

Refuge (Psalm 2; Matthew 17:1-9)

What is Jesus' vocation among us in the time of No Kings?

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Psalm 2, at once royal and liturgical, is built around a central proclamation by God about the human who is set apart to reign: "You are my [child]; today I have begotten you." God confers authority on the one whose vocation it will be to care for God's people. And God speaks directly to the one being set apart.

In some versions of Jesus' baptism, the divine proclamation is offered directly to Jesus. At other points, Jesus' baptismal vocation is an occasion for a revelation: *In case you wondered, Jesus is the One whom I have sent, my child, my beloved one*. In the transfiguration story, Jesus' vocation is set against the vocations of those who have come before.

In the context of a present-day world in which picket signs and chants passionately announce that there is no royalty among us, this psalm invites reflection on what Jesus' vocation is among us now. Dietrich Bonhoeffer pointedly asked, "Who is Jesus Christ for us *today*?" In response, this psalm points to a way of living one's vocation, whatever that might be, that is outside the scope of what many have recently come to experience.

In this regard, the one whom God calls may be "wise," but this "wisdom" is shaped not with iron fists but to "serve with fear" and to "kiss [God's] feet." This kind of vocational identity is marked by humility and an empathic love tuned in to the situation of those who are at the margins.

This way of being in the world is especially differentiated by the psalm's final verse. "Happy are all who take refuge." The word *refuge* intimates the world's disarray. Disarray is not hard to find. It's everywhere. Refuge, though, suggests a situation of calm, of care, of rest. This is someone who knows us deeply, welcomes us when everything falls apart, and promises us that we do not need to face the chaos alone. The refuge in the face of all that surrounds us is the opportunity to find our footing, to take a deep breath, and to be restored.

Though it would be easy to build conditions around the arrival of refuge, it's also possible for it to arrive without our searching or bidding. Those who seek and long for refuge have already been heard and seen and known. They are held in the promise of a hope and peace that has no end.