then he goes on to say, you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

Let's stop there. We're still in heaven. We're still listening. We're eavesdropping on the conversation between the Father and the Son. And this is what he has to say. He says, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool.

But then he says, rule. Commands him to rule. He promises him that his rule, his authority has been established. Now you might say, well, hold on a minute.

This is God speaking here. Does God not rule anyway? Does he not rule finally and ultimately and infinitely? And does he not have more rule and authority than anyone else?

[16 : 41] Because he spoke the universe into being. How can there be? And yet, there seems to be something new here, doesn't there? There's something here that wasn't there before.

Something that arises as a consequence of Jesus' work on earth. This rule, this authority. What is it?

What is there now that there wasn't before in God? And doesn't it kind of remind you of what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 28?

Just about when he was just about to be ascended to heaven. Do you remember what he said? He said, go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.

Now we know that bit, don't we? But sometimes what we don't read properly is what goes before it. Which is this. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

[17 : 41] All authority has been given to me. And once again, you might say, well, surely as the son of God, you have all authority anyway. You've had it from all eternity. You have no beginning.

You'll have no end. You're God. Surely what makes you God is authority. And yet, this is what he says to us. All authority has been given.

What does he mean by that? Well, he's referencing the gospel. He's referencing what he has just done. And what he has just done has produced in the world.

And what did it produce? It produced forgiveness. Cleansing. Cleansing. It produced new life, which is given by God to us.

The undeserving. You might say, well, does God not have the ability to just forgive sins by just saying the word?

[18 : 45] He actually doesn't. He doesn't. Now, that may surprise you. I better explain what I mean. He doesn't. Because if God was to just obliterate sin, it would be going against his own nature.

Because God has said that the wages of sin is death. Therefore, because sin produces a penalty, that penalty has to be paid.

And it either has to be paid by us or it is paid by Jesus. Now, because Jesus has paid the penalty for our sin on the cross, therefore, on that basis, he can say to us tonight, your sin is forgiven.

Because the guilt has been taken away. The price has been paid. The sacrifice has been offered and accepted by God. Therefore, he and his church has the authority to go out with the gospel and to pronounce the forgiveness of sins to all those who surrender in faith to Jesus Christ.

That's what it means by rule. This is a new kind of rule. Of course, God can do whatever he wants, as long as it doesn't contradict his own nature.

[20 : 11] But this is a new kind of rule. A rule in which the sins of men and women and boys and girls are forgiven and cleansed and removed.

And that was only made possible by the death of Jesus Christ. He's he's he rules. But look at the the next thing about this command is not only does he rule in a new way, but he rules in the midst of his enemies.

He rules in the midst of his enemies. Now, there's something strange about that. Because normally when one army fights another army, there's a clear demarcation.

There's a front line. There's a frontier. There's maybe a no man's land. There's maybe a space between the two armies. And in that space, at some point, then there will be a great battle.

But there's the one army on the one hand and the other army on the other hand. And it's very clear where both sides are. But here it's different. Because here the father is commanding the son to rule in the midst of his enemies.

[21 : 36] He's to go behind enemy lines and establish his kingdom, his rule and his authority right in the enemy camp.

That's most unusual, isn't it? It's most extraordinary for any force or any army to do that. But that's exactly how Jesus' authority is going to work.

On this earth. Right in front of and in the middle of his enemies. Right where they are. And as we move into the second scene of the psalm, we discover that he brings this rule to pass through his church, through his people.

And it's not by sword. It's not by guns. It's not by coercion. It's not by force. It's not by making people convert to following Jesus.

The rule, the authority which Jesus has in this world is the still small voice of the gospel.

[22 : 51] As the word is shared. And as Christians move out into the world, as the disciples did after Matthew 28.

Often at great cost to themselves. And as they shared the gospel. They discovered the hostility and the violence of those who were opposed to the message of the gospel.

Many of them gave their lives for the sake of the gospel. And yet, God's kingdom advanced and developed and grew right behind enemy lines.

And so it has ever been since. For 2000 years. And it will be. It will continue to be in the future.

So that's the heavenly scene then. With an earthly consequence. Jesus commanded to sit at the Father's right hand. He is given this rule. On the basis of his death and his resurrection.

[24 : 01] And he is to rule behind enemy lines. Through his church. Through his people. The second scene is the people.

And it's just as glorious. Just as triumphant. And just as majestic. We don't know what heaven looks like this evening.

We've never been there. We can only imagine. By taking the little pieces of information that the Bible gives us.

And trying to use our imagination. I wouldn't try too hard. Because we'll get it wrong. All we can think of is what our puny minds can think of. But I think all of us will say one day.

Eye has not seen. Nor he has heard. Nor has it entered into the heart of man. What God has prepared for those who love him. And that's where faith comes in. Heaven is something that goes way beyond our greatest imaginations.

[25 : 01] But heaven will be the most glorious place. And the first part of this psalm is. Has taken us into heaven. But now we're going to come back down to earth.

And we're going to see how this first part plays out on the earth. But we're going to see it from God's perspective. And it's so important to see it from God's perspective.

Because if we see it only from ours. Then we get bogged down. And we despair at all the difficulties. And the frustrations.

And the hostility that there is. The enemy in all his might. If you see it from God's perspective. Then the triumph is guaranteed.

The victory is assured. Now here's how God looks at the world. The world in which the church. His people. You and I.

[25 : 59] Are out there. Sharing the gospel. Living as Jesus wants us to live. As living examples of the reality of the gospel.

Here we have verse 3. Your troops or your people. Will be willing. That's the first thing that describes. That's the first word that describes. God's people.

They are a willing people. They are a willing people. Now remember what I said before. They haven't been coerced into believing in Jesus. They haven't been forced.

They haven't been harassed. At least I hope not. They've been persuaded. Their minds have changed. Their hearts have been renewed.

They can say I once was lost. But now I'm found. I was blind. But now I see. I was dead. And now I'm alive again.

[27 : 04] Perhaps many of you this evening can remember back to a time when you hated God. There are people here. There are people in Aberdeen. And all across our country. And all across the world.

You go up to them and start talking about God. They will call you for everything under the sun. They don't want to hear. It's the last thing they want to hear about. And yet. Yet.

God can change that person. God can make that person into a believer. See what the psalm tells us is the world from God's perspective.

From God's triumphant perspective. And we. You and I. Are living examples. Of what God can do.

And what God will do. In the hearts of people. Who are touched by the gospel. And set free by the power of Jesus. And if he can do it.

[28 : 02] At least I can say it from my perspective anyway. If he can do it for me. He can do it for anybody. Because. By nature. We're dead. We're hostile.

We hate God. Because God shows us up for what we are. And yet. When we come to see. The truth of Jesus Christ. Our hearts are changed by the power.

Of the Holy Spirit. So. His people are willing. And that word willing. Is. Is. I read some.

Some commentary. Some time ago. Over this. And. I had one or two. Here's the way some commentators put it. I think some of these. Expressions are marvelous.

Here's the way one person puts it. Your people are unsparing offerings. See willingness. Is not just. Is not reluctant willingness.

[28 : 57] There's no such thing as reluctant willingness. Willingness. When it comes to. A person. Their faith in Jesus. Is loving willingness. Is ready to serve Jesus.

Whatever the cost. Unsparing offerings. Another one says this. Your people are willingness itself.

We are the embodiment. Of willingness. Another person says. You have the homage. Of your people. Willingness.

In other words. In other words. Involves our worship. What do we do when we're worshipping? We're expressing. The love. The unique.

Love. That we have. Sometimes. Sometimes. Of course. That love. We feel. More strongly about it. Than others. We feel. That that love is stronger. Than.

[29 : 53] Than at other times. I know. That there are times. Of difficulty. Like we're saying last night. Times. When. Our. Circumstances. Change. And when we might feel.

That our love is growing colder. Yet God is able to. Resolve all of that. He's able to. Enthuse us. And encourage us. And remind us. Afresh.

That that love. Is ignited. By his love. For us. In Jesus Christ. So that's what willingness means.

It's a lot more than. It's. It sounds at first. At first sight. And then. There is. The fact that.

They are. Holy. They are arrayed. In holy. Majesty. That word holy.

[30 : 48] Is very important. You can't understand the Bible. Without it. It belongs to God. First and foremost. It describes God's. Righteousness. His otherness.

His separateness. From everything. That he. That he has created. It's the word. That seems to. Seems to. Jump out.

When we read passages. Like Exodus chapter 3. Where Moses. Sees the burning bush. And where he goes over. First of all. Out of curiosity. To see this. Strange sight.

And then when he realizes. What it is. He's looking at. He's looking at. God. Himself. Then he has to. He. All of a sudden. Realizes.

His own. Sinfulness. And. He draws back. Because he was afraid. To look at God. And that's what happens to us. When we are.

[31 : 45] When we discover. Who God is. It was the same with Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 6. When he saw the Lord. High and lifted up. And the train of his robe. Filled the temple.

And the angels. They cried. Holy. Holy. Holy. Is the Lord of hosts. All of a sudden. It's like. Isaiah's world. Collapses.

And he sees himself. For what he is. When he says. Woe is me. For I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell among a people. Of unclean lips.

And my eyes have seen the Lord. It's at that point. You notice. At that point. That the angel. Goes to the altar. And it takes a burning coal. And touches. Isaiah.

Thereby. Cleansing him. And removing. His. Sin. And that's what's happened to us. By faith in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 39] Our sin has been cleansed. And we have been. Made holy. We have been separated. To serve God. And to love him.

And to follow him. They are holy. Now tonight. As we. Think about the Lord's table. And as we are. Rightly. Examining ourselves.

The Bible tells us. To examine ourselves. We don't like what we find. What we find is ugly. Isn't it? At least it is with me. We find all the dross.

And all the filth. And all the shame. When we honestly examine ourselves. In the light of God's word. And yet. We know that there's no one else. We can turn to.

The answer is not staying away from church. Or staying away from communion table. That's not the answer. The answer is in coming afresh. To God. In repentance.

[33 : 38] And in confessing our sin. And he says if we confess our sin. He is faithful and just. And will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But I want you to see tonight. Whatever we think of ourselves. This is how God sees us. He sees us as a people. As he looks on us this evening.

He sees us as a people. Who have been made willing. Lovingly willing. To serve him. Because that's the one thing. Whatever else we're able to say tonight. Are we not able. When Jesus asks us.

Do you love me? Is the answer not yes? Maybe a hesitating yes. Maybe we hesitate.

Because we're so aware. Of our own failures. And yet the answer is yes. Isn't it? We do love Jesus. And God sees us as a holy people.

[34 : 33] A willing people. And a holy people. Who have been separated by him. From the rest of the world. A holy people. And he also calls us.

A young people. People. Let me read it for you. Your troops will be willing. On the day of your battle. Arrayed in holy majesty. From the womb of the dawn.

You will receive the Jew. Of your youth. Now what does he mean by that? Well let's imagine for a moment.

This scene that's described for us. In this passage. Here is God. And he's describing the world. As he sees it. Or rather the church. As he sees it. And it's like.

There's a dawn. A new day dawning. Because of Jesus' resurrection. And his ascension. All eyes are towards the future. There's a new beginning.

[35 : 39] And as the sun rises. Over this wonderful field. There's this glistening covering. Over this glorious. Majestic. This sparkling mass.

That covers the field. It's Jew. There's something really lovely. About the way that the sun shines. The morning sun shines. On the Jew.

And the Jew. Is comprised of droplets. Each one of them. Reflecting the sun. And forming this massive. People.

Who love God. And who are motivated. And energized. And oriented towards. His glory. And his obedience. That's the way.

That God. Sees. The church. Today. And you and I are part of that. That's the way that God sees us. And no matter how despondent.

[36 : 44] We are sometimes tempted to get. About ourselves. And the church. And how the odds are against us. And how much. How much. How many challenges. There are out there. And how. How difficult it is.

To live the Christian life. God. Is always. On our side. And God looks upon us.

As his glorious people. Here's what Paul says. He says. You. We. He says. Are God's workmanship. We. Are God's workmanship.

Created in Christ Jesus. To do good works. You and I belong to that. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. In what way.

Are we young. There's a sense. In which. Every one of God's people. Is young. Because. If I look out. And some of you are old. And some of you are young.

[37 : 41] This evening. No getting away from it. I categorize myself. In the older section. What's the difference between us? The difference between us.

Is that a young person. Looks at life in terms of. What is. In front of him. Or in front of her. I'm sure you've often had people say to you.

You've got your whole life in front of you. Which of course. I hope is true. And people. When you get to my age. You're tempted to start reminiscing.

And start thinking of your life. As. Being in the past. You remember more. Events. Especially when I come here.

And remember. The years that we spent here. Where have all these years have gone. And things. Incidents. And happenings. And events. And people. And trying to remember people's names. And all that.

[38 : 39] And you're tempted to think of your life. As being in the past. And it is. And we've got so much to be thankful for. And yet the past is in the past.

Isn't it? As far as the gospel is concerned. Life is always in the future. We don't pray for the past. Do we? You never pray for the past.

Why? Because you can't change it. Not even prayer can change the past. God cannot undo. What has done. What has been done already.

What God can do. Is he can so work. Things that have been done in the past. To make them work for his. For our good. And for his glory. That's an amazing thing about God's providence.

All things work together for good. And we're quite entitled to pray for that. But we can't pray for. That God will change the past. Because that's absurd. What do we pray for?

[39 : 36] We always pray for the future. Don't we? So there's a sense. In which whatever age we are this evening. Life is what is in front of us.

However long that is. Or however short it is. Our lives. Are in front of us. And that's what we pray for. We pray that God will work.

In the future. Today. Tomorrow. Next week. We pray that God will do great things. So there's a sense. In which. Tonight. We're at a new beginning.

Because God. Is the God. Of new beginnings. Looking into. A glorious future. Do you know. You notice this psalm. It's all in the future.

Beginning with. The ascension of Jesus. Working its way. Towards. The second coming of Jesus. And the final judgment. And we are tonight.

[40 : 37] A people of the future. We pray for the future. We anticipate the future. We rejoice. In what God. Is going to do. So we can't get hung up. On the past.

And if you are hung up. On the past. Then ask the Lord. To deal with it. If it's a past weakness. A past failure. A past sin. That you're conscious of.

Then come to the Lord. Come to God. And he will graciously pardon. Move on. Make this an opportunity.

Sitting around the Lord's table. Tomorrow. To remember. Jesus. With a view.

To his coming again. And to everything that is in. The future. Let's give thanks. For what God has done. In Jesus Christ.

[41 : 36] But let us pray. And. Anticipate. What God will do. In us. In the future.

As he works. Within us. As his. Magnificent. People. That's what he looks on us as. There it is.

Your troops will be willing. In your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty. From the womb of the dawn. You will receive the due. Of your youth. He has loved us.

He continues to love us. Which means that he is thrilled. As he looks on his people. This evening. Let's come in that thrill.

And enjoy. What he has done for us. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Our Father in heaven. We do rejoice. In what you have made us.

[42 : 33] We confess. The vileness. Of our sin. But we thank you. That you're able to remove it completely. And we pray. That this will be an occasion. When.

When we. With renewed determination. And renewed strength. We move into the future. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

And so Lord. We pray. That as we. Remember. What Jesus did for us. That you will give us a hatred. For everything that is sinful. And give us to see ourselves.

As you have described us. In all its preciousness. And in all its glory. In Jesus name. Amen.