

Introduction

- When I chose the passage for this morning, hadn't put two and two together with last night's musical!
 - but entirely appropriate...
- **Punctuation?**
 - is it an exclamation point at the end of the first line, or a question mark?

Context: Human opposition (v.1,2)

- The first of the 14 Psalms that are tied to historical incidents in David's life:
 - (the others are 7, 18, 30, 34, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63 and 142)
 - and that historical context is where the Psalm starts in the first two verses

Absalom's Rebellion

- Absalom had taken revenge on one of his half-brothers Amnon who had raped his sister Tamar, and been banned from the court as a result (2 Samuel 13)
 - eventually had been brought back to first Jerusalem, and later the king's presence, through 2 Samuel 14
 - but he was not someone content to be reconciled and again have to be under his father's kingly authority
 - the Bible doesn't explain precisely why, but he began to plot against his father...
- Began with **self-promotion**:
 - (1) *In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. (2) He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." (3) Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." (4) And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice."* (2 Samuel 15:1-4)
- Moved on to become **plotting**:
 - *Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'" (2 Samuel 15:10)*
- And that ultimately led to a **coup**:
 - (13) *A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." (14) Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword."* (2 Samuel 15:13-14)
- So king David's household fled (15:16)
 - there were some extraordinary displays of loyalty in adversity through the end of chapter 15 and into 16 by individuals who still loved and respected David
 - but also signs of the rejection - eg **Shimei, in 16:5-8, a relative of Saul's, who cursed David**
- And still David maintained his trust in the Lord:
 - *It may be that the LORD will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today.* (16:12)
- Absalom sought to consolidate his power, even sleeping with his father's concubines in plain sight (16:22):
 - **mocking his father, rubbing his nose in his defeat**
 - chasing him round the countryside, pursuing him like a hunted animal (2 Samuel 17)

Historical Context

- All of this forms the context of these first verses:
 - how many indeed are David's foes!
 - the language of "rising up" is of that opposition increasing, rising like a wave
 - everywhere he turns people are against him, there seems to be no hope
 - so much so that people were muttering that God had deserted him - almost certainly with the accusing subtext that David has committed some kind of evil...

Response: Trust in God's protection (v.3,4)

- Incredible turn-around of trust
 - terms grow increasingly positive
 - around me - strong preposition in Hebrew - cover, completely protect
 - bestow glory - honour of serving a greater master, huge privilege and status - cf Caesar's servants in Asterix!
 - lift head - not just out of gloom and shame but into glory, to be crowned almost
 - holy hill - Jerusalem - where God had installed David as king, and his ark as symbol of his own divine presence and earthly throne...
 - so it is the Lord's decrees that will issue from Zion, the holy hill, not Absalom's
 - in other words, it is the Lord who will determine David's future, not Absalom
- Here is our example in the face of opposition
 - not just the kingdom and life-threatening opposition David faced
 - but also the difficulties, struggles and antagonism we each of us face daily
 - when stuff happens, particularly when people "happen", that opposes God's work
 - perhaps making life difficult for us as believers, and seeking to throw us out of our stride in following God
 - or perhaps directly opposing some venture for the Lord
 - or attacking relationships between believers...
- What do we do?
 - instinct is to try and "sort" things....
 - rather need to turn to God, trust him...

Result: Peace of mind (v.5,6)

- Result, peace, sleep, lack of fear of others
- "I" is emphatic - corresponding to the "you" of v.3
 - God has shielded, so I lie down...
- Peace
- No fear of others

Future: Victory and blessing (v.7,8)

- David's call is to kingship
 - our call is also to kingship, to reign in God's kingdom in eternity!
 - *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:5)*
- For David, therefore, refuge, safety, escape is not enough:
 - to settle for less than victory would be tantamount to abdication, giving up on the call God had laid on his life
 - and this explains the uncompromising tone of v.7
 - God's call, God's honour, God's name is at stake here
 - is God God, or not?!
 - and so he calls on God to demonstrate his authority, his ultimate kingship, defeating his enemies so that the wicked are brought low

Absalom defeated

- And that is what happened...
 - poor advice undermined Absalom's situation
 - until there was a confrontation, a battle (2 Samuel 18)
 - even then, David instructed his commanders to be gentle with Absalom (18:5)
 - an instruction Joab ignored, killing Absalom when he got caught by his hair in a tree - one of the more grisly episodes in the OT! (2 Samuel 18:10-15)
 - *(a death that grieved David immensely: (2 Samuel 18:33) The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - O Absalom, my son, my son!")*

Conclusion

- For us, similarly, to escape with our lives, to get to live out our days without conflict or opposition, is **not enough!**
 - for our call is reign in God's kingdom, to see his kingdom come here and now
 - a quiet life is not enough
 - God's rule is our aim and call
- And so we too call on the Lord, "**Arise!**"
 - knowing, as David did, that from the Lord alone comes deliverance
 - our son may not have deposed us, and be seeking us out to kill us
 - but we are mired in a world that is increasingly disloyal to the Lord, that is taken in by the rumour that God has withdrawn from his people
- **Arise, O God! Deliver us, O our God (v.7)**