

As I was thinking about what a Christian family of faith can look like during and after a pandemic - the time of Coronavirus will come to an end eventually, have hope - I was reminded that Jesus, his friends and followers would have sung, prayed and talked the Psalms as part of their worship. They lived with these songs, poems and prayers, they inhabited them. These prayers drew them closer to God, gave them language to express feeling and emotion with God, taught them about the past and pointed them to the promised future of God's kingdom and loving leadership of humanity. As we'll see in the next few weeks, there's a psalm for most feelings, emotions, situations and circumstances. There's a psalm for most of what you've ever wanted to say to God but thought you weren't allowed to. Some of them are beautiful, some are violent and visceral, but all of them point us to God and call us to trust and worship him. I believe that the opportunity and invitation that our church is having extended to it at the moment is to choose to trust God with all that we have, with more than we have, individually and collectively, ever in our lives before. There may be bright days ahead, there may be dark, but trusting God, hiding ourselves in him as one of today's psalms says, is the way which will lead us to everlasting life.

They say that the beginning is the best place to start, and so we're in Psalm 1 and 2 today. Psalm 1 begins with a list of things 'blessed' people are not to be or do: the one who follows God's ways won't 'walk the way that sinners walk' (ie, won't do what they do), won't walk in the directions an have the priorities that sinners have, and won't scorn others, or scoff at them.

Instead, the one who follows God's ways delights in the word of 'I Am' (that's God) and meditates on it day and night. This leads to a firm foundation for life, like a tree that will grow strong and bear fruit, one that is planted by God.

Someone who does this prospers in the things that matter, the things of the kingdom. The psalm contrasts this with the wicked, whose schemes will fail and who are 'dust in the wind' as TPT says. It's a stark warning, God won't defend them on the day of judgement.

The thing is, we recognise some of ourselves in both the one who does God's things God's way and the one who sometimes goes in their own direction, don't we? Sometimes we choose to do things that we know aren't what God wants us to.

'But how different it is for the righteous!

The Lord embraces their paths as they move forward

while the way of the wicked leads only to doom.' the psalm ends.

We know we can't be good and perfect *all on our own*, what to do? Who to look to?

Psalm 2 gives us a clear set of clues and a direction to look in. The first verses paint a picture of leaders of the nations finding a way to have power, to *make it happen* to self-serve and have things all their own way. The response of God the Father is to look on and laugh. He has the power and the authority and He has chosen a King. This King will give hope and possibility to people who worry whether they are right or wrong, like you and me. The King himself speaks - saying

"I will reveal the eternal purpose of God.

For he has decreed over me, 'You are my favored Son.

And as your Father I have crowned you as my King Eternal."

Jesus is the King, the blessed one. You might be thinking to the New Testament and what was promised about Jesus - that He would save His people from their sins - and about what He said, about the kingdom of heaven having come near, being present with us now, close enough for us to reach out and touch, to take part in, if we will put our trust and our hope in Jesus as King, saviour and friend. You might remember that Jesus went to the Cross and died there, saving his people from their sins, as he did so. You might remember him rising from the dead, crushing death and rebellion against God, as we've heard this morning.

These two Psalms are about Jesus, the one who leads the way and gives us the opportunity to be the blessed ones who follow God's ways. These two Psalms point the way for us, to be people who trust and obey. Christianity isn't about trying really hard to be perfect. It's about accepting our own imperfections and realising that we need some help with becoming clean, new and hopeful

again. Jesus is the favoured son, the one who lives in such a way that 'all authority in heaven and on earth is given to him' and what does he do with it? He gives it away and says 'you are my friends if you do what I have commanded you to do' and 'therefore go and make disciples, followers of mine'. In that way, we're just like John the Baptist whose earthly father's song we had as our NT reading today. We can be people who prepare hearts to accept the saviour, and the way that leads to everlasting life. Salvation life, in the here and now and for ever, is revealed to us both by Jesus, and in Psalms 1 and 2. You and I can be free. If we trust in God's King, Jesus. If we do and are, then we can preach that salvation life is here, now, for anyone who accepts the offer of the gift of grace. Do you want it? Do you know someone who needs it? I'd be willing to bet you do, and I'd be even more confident that if you come to God honestly and admit you were wrong to live apart from him but you want to live his way now, that he will accept you and your new life will start from that very moment.

One day we're all going to fall facedown before the king. Let's take the chance to turn aside from the things that keep us from God and hide ourselves in him today, in these difficult and uncertain days, it's all the more clear that there's no safer or more life-giving place that we could possibly be than hidden in God, with God, now and forever.

Amen