

SUNDAY 22 September 2024 - St Paul's Cooma 9.30am

Introduction

Hymn TIS 124 - Great God, we sing that mighty hand

**Great God, we sing that mighty hand
by which supported still we stand;
the opening year your mercy shows,
and mercy crowns it at its close.**

**By day, by night, at home, abroad,
still we are guarded by our God;
by his incessant bounty fed,
by his unerring counsel led.**

**With grateful hearts the past we own;
the future, all to us unknown,
we to your guardian care commit,
and peaceful leave before your feet.**

**In scenes exalted or depressed,
you are our joy and you our rest;
your goodness all our hopes shall raise,
adored through all our changing days.**

Greeting

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the day

He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." Psalm 2.5-6

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Prayer of the Day

O God,

You give light to the blind and comfort to the sorrowing, and in your Son you have given us a High Priest who has offered the true sacrifice for us and yet can sympathise with us in our weakness: hear the cry of your people and lead us home to our true country, where with your Son and Holy Spirit, you live and reign, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen**

The Ministry of the Word

Genesis 22:15–18

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 2

¹ 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.

Acts 4.23-31

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: “ ‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’ ²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Matthew 12:17–21

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁷ This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. ¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. ²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.”

This is the gospel of the Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - Psalm 2 - Why do the nations conspire?

Question Time

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Gracious God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as

we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn TIS 131 - Father of heaven whose love profound

Father of heaven whose love profound

A ransom for our souls has found

Before Your throne we sinners bend

To us Your pardoning love extend

Almighty Son incarnate Word

Our prophet priest redeemer Lord

Before Your throne we sinners bend

To us Your saving grace extend

Eternal Spirit by whose breath

The soul is raised from sin and death

Before Your throne we sinners bend

To us Your quickening power extend

Thrice holy -- Father Spirit Son

Mysterious Godhead Three-in-One

Before Your throne we sinners bend

Grace pardon life to us extend

The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, we thank you for this world of wonder and delight. You have given it to us to care for, so that all your creatures may enjoy its bounty.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that when we turned away from you, you sent Jesus to live and work as one of us, and bring us back to you. He showed us how to love you and set us free to love and serve one another.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

We thank you that on the cross Jesus took away our sin, all that keeps us from each other and from you. He frees us from hate and fear, from all that destroys love and trust.

Lord our God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

And so with everyone who believes in you, with all the saints and angels, we rejoice and praise you, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us. Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**
The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.

After Communion

Father of all we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others; we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world. **Keep us in this hope that we have grasped: so we and all your people will be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name.**

Hymn TIS 161 - Tell Out My Soul

**Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice
Tender to me the promise of His Word
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice**

**Tell out my soul the greatness of His name
Make known His might the deeds His arm has done
His mercy sure from age to age the same
His holy name the Lord the mighty one**

**Tell out my soul the greatness of His might
Powers and dominions lay their glory by
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight
The hungry fed the humble lifted high**

**Tell out my soul the glories of His Word
Firm is His promise and His mercy sure
Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and for evermore**

Notices

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of

God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon - Psalm 2 - Why do the nations Conspire?

As kids did you ever play that imagination game - "Would A beat B in a fight?" Usually it was super heroes: would Superman beat Batman, but sometimes it would be animals - would lions beat tigers, or when things got really competitive, my dad versus your dad.

Countries of course play this for real, and are playing it today. I really don't want to get into a game of If Australia got into a fight with Russia... for example. I don't think Ukraine likes that game, and to be honest, no one is winning.

They seem to be playing a different version of the game in our psalm this morning. They are playing if your country and my God got into a fight, who would win?

Our psalm today looks at the relationship between God and the nations. As we read this psalm, we must remember that the Jews in the Old Testament divided the world into two. Firstly, there was Israel, God's own people, then there were the nations, everyone else. We know that Israel were God's chosen people, but the other nations were supposed to be blessed by God through Israel, as we read in our Old Testament reading this morning. After Abraham had shown that he was willing to sacrifice his own son Isaac, God said "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." I think that Israel forgot this bit sometimes.

Nevertheless, since every nation had their own god or gods who they thought was the best, nations were constantly in conflict with each other. Since Israel was adamant that their God, Yahweh was the only true God, the nations were particularly in conflict with Israel and their God Yahweh.

This is why the psalmist starts his psalm with:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ²The 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."

Not only did the other nations think their gods were better than Yahweh, they didn't want Yahweh as their God because they thought he was too much work, too restrictive of their enjoyment. They thought He was a wet blanket who didn't want them to have any fun.

Does that sound familiar to you today? How often do we see this attitude in the people around us today, the attitude that faith in the true God is a burden, a shackle or chain around their necks. Christians of course know this is not true. 1 John 5:3 tells us that God's commands are a matter of loving God, and not burdensome.

Nevertheless, the rest of the world conspires and plans in vain to reject God and his commands, even at the national level. The communists seek to destroy all religion, and many Islamic and other faith

based states specifically target Christianity. North Korea, Somalia and Libya top the lists of Christian persecutions.

Despite these nations rejecting God, persecuting his people, and even joining together to worsen their atrocities, the psalmist reminds us that all their efforts are in vain. God laughs and scoffs at them.

Recently, many good Christian friends have reminded me that humans make plans - and God laughs. While this is very true of the little plans that I make, how much more is it true of the plans of nations to reject God?

When you look at the countries with the greatest Christian growth, Yemen in particular stands out to me. It is seventh highest on this list for Christian growth, and yet it is 5th on this list of christian persecution. Many Yemenis are trying to get rid of God by persecuting his people, yet Christianity of growing stronger there than most other countries. Also more than half of the 20 countries with the largest Christian growth are avowedly Muslim. Certainly God laughs at their plans.

The psalmist says that God says to the kings of the earth, ⁶ "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." He said "You are my son; today I have become your father.

It sounds like the psalmist is talking about Jesus? The apostles Peter and John certainly think so when they quoted this psalm in Acts 4 (our New Testament reading) and said that Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen."

The way that God defeated the rulers of the nations was to anoint Jesus as the king of kings in Jerusalem. God will give the nations of the kings of this earth to Jesus as his inheritance. He will give Jesus the whole earth as his possession. In doing so, He metaphorically breaks the rulers of this world with a rod of iron, dashing them to pieces like pottery.

This is why the psalmist warns the kings of this world to be wise. He tells them to take the only proper option, to serve God with fear, and celebrate Jesus's rule with trembling.

He warns them to Kiss, or give homage to his Son, or he will be angry and this will lead to their destruction.

So, the psalmist is clear that in a conflict between God and the kings of the earth, Yahweh will always come out on top. In fact, we know that the war has already been won, because God has installed Jesus as the king of kings on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, although the rulers of this earth didn't recognise it when God did it. They didn't recognise it because the king of kings was crowned

with a crown of thorns, and was not installed on a bejewelled, golden throne in Jerusalem but on a wooden Cross, anointed not with previous oil but with his own blood.

Yet, despite the ignominious coronation, Jesus has been raised up and now sits on the highest throne, at the right hand of God himself. He is waiting only until the right time to receive the inheritance of all the nations to the ends of the earth, even the nations of the kings who conspire and rise up against him. He will be angry against all the sin in the world, all, including the kings of the nations whose sin is to have rejected the one true God, and against whom His wrath will flare up in that moment.

So, let us not be like the rulers of the nations. Instead, let us be the people of whom the psalmist said: Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Is your refuge in Jesus Christ, God's anointed?

Amen