**The Baptism of Our Lord**

**January 10, 2021**

**Text—Psalm 2**

 Our text for this morning’s festival service will be our Introit this morning: Psalm 2. As many of you are aware, we are in the middle of an ongoing series on the Psalms, many of which we read during our Advent and Christmas services last month. But we are going to continue with this series off and on throughout the rest of the first half of our church year. The reason for that is because there are one hundred fifty psalms, and so there’s got to be at least one that speaks to whatever day we’re observing. And today, The Baptism of Our Lord, is no exception.

 Our text is Psalm 2, which is considered to be one of the “royal psalms.” And if you read it, you can see why. The psalm speaks about the kings of the earth plotting and setting themselves against God and his anointed one. In ancient Israel, a king was not “crowned;” rather, he was anointed with oil by a priest to show that God had chosen this particular man to be the ruler of his people. So when the kings of the earth plotted against the Lord’s anointed one, they were actually plotting against the Lord’s chosen king of Israel. But God would not have any of that nonsense. He would laugh and hold them in derision, and he would speak to them in his wrath, proclaiming that he himself had set up his king, and nobody was going to bring that king down.

 In verse 7, the perspective of the psalm switches to the king himself, who boasts that he has heard God’s declaration, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” The king in a sense was the son of God, the son who would be the face of God’s reign to his chosen people. All the nations to the ends of the earth would be given to the king, who would exercise total rule over them and destroy all who opposed him. Finally, the psalm ends with a warning to the kings of the earth to be smart and serve the Lord with fear and trembling. They should also serve his Son, his anointed king, because the king’s wrath was like that of God, and it would destroy anyone who got in his way. But those who took refuge in the king, those who allied themselves with him and his kingdom, would be blessed beyond measure.

 Psalm 2 is known as a “royal psalm” because it speaks about the king of Israel and his relationship to God. This psalm was most likely sung at anointing ceremonies of the kings of Israel and Judah, to remind the people of the promises that God had granted to his anointed kings. It also reminded people that the king was God’s Son, standing in for God himself, and that they needed to serve and obey him. To rebel against the king was to rebel against God, and to invite God’s wrath upon oneself. It was an appropriate psalm to be sung at the anointing of the king of Israel, God’s Son.

 And it would have been a very appropriate psalm to be sung at the baptism of Jesus, would it not? What else was his baptism than his anointing for service, to go out into the world and proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of God? What else was Jesus’ baptism than his anointing as the Son of God and the king of Israel? To be sure, Jesus always was those things, but his baptism was when it was made public knowledge. Jesus came to John the Baptist and asked to be baptized by him. He went into the water and had it poured over his head, which anointed him as king just like all the other kings of God’s people. And then when he came up out of the water, he heard the voice of God saying, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” You can almost hear the echoes of Psalm 2, can’t you? “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” At his baptism, Jesus was publicly anointed as the Christ, the king of Israel, and the Son of God. And for the next several years, he would exercise his reign over the whole creation by proclaiming the Gospel, healing the sick, casting out demons, and most importantly of all, rising from the dead.

 But not everybody would be happy to see Jesus take his place as the Son of God and king of Israel. Not everybody would believe in him or want to follow him. The scribes and Pharisees, the leaders of Israel at the time, they did not like Jesus one bit. They perceived that he was a threat to their authority, even though they didn’t believe that he was who he said he was. So they conspired against him. They raged and plotted, just as the nations did in Psalm 2. They set themselves and took counsel together against the anointed one of God, to remove his authority from over their heads. They conspired to arrest him under the cover of night, wrongly convict him of blasphemy, and hand him over to the Romans to be crucified. As he hung there suffering on that cross, they must have felt pretty proud of themselves. They had raged against the Lord’s anointed one and been successful, and he was now no longer a threat to them. But he who sits in the heavens was laughing at them and holding them in derision the whole time. Because on the third day, the Son of God rose from the dead, proving that God was with him and that no earthly authority could dare oppose him. God then set Jesus on his holy hill, not the literal Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, mind you, but at his own right hand in heaven, ruling over all creation. All the nations are Jesus’ heritage, and the ends of the earth his possession. On the last day, he will return to speak in wrath to those who had opposed him, and give them the due penalty for their unbelief. But those who have believed in him, who have taken refuge in him, will be blessed. They will be raised to eternal life with God in his kingdom, where no other power or authority will ever be able to harm them. Jesus will break his enemies with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel, but those who trust in him will reign with him over the new creation forever.

 So how about all of us here today? Are we going to be wise and serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling? Are we going to kiss the Son and love him as our Lord and Savior? Are we going to take refuge in him and be blessed? Are we going to believe God’s decree in Psalm 2 about his king: “You are my Son; today I have begotten you?” What about his decree when Jesus was baptized by John, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased?” The Son of God still offers his faithful people everything that he did in Psalm 2. He offers us forgiveness of sins, rescue from the power of the devil, and eternal life in the kingdom of his Father. What fools would we have to be to reject this offer! How blinded would we be to see what the Son of God can give us and just throw it back in his face? How stubborn and hard-hearted would we be to rebel against him? We know that we should never do that! We know that we should never turn away from the Son of God who offers us so much. We know that we should never be like the nations and the kings of the earth who plot against him. There is no course that makes sense other than to embrace the Son of God and take refuge in him. Otherwise, we would find ourselves opposing the Lord God himself.

 And yet, there are still so many people these days who do just that, aren’t there? So many reject the Son of God and his people, the church. They set themselves against his reign, his Word, and his Law. They still desire to burst apart the bonds of God that they believe hold them captive. They would rather be free to pursue their own concepts of justice and righteousness. And sometimes we here find ourselves among them, don’t we? How often are we tempted by the ideas and philosophies of the world? How often do we wish that we could just do whatever we wanted, without having to be accountable to God? How often do we see his Word and his Law as restrictive or oppressive? The same sins and tendencies to rebel against God that are found in everyone else are found in us as well. Our psalm’s warning that the Son’s wrath is quickly kindled is directed toward us too. He may be gracious, kind, and merciful, but if you turn against him, then you too will feel his wrath.

 And that is exactly why we will continue to worship our Lord Jesus Christ and serve him only. We recognize that he is the Son of God who has been given power and authority over all that exists. We recognize that he is coming back on the last day to exercise judgment over the world. And we recognize that he will give eternal life to those who have trusted in him, while those who rejected him will be banished to eternal death. We know that this is who Jesus is and that this is what he will do, so we will not be foolish enough to turn our backs on him and chase after the false gods of this age. We will not rage or plot in vain, nor will we set ourselves to take counsel against him. Instead, we will take refuge in him, and we will be blessed.

 What John the Baptist said about Jesus was absolutely true. He said, “After me is coming he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.” Before he even saw Jesus, he recognized who he was. He knew that the one who would come after him was far greater than he himself was, and that salvation would be found in him alone. He knew that Jesus was the promised Christ, the anointed one, who would rule over God’s people as his chosen king and Son. He knew that all glory, power, and dominion would eventually be given to Jesus, which was why he was ready to fall down at his feet and worship him. John knew exactly what was going on with Jesus. How about all of us here today? Do we understand that Jesus is the Son of God and the king of his people? Do we understand that he is coming back to assert his reign over everything, and destroy all who have opposed him? And do we understand that by trusting in him, we can be brought into his kingdom and find refuge in him? When we trust in Jesus, his power and strength are no threat to us; rather, they are what assure us of his eternal protection from our enemies. Nothing will be able to separate us from his love, because he is stronger than everything else, and he keeps his promises to his faithful people. All that remains for us is to believe what he tells us, and we will be blessed beyond all measure. So do as the psalm says, pucker up, and kiss the Son! By so doing, you will be saved from his wrath, and you will find eternal refuge in the glorious kingdom of the Father. Amen.