

“Crushing Kings”

Series of Psalms (Lent 2023) – part 2

Psalm 110

[49 - Title slide] *Welcome.*

Prayer: 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.

[50 - Lent image] Throughout Lent we are on a journey to Easter through the psalms, asking each time, “How does this connects us to Jesus and the Easter story?” Psalms are the prayer cries 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. Jesus knew these same psalms. He memorized them, quoted them, sang them and prayed them. We should, too.

Last week we talked about psalms of praise, using their words to praise God for who God is and what God does. This week I want us to examine a royal psalm. As the name indicates, royal psalms describe the relationship between God and the king.

[51 - Crown] Royalty is featured prominently in media and literature. What are your favorite stories, real and fiction, that feature kings, queens, princes and princesses? [Pause for answers] My favorite character is Aragorn from *Lord of the Rings*. The people loved Aragorn. He had proven his strength and leadership in battle.

The Bible tells us, Jesus is the King with a capital K, but not everyone welcomes Jesus like the people of Middle Earth welcomed Aragorn. This morning I want us to look at a few passages, including Psalm 110 to help us understand what Jesus’ kingship is all about.

[52 - verses] First look at the gospel of Matthew. Jesus is portrayed as the heavenly king, starting right at the beginning with his genealogy – Matthew 1:6 says Jesus was a descendant of King David. A little later in Matthew chapter 2,

you find the story of the wise men. Why were they searching? To find the "King of the Jews." (Matthew 2:2) From the very beginning of his earthly life, Jesus is a king.

[53 - verses] Thirty-three years later, when Holy Week began with Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem with the crowds shouting, "Hosanna!" In Matthew 21:5, the author quotes the prophet Zechariah, "See, your king comes to you, riding on a donkey." These people loved Jesus, but there were plenty others who did not. Throughout Holy Week, Jesus was challenged and his authority was questioned. In Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus finally asked the Pharisees a question:

[54-55 - verses] ⁴¹...Jesus asked them,⁴²"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

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

⁴⁴"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet."

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

The Pharisees believed the Christ, or the Messiah, was supposed to be the Son of David. Jesus then pointed to Psalm 110. "How can the Messiah be David's son?" he asked them. How can David's descendant be greater than David himself? David was Israel's greatest king ever. The Pharisees were so stumped, they stopped asking Jesus questions.

There is only one acceptable answer to Jesus' question. The Messiah is greater than David because Jesus actually is the Christ, and Jesus certainly is greater than his great-great-great grandfather David.

[56 - verses] 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 wrote about 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 the lord of people, with a small “L”. Jesus is saying that God, speaking through David, made a promise to the anointed one, the Christ – to Jesus himself. That makes Jesus a far greater king than David ever was.

[57 - promises] There are three promises God gives to the Messiah in Psalm 110. Position or authority, priesthood, and victory. Let’s look at each one in turn.

[58 - Position verses] First of all, God gives Jesus high position. 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. 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. He is truly their king.

God promises the Christ a kingship in the presence of God, power over his enemies, and dominion over the people. That’s the first promise of this psalm.

[59 – Priesthood verses] The next promise is the Messiah will be a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Who’s that? In Genesis 14, Abraham returned from a victorious battle and encountered Melchizedek, the high priest of God and the king of Salem. Abraham gave him a tithe, and the priest offered him a blessing.

[60 – Priesthood verses] At the opposite end of our bibles, the book of 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.” Hebrews also quotes Psalm 110 in this passage.

[61 – Priesthood verses] What kind of a priest is Jesus? Since Jesus lives forever, his priesthood is greater than any human priesthood. Because of God’s oath, Hebrews says, “...Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.” (Hebrews 7:22) Jesus’ priesthood is permanent. (Hebrews 7:24) Jesus is the perfect priest because he saves completely. (Hebrews 7:25)

The role of the king was to reign, and he was sovereign in all places except one: the temple. The priest alone was in charge of the temple and the sacrifices. The priest was the only one who went before God on behalf of the people. By combining the role of king and priest into one person, Jesus 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. To this great priesthood Jesus now belongs, forever.

[62 - Victory verses] Psalm 110 promises the Messiah the kingly position and priesthood. There is one last promise: victory in battle. This might be the hardest for us to understand. The Messiah will “crush kings”, “judge the nations” and “heap up the dead.” (Psalm 110:5-6) His enemies will be made a footstool. (Psalm 110:1) In ancient portraits, kings were often depicted with their feet on the necks of their vanquished foes. Frankly, this is very bloody, militant language, and it’s hard to reconcile with our image of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. My daughter once said, “Dad, I don’t think Jesus would kill all those people and pile them up.” I don’t, either, so what is this passage saying to us?

The context of this scripture is important. The Israelites were constantly fighting battles with their enemies. In a fight, we all want a strong leader to protect us. Christ is portrayed in Psalm 110 with power over enemies and victory in all circumstances. Sin. Death. Despair. Depression. Addiction. No, I don’t see dead bodies piling up; I see something better. I see spiritual victories piling up. Families, friendships, marriages restored. Addictions broken. The poor being served. Churches celebrating their salvation. This what the power of victory in Jesus does for us.

The last verse (Psalm 110:7) talks about drinking from a stream. It could mean that the king, in the midst of battle, still finds refreshment, energy, and vigor. Think about when your favorite team wins. You “lift your head,” pump your fist, and shout out in gladness. I don’t think this passage is about violence. I think it’s all about the victory.

[63 – King Jesus] Psalm 110 says the king/priest/messiah gets power, authority, and victory. Does Psalm 110 align with your own view of Jesus? Most

of us have no problem with Jesus as a kingly leader or intercessor, but do we see Jesus victorious in battle?

Our battles are more spiritual than physical. How often are we defeated? The tolls they take on us can feel like heaps – heaps of addiction, 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 when we need one?” If so, this psalm has your answer.

Jesus the king is neither vengeful nor vindictive. He does not pay eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. Jesus is gentle, but he is powerful. Jesus is both fully human and fully God. I wonder if we have forgotten the “fully God” part. Jesus is 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. 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, the messiah, the anointed, chosen one who saved the whole world. The King of kings.

Do you follow this king Jesus? Are you his servant? Would you do anything your king asked? Psalm 110 says his troops are willing. I want to be like them. But in order to do that, I have to give Jesus the throne of my life.

Is Jesus your king? Do you honor him with your life? Will you let him save you? Unlike a king who demands tribute, Jesus gives us a choice to love him or reject him. It is our choice to serve him, talk to him, and tell others about him. It is our choice to enter his kingdom, 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 have authority over you, but the Bible tells us our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ the King. Let us use this season of Lent to show others that Jesus is king of our lives.

Let’s pray.

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. How is Jesus your priest and sacrifice? What did he do to save you? Have you thanked him?
4. What victory has Jesus won for you in your life?
5. Think of someone who struggles to see justice, peace, and security. How would they change if they met Jesus? How could you introduce him?