

INI - SDG!

Christ the King Sunday
November 22, 2009
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: Revelation 1:4-8 - *“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*”

Theme: KING JESUS IS WORTHY OF OUR PRAISE

- Behold His love!
- Behold His rule!
- Behold His reign!

Dear fellow subjects of the King of kings, dear fellow redeemed,

If you could be king for a day, what sort of king do you suppose you would be? When you are king, you are the ultimate authority in the land. What you says has to be done. So what sort of king would you be? Would you be a bossy king who made demands that you be waited on hand-and-foot? Demanding that only your favorite foods be served for your meals. Would you be a rich king who used your wealth to travel all around the world in your private jet and stay in only the finest hotels. It can be fun to imagine what we would do if we were king, even for a day.

But I'm pretty sure that if you were a king, you wouldn't let people spit on you. You wouldn't let people slap you. If you were a king would you allow people to mock you? If you were a king would you allow people to crown your head with crown made out of thorn branches? If you were a king would you willingly let your enemies crucify you? What sort of king would ever allow such things to happen to him? Maybe a defeated king. The kind of king who had no power or authority to stop any of these things.

Who would ever want to be such a king or who would want such such a king rule over them? Who would want to be ruled by a king that was beaten, mocked, and nailed to a cross? We want a powerful king. A king who will protect us and provide for us. We want a king who will defeat our enemies, not a king who was defeated BY His enemies. We want a king who is worthy of our praise, not a king whom we are ashamed of professing allegiance to.

But Jesus is just such a King! Though the mocking, beating, and crucifixion did happen to King Jesus, He is worthy of our praise. He is worthy of our praise because of His love. He is worthy of our praise because of His rule. And He is worthy of our praise because of His reign. Therefore on this Christ the King Sunday, let us examine how King Jesus is worthy of our praise!

BEHOLD HIS LOVE!

There have been many kings throughout the history of the world who have been quite oppressive. Since they were the ultimate authority in the land, they ruled with an iron fist. Kings levied heavy taxes on their people. Kings who suppressed their people. Kings who thought the only way to gain respect and honor from their people was by the use of force. One such king in the Old Testament would be King Rehoboam, son of King Solomon. When Rehoboam took the throne, the people of Israel asked that he be more lenient and more gentle with them than his father Solomon. King Rehoboam's response? ***"My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"*** (1 Kings 12:14) I don't think anyone would describe such a king as being "loving." Because of Rehoboam's heavy-handedness the Northern territories seceded from Israel and became their own nation with their own king.

But listen to how King Jesus is described in our text. John speaks of Jesus Christ who ***"loved us."*** King Jesus is not a heavy handed king that makes impossible demands on his people. Instead King Jesus loves His people and He rules His people in such love. This King did not simply TALK about loving His people, He SHOWED just how much He loved us. The Apostle John writes of King Jesus, that He ***"loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."***

As the King who loved us He saw our problem - and it wasn't taxes or health care. Each of us was thoroughly stained by our own sins. Our sins made us unacceptable in the sight of the most holy God. Isaiah writes, ***"We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away."*** (Is 64:6) No matter how much any of us try, our sin is right there with us. We can't escape it. We can't undo it. We are all like an unclean thing.

Therefore the King who loved us took it on Himself to take care of our biggest problem. He used His own blood to wash us clean from our sins. When His blood was shed on the cross, He was bleeding for us. The Apostle John writes in his first epistle, ***"The blood of Jesus Christ (God's) Son cleanses us from all sin."*** (1Jn 1:7) Later on in Revelation when John receives a vision of the saints in heaven it is said of those saints, that these are the ones who ***"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*** (Rev 7:14) Behold how Jesus loves us as He uses His own blood to wash us clean from our sin!

But King Jesus has done more for us in love! When the Holy Spirit brought us to faith, He made us members of the Kingdom of God. When we were brought to faith, Christ set up His throne and rules in our hearts. And thus, John continues in verse 6 that King Jesus ***has made us kings and priest to His God and Father.*** The King has made us kings and priests!

In Exodus 19, we read the LORD saying to the Children of Israel, ***"You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*** (Ex 19:6) God wanted the Children of Israel to be His own special people who loved and served Him only. Jesus has done that for us now too! We are a kingdom of priests to God the Father. As a kingdom of priests we present our whole bodies, our entire life as ***a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is (our) reasonable service.*** (Rom 12:1) We serve God in everything we do.

Behold the love of King Jesus! He shed His own blood to wash us from our sins. He made us kings and priests to God. Praise be to King Jesus for His love toward us!

BEHOLD HIS RULE!

A king is no king at all unless he has something to rule over. The kings of this world have land and people over which they rule. The Saudi King rules over the nation and people of Saudi Arabia. The King of England used to rule over everything and everyone in the British Empire. Without land or people, these are no kings, but mere men only claiming to have power. But what about King Jesus? What does He rule over?

Pilate wondered what sort of king Jesus was. **"Are you the King of the Jews?"** we heard him ask in our Gospel lesson. (Jn 18:33) He sure didn't seem to be the king of the Jews. The Jewish religious leaders had handed Jesus over to Pilate asking him to kill Him. We learn a great deal about the rule of King Jesus from His response to Pilate. **"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."** (18:36) Every king of this world rules over his subject and protects his territory by use of force. Not so with King Jesus. His kingdom is not of this world, it is a spiritual kingdom. Therefore He does not rule as the kings of this world rule.

Jesus went on to reply to Pilate, **"...I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."** (18:37) Jesus is a King - but a different kind of king from the kings of this world and their kingdoms. He rules with the truth. John says the same in our text when in verse 5 he calls Jesus, **"the faithful witness."** Jesus faithfully witnessed the truth of God. His spoke the truth of God and the Way of salvation. And it is through this Word of Truth that Jesus establishes His kingdom by bringing people to faith and ruling in their hearts.

In verse 5, John also describes Jesus as the, **"the firstborn of the dead."** For the Jews, the firstborn was a sort of pacesetter for the rest of the family. Other sons and daughters were blessed in line with the inheritance that the pacesetter received. When He rose from the dead He proved that He rules over death itself. As the firstborn of the dead, similar blessings are promised to the other sons and daughters in the family of God. King Jesus has promised the same when He said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."** (Jn 11:25-26) King Jesus rules over death.

One other description is given to King Jesus in verse 5. Jesus is said to be **"the ruler over the kings of the earth."** Jesus is the King of all kings. Think of what this means that Jesus is **"the ruler over the kings of the earth."** When we turn on the news and hear of the disturbing things that the rulers of this world are doing, we need to stop and remember who is truly in control. It is King Jesus. The rulers of this world do have a great deal of power, but there is only so much a king, president, or dictator can do.

Throughout history, the rulers of this world have tried to destroy the Church. They have persecuted Christians, burned them, crucified them, and thrown them to the lions. While those rulers thought they were in control, it was King Jesus who was sitting on the throne. As the psalmist says, **"He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision."** (Ps 2:4) Every time the rulers of this world tried to destroy the Church, the Church actually thrived and grew! King Jesus rules over the kings of the earth.

Praise be to Jesus who rules by the power of His word, and who rules over the kings of this world!

BEHOLD HIS REIGN!

In 1951 a new amendment was added to the United States constitution which limited the

number of terms which a president could hold office. This 22nd Amendment states that no President of the United States shall serve for more than two, four year terms. This is to limit the reign of a president. The United States did not want a king who would rule the nation for an unlimited number of years.

Thanks be God that there is no limit to the reign of King Jesus. Imagine the horror of finding out that Jesus was no longer in control and watching over His people! Imagine the horror that the era of being washed clean by His blood had come to an end! Thankfully, the King Himself reassures us the last verse of our text, ***“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*** Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is similar to Jesus saying, “I am the ‘A’ and the ‘Z.’” He is the Beginning and the End. The reign of Jesus will never end. It is an eternal reign.

What a blessing and comfort this is to us! In a world where it seems like everything is changing everyday of our lives, were nothing seems certain, the reign of King Jesus is certain. When Jesus describes Himself as Him ***“Who is and who was and who is to come,”*** it is similar to what the writer to the Hebrews says - ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”*** (Heb 13:8) King Jesus is the great I AM. He is eternal and unchangeable. King Jesus is not going anywhere. When Jesus said, ***“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*** (Mt 28:20) He meant always! Behold the eternal reign of King Jesus.

Most Americans have their favorite President - FDR, Reagan, Lincoln, Washington. These are leaders that we admire, look up to, and honor. But there is no leader that is greater and more worthy of praise than King Jesus. King Jesus loved us, cleansed us in His own blood, and made us kings and priests. King Jesus rules in our hearts, rules over death, and rules over all creation for this good of His people. King Jesus reigns eternally. With the angels we lift up our voices and proclaim, ***“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”*** (Rev 5:12) To King Jesus ***be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!***