

## THE KINGDOM OF THE SON

Our text for Christ the King Sunday is the Epistle Lesson assigned to this day. From Colossians chapter 1 we listen again to verse 13:

*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son . . .*

Dear Friends in Christ the King,

What picture comes to your mind's eye when I say the name Jesus? For those of you who have worshiped here for a number of years, your first thought might be the picture of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane which has adorned the front of our church since it was built. Those of you who venture into the balcony often, our musicians, instrumentalists, our sound and recording techs, when I say the name Jesus, your first thought might be Jesus the Good Shepherd our magnificent stained-glass masterpiece that dominates the western end of the building. Many believers, when they hear the name Jesus, think of Jesus on the cross. As the Christmas Season approaches, some will respond with thoughts of the baby Jesus lying in a manger.

We also tend to think of Jesus and picture Jesus differently at different stages in our life, at different times, at different ages in our life. A child enjoys the picture of Jesus welcoming the little children. In times of sickness or distress you might picture Jesus as the miracle-working, storm-calming healer of the sick. When there has been a death, at times of loss and grief, you might picture Jesus weeping in sorrow at the grave of his friend Lazarus. In times of temptation or doubt, when you feel your faith is weak you might picture Jesus leaving the ninety and nine and seeking the one who has wandered away.

There are lots of ways to picture Jesus because Jesus is involved in many different ways and many different times in your life. Let it be sufficient to say Jesus is there to meet any need you have at any time in your life. But how many people, I wonder, when I say the name Jesus, how many people think of Jesus as a KING? Probably not many. But here's the interesting thought, the very first time you see Jesus face to face, you will see him as a KING. At the moment of death or on the Day of Judgment, the first time you lay eyes on Jesus you will see him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

That's not the way most people saw Jesus during his years here on earth, when he lived among us. They saw a humble carpenter with few earthly possessions who never had a home of his own. They saw a traveling teacher who displayed compassion to those around him. They certainly didn't see a king. And yet, Jesus himself stated clearly that he was a king.

Luke's Gospel describes the scene of Jesus appearing before Pontius Pilate. Jesus was brought in by his accusers who said, "This man is subverting the nation. He claims to be the Christ, the Messiah, a King!" The Roman governor looked at Jesus and asked him, "Are you a

king? Are you King of the Jews?" Jesus responded with a simple, "Yes." Jesus went on to tell Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world . . . My kingdom is from another place." "You are a king then!" said Pilate. And Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king."

"You are right in saying I am a king." The effect that this statement had on Pilate is striking. As you heard in today's Gospel reading, Pilate had a sign made for the cross of Jesus. In Aramaic, in Greek, and in Latin the sign read, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. The Jewish religious leaders considered this an insult. They hated Jesus and wanted him crucified. Not only was Jesus NOT the king they were looking for, this title branded them, and all Jews, as his followers and branded him as their king. So they went to Pilate and demanded that Pilate change the sign. John 19:21-22 (NIV):

*<sup>21</sup> The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."*

The truth is, what Pilate had written, God himself had written long before in prophecy, and that truth couldn't be changed. Jesus is the Christ, a King. Jesus is Christ the King.

There aren't too many kings, too many monarchs left in today's world. England, Sweden, Jordan, Denmark, Monaco, Norway and a few others. And these monarchs don't have any real power. In this country we have "Used Car Kings," and "Carpet Kings," and "Homecoming Kings," but no political king. We fought a war to be free of kings. Yet we are ruled right now by a king. We believers are ruled in his "kingdom of grace," the Kingdom of the Son. The whole universe and everything in it is ruled by Christ in his "kingdom of power."

Our king doesn't rule from a golden throne or wear a diamond-encrusted crown. His kingdom of grace is not one of boundaries or borders or custom agents. His kingdom of grace, the Kingdom of the Son, is located in human hearts. His subjects are not united by language or race or culture, but by faith, faith in him. His over all rule, his kingdom of power, extends over the universe and whatever's beyond the universe. But his kingdom of grace is in the human heart. He has more than an embassy in every believing heart, he has a dwelling place, a palace of hope, a home where he himself lives.

You see, Jesus came to rule in the hearts of mankind and to advance his rule, advance his kingdom by bringing more and more people to faith. He wasn't born in a palace, but a stable. His only crown was a crown of thorns. His only scepter was a stick, a reed. And his only regal cloak was a faded cape used in mocking jest. Jesus didn't command an army. He never sat in judgment like Pilate or Herod. But he touched the sick and afflicted with healing hands and forgave the sins of the repentant. Jesus is a King unlike any other king. He is the King who gave up his life into death to save his subjects.

Have you ever had a personal enemy, one you hated with a passion, one you wanted to hurt, harm or dishonor any way possible? This question is strange to our Christian ears. It is alien to our sanctified desire to love one another. But, yes, you and I did once have a personal enemy, one that we hated with a passion. That enemy was our gracious God. God didn't want

to be our enemy. Our sin made us hostile to him. You see, we are born into this world enemies of God. As the first verse of our text tells us we were members of the kingdom of evil, we lived in the dominion of darkness. We were alienated from God. We were hostile to God. We rejected God's love. We were headed to an eternity under the rule of Satan.

But praise be to God! This intense hatred hasn't continued to mark our lives. God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into The Kingdom Of His Son. We didn't make the tiniest overture toward peace with God. Even while we hated him, he carried out the work of reconciling us to himself, turning us from enemies to beloved children.

Romans 5:10 (NIV) . . . *when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son . . .*

It took the death of the King. It took the shedding of royal blood. <sup>14</sup> *in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* Our King paid for our sins with his life. Our King gave us life through his death. And now, through faith in Jesus, we are members of the kingdom of grace, Kingdom Of The Son. Now he dispenses forgiveness rather than retribution. He welcomes those who hated him into his kingdom.

Long ago in Southeast Asia, before the French and British colonial rule, there were kings in Laos and Vietnam. In many places the boundary between the two kingdoms was poorly defined. So the kings of Laos and Vietnam discussed the issue and reached an agreement on citizenship and on taxation in the border areas, who would be considered a citizen of Laos and therefore taxed by Laos and who would be considered a citizen of Vietnam and therefore taxed by Vietnam. It was this.

Those who ate long-grain rice, who built their houses on stilts, who decorated their houses with Indian-style serpents, were considered Laotian no matter which side of the border they lived.

Those who ate short-grain rice, who built their houses on the ground, who decorated their houses with Chinese-style dragons, were considered Vietnamese no matter which side of the border they lived.

The exact location of a person's home was not what determined nationality. Instead each person belonged to the kingdom whose cultural values he or she exhibited.

Spiritually, it's the same with you and me. We belong to the kingdom whose cultural values we exhibit, the Kingdom of the Son. We live in the world surrounded by the forces of evil. There are citizens of the dominion of darkness who exhibit the cultural values of non-believers. Oh, they may be very friendly people, but they never go to church, they never read a Bible, they do not pray before meals, they see nothing wrong with sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage, abortion, or living a sexually-active homosexual lifestyle. They exhibit the cultural values of non-believers.

There are citizens of the dominion of darkness who hate Christ and hate Christianity and hate Christians. They exhibit this hatred in the news articles or the books, movies or TV shows they write, also in the interviews they give and the interviews they conduct. They give evidence that they belong to the dominion of darkness by the causes they support which are often opposed by God's Word. They exhibit the cultural values of non-believers.

To the world around us, you and I are known as subjects of Christ the King by the values we exhibit. We live as the servants of a mighty and powerful God who ultimately controls all things, (that's his kingdom of power), a God who has told us what is right and what is wrong and condemns those who are given over to what is wrong. We know that we are sinners in need of a Savior and that Savior is Jesus. We know that his life and death have reconciled us to God, and that we are God's children by faith in Jesus. By the lives we live, we display our loyalty to our Savior King. We exhibit the cultural values of believers.

Out of love for him and for his gift of faith, we strive to conform our lives to his will, loving one another and even showing love to those who hate us. Our lives will display his values and his rule in our hearts. Jesus wants to strengthen his rule in our hearts and he does so through the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. When we believers willingly live as he desires, we discover that we are free, not condemned, loved, not hated.

Even now, Jesus reigns supreme over all in his kingdom of power.

<sup>17</sup> *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

<sup>18</sup> *. . . so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*

Jesus reigns supreme over all in his kingdom of power.

Our world has been shaken to its core by the events of the past two weeks. For many, this is the first time they have personally started to feel threatened by terrorist activities. All of a sudden, those years of taunts and threats from Al-Qaeda and ISIS don't seem so hollow, they don't seem so far away, they actually seem possible. Are you afraid that we might see the destruction and carnage of Paris here in the United States? Or are you more worried about what kind of world your children and your grandchildren will have to grow up in? When you are tempted to think that world events are tumbling out of control, remember, Jesus reigns as king supreme over all. Through Jesus the very world itself was made and in Jesus all things in this world hold together.

Just what will happen in the coming months and years remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that the supreme king, Jesus, remains in charge. In his own time he will properly deal with those who have denied him and with those who dared to mock his rule. The creator and sustainer of the universe has all power to protect his own, and he has the wisdom and the strength to work good in all situations for those of us who belong to the kingdom of the Son. He alone reigns as king supreme. Amen.