

Bellaire Community United Methodist Church

March 12, 2017

## **“Crushing Kings”**

*Series of Psalms (Lent) – part 2*

Psalm 110

I am glad that you are here today. I realize not everyone chooses to spend their Sunday morning worshipping Jesus Christ in the community of faith. But when we gather in this place with open minds and open hearts, the Holy Spirit can do a work among us. So I thank you for coming, not to listen to me, but to listen to God. I truly believe that God can change people’s lives through the church if we just give God that chance.

I invite you to pray with me, extending your hands with your palms up, in a posture that says, “God, I’m ready to receive what you have for me this morning.”

Lord God, you know our hearts. You see us as we truly are, not the way that we pretend to be in front of others. We know that you are sovereign, and you deserve to be first in our lives. So help us today to order our lives the right way, with you on the throne, according to your Word. Help us to again make Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We pray this in his precious name. Amen.

Lent, the season before Easter, started last week on Ash Wednesday. Lent helps us to prepare to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and remember his sacrifice on the cross. Each of the next six Sundays, we are examining a psalm that connects us to Jesus and the Easter story.

Last week I mentioned how Psalms are the prayers of the Bible. They range in emotion from joy to sorrow, anger to confession, despair to hope. No matter what you are feeling, there is a psalm for you. And Jesus knew these same

psalms. He memorized them, quoted them, sang them and prayed them. So we should, too.

Last week we covered psalms of praise. We learned that we should praise God for who God is and what God does.

This week we are examining royal psalms. As the name indicates, these psalms describe the relationship of God and the king. I realize that we do not have kings and queens in America, but royalty is featured prominently in our fantasy literature and media. So let's watch this clip to get ourselves in the proper mindset. (*Lord of the Rings coronation clip*)

The people loved Aragorn. He had proven his strength and leadership in battle. Now, the truth is, Jesus is the king, but not everyone welcomes him like the people of Middle Earth did for Aragorn. So this morning we are going to do a little detective work as we examine Jesus' kingship and Psalm 110. I encourage you to do some page turning with me using the pew bibles.

First, turn to Matthew chapter 1. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is portrayed as the heavenly king. Matthew starts right at the beginning with Jesus' genealogy – Matt 1:6 says Jesus was a descendant of King David. If you skim ahead to chapter 2, you find the story of the wise men. What was the object of their search? To find the "King of the Jews." (Matt 2:2) So from the very beginning, we see that Jesus some people viewed Jesus as a king.

Next, we flip ahead to the beginning of Holy week, in Matthew chapter 21. This is the story of Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem with the crowds shouting, "Hosanna!" In verse 5, we see Matthew quoting Zechariah, "See, your king comes to you, riding on a donkey." These people loved Jesus, but there were plenty who did not. Throughout Holy Week, Jesus was challenged. First, he

turned over the tables in the temple (Matt 21:12-17). Then, the elders questioned Jesus' authority. They had a discussion about John the Baptist and his message. In chapter 22, they try to trap Jesus, and give him impossible questions. Finally, we see our connection to Psalm 110. In Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus asked the Pharisees this question. Let's read this portion together.

<sup>41</sup>While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,<sup>42</sup>"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

<sup>43</sup>He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,

<sup>44</sup>"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet."<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>45</sup>If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" <sup>46</sup>No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

When the Pharisees replied that the Christ, or the Messiah, was supposed to be the Son of David, Jesus pointed to Psalm 110. How can the Messiah be David's son? How can David's descendant be greater than David himself? They all knew that David was Israel's greatest king ever. The Pharisees were so stumped, they stopped asking Jesus questions.

But Jesus' question needs to be answered. How can the Christ be David's son? The only acceptable answer is that Jesus is the Christ, and he certainly is greater than David.

Let's look back at Psalm 110 again. When Jesus applied this psalm to himself, what was he saying?

Psalm 110 starts with “The LORD said to my Lord.” According to Jesus, David, to whom this psalm is attributed, was having a prophetic vision. The LORD, with all capital letters, refers to Yahweh, the God of Israel, who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush. God Almighty. Our Father in heaven. The second Lord, however, is the Hebrew word Adona. It can mean Lord God, or it can mean lord of people, with a small “L”. Jesus is saying that God, speaking through David, is making a promise to the anointed one, the Christ – to Jesus himself.

That promise from God comes in three parts: position, priesthood, and victory. Let’s look at each part.

First of all, Christ’s leadership. God gives Jesus leadership and authority. Psalm 110 is really a coronation psalm. The words, “sit at my right hand” conjure an image of a throne. The seat on the right of the throne is a seat of power and prominence. Enemies are made to be a footstool. In ancient portraits, kings are often depicted with their feet on the necks of their vanquished foes. Verse 2 talks about a scepter. If this psalm is for a Davidic king, then his rule is centered in Jerusalem and extends outward. Verse 3 shows that people are willing to follow this leader and are ready to fight for him. The line “dew of your youth” is unclear, but it probably refers to energy and strength – the Christ has vitality and power.

So God promises the Christ a kingship that is in the presence of God, vanquishes his enemies, and rules over the people. That’s a great start.

The second promise is from this Messiah is that he will be a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. We find this in verse 4. Now, who is Melchizedek, besides a really hard name to pronounce? For that answer, we flip backward to Genesis 14:18. Here, we have a story of Abraham returning from a victorious battle, and encountering Melchizedek, the high priest of God and the king of

Salem, which means peace. Abraham gives him a tithe, and the priest offers him a blessing. Interesting. But what does that have to do with Jesus? Flip the pages one more time, way to the back, to Hebrews 7. Hebrews tells us (6:20) that Jesus is a high priest forever. Verse 7:16 says that Jesus “has become a priest, not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry, but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.” Psalm 110 is quoted here as well, in verse 17. How do we understand this, then? Jesus lives forever, therefore, his priesthood is greater than any human priesthood. God made this promise. He literally took an oath. Look at verse 22: “Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.” Verse 24 says that Jesus’ priesthood is permanent. And verse 25 says that Jesus is the perfect priest because he saves completely.

The role of the king was to reign, and he was sovereign in all places except one: the temple. The priest was in charge of the temple and the sacrifices. The priest is the one who goes before God on behalf of the people. By combining the role of king and priest into one person, Jesus, he can do the work of both. Jesus can lead and intercede. And Jesus not just any ordinary Jewish priest, he is in the order of Melchizedek. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, made his tithe to Melchizedek way before Moses and Aaron ever established the priesthood in Exodus. It is to this great order of priesthood that Jesus now belongs, forever.

The Messiah in Psalm 110 is given position and priesthood. There is one last promise. The Messiah is given victory in battle. This part is probably the hardest for us to understand. According to Psalm 110, the Messiah will “crush kings”, “judge the nations” and “heap up the dead.” Frankly, this is very bloody, militant language, and it’s hard to reconcile with our image of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. My daughter said yesterday, “Daddy, I don’t think Jesus would kill all

those people and pile them up.” Of course not. I don’t either. But the context of this scripture is important. The Israelites were constantly fighting battles with their enemies. Americans, on the other hand, have not fought on our own soil in decades. But if we were fighting, wouldn’t we want a strong leader to protect us? I don’t think we have to take this psalm literally, under our own context. Psalms are poetry, after all. But what is portrayed here is power over enemies and victory in all circumstances. This is something that Jesus has for us. The last verse talks about drinking from a stream. It could mean that the king, in the midst of battle, still finds refreshment, energy, and vigor. I think he has the feeling that you get when your favorite team wins. You “lift your head,” pump your fist, and shout out in gladness. I don’t think the thrust of this section is the bloodiness. I think it’s the victorious part that is its aim.

Well, so what? The king-priest-messiah gets power, authority, and victory. Why does that matter to us? Well, if this is the psalm that Jesus used to describe himself (and Peter in Acts 2 and the author of Hebrews), then how does it align with your own view of Jesus? Most of us have no problem with Jesus as intercessor, or even kingly leader, but do we see Jesus as victorious in battle? I’m not talking about sword fights. Our battles are more spiritual than physical. But I find that they still defeat us. The tolls they take sometimes feel like heaps – heaps of addiction, pollution, broken families, broken communities, fear and despair. Have you ever felt defeat? Have you ever asked, “God, why did this happen? Where is our leader?” If so, this psalm has your answer.

Jesus is neither vengeful nor vindictive. He does not pay eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. But Jesus is powerful. Jesus is both fully human and fully God. I wonder if we tend to forget the God part. Jesus is both to be loved and to be

feared. He is a lamb led to the sacrifice and a lion roaring and powerful. Jesus is victorious because he was humbled. In the gospels, even though he was king, he never let the people crown him. Only after his death and resurrection was he truly revealed to all for who he was: the savior, messiah, anointed, chosen one, who saved the whole world. The King of kings.

The question is, if Jesus is king, do we follow him? Do you give Jesus the honor and glory due him? Are you a servant of the king? Would you do anything the king asked?

Psalm 110 says his troops are willing. I want to be on that side. But in order to do that, I have to give Jesus the throne of my life.

So I ask you, is Jesus your king? Do you honor him with your life? Unlike a king who demands tribute, Jesus gives us a choice to love him or reject him. It is our choice to love him, serve him, talk to him, and tell others about him. It is our choice to love Christ's bride, the church. To serve Jesus as king means to lay down your life for the king who laid down his life for you.

Others will have authority over you, and the Bible tells us to respect that authority. But our ultimate allegiance is to King Jesus Christ. So use this season of Lent to ask yourself, "How do I show others that Jesus is king of my life?"

### Memory verse

Revelation 19:16

"And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

### Reflection questions

1. Who has authority over your life? What “kings” and “queens” threaten or control you?
2. What authority does Jesus Christ have in your life? Is He your King? How do you serve him?
3. What victory has He won for you in your life?