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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 25, 2018
Last Sunday after Pentecost
Christ the King!

Scripture Lessons: Daniel 7:13-14, John 18:33-37

Hymns: 41, 367, 361, 377:10 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 1:4b-8

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, ⁵and 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, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

⁸“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.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Who reigns forever and ever, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Imaginary kings in imaginary kingdoms.

Fictional books and the movies are full of them. Some of my favorite movies are about imaginary kingdoms. Perhaps yours also. Even children's movies are made about imaginary or magical kingdoms. It is all great fun and yet there is usually some moral to the story, some truth, that ideal or sometimes even spiritual philosophy that the author is trying to convey to his audience. It gets confusing for people when movies are made out of Bible "stories" You know I really don't like that expression "Bible stories" because it can lead to that impression that these are more of the same, just stories that someone made up a long time ago that may or may not have really happened and we are to draw some truth from them.

That is the attitude of too many in this world, even among Christian denominations. After all most churches emphasize today that creeds are really not that important, not as important as deeds. "Deeds not creeds" is what they say. All this diminishes the truth of Jesus Christ and what He has done and continues to do for and in us, and what He shall do on the Last Day. His is not an imaginary kingdom, neither is Christ an imaginary King, but rather He is the Great I AM, the all-powerful and eternal King! On this last Sunday of the church year the Holy Spirit shall lead us in consideration of how --

THEME: Christ our King Rules for Us.

I think we have a sort of cliché image of the role of kings in this earth. It starts with the basic expression I just used, "Kings rule!" Maybe we take it a bit farther by playing with the idea that if I were king, then, I would get what I want all the time! For example: if I were king I would have pie for dinner every day. What we fail to understand with such trivial assessment of what it means to be king is that kings have great responsibilities. Maybe not so much today since in most countries where they have kings or queens they are for the most part figureheads with the bulk of the power and responsibility lying with the parliament and prime minister. But that is not the way it was, and that is certainly not the way it is with Jesus. Jesus is the complete King who fulfills the role of King perfectly. It starts with our security. He has made us safe and secure protecting us from all our enemies. We see Jesus –

I. As Our Champion Securing Peace and Grace.

Consider what it took to make these opening words of our text true.

Revelation 1:4-5 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, ⁵ 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,

You hear me say similar words every church service as I stand to preach the sermon. “Grace and peace.” You hear it so often you almost don’t hear it anymore. Would you miss it if I stopped saying it? It is really significant that we possess grace and peace, but this grace and peace isn’t from just anyone. It comes to us from God, the Eternal God, the Almighty God, the Triune God! This is the God against whom Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden and from that time forward there was enmity against God from mankind. Yeah, that word “enmity” sort of means what it sounds like. There is vile, bitter anger and rebellion from man against God, not because God likes it that way, because that is the state of the natural man, the unregenerate heart of man. As a result, *“There is **no** peace, says my God for the wicked.”* (Isaiah 57:21)

So this peace is a special gift, a gift of grace from the most holy God. This comes to us from Christ, our King. We won’t take this peace for granted as long as we remember what it took to win and secure the peace between God and man. It didn’t just happen by an easy declaration. There was an extreme battle between our Champion King, and the forces of evil led by the devil himself. The devil wanted to undermine Jesus, to trip Him up, to lead Jesus to forsake His mission of salvation, to lead Jesus to curse His enemies, to come down from the cross, to defy His heavenly Father’s will. It was the devil’s goal to stop Jesus dead in His tracks. Perhaps he thought he achieved that goal when Jesus’ died on the cross. If he thought that was a victory for the forces of evil he couldn’t have been more wrong.

That was precisely when and where the peace was secured. Our text reminds us that it was Jesus Christ, our King who loved us and washed us clean in His own blood. Not a spot remains. Peace was won; God reconciled us to himself through the death of His Son.

Because of this sacrifice for sin, Jesus was made Ruler over all the earth. I know, I know it doesn't always look like Jesus is in charge. It looks like the forces of evil are having their way everywhere. Some falsely conclude that God doesn't care, or that Jesus wasn't victorious. It isn't that Jesus lacks the power to destroy all that is evil. It is about grace, because *"the Lord ... is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

For that reason He exalted Jesus as King over all the earth. The Apostle Paul then spells out the Father's response to Jesus' obedience. In Ephesians 1 we read that it was *"according to the working of His mighty power²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*(Ephesians 1:19-22)

Yes, Jesus is in control. He controls all things for us His Church that we may be safe and secure in this world. Later in this book of Revelation this truth is celebrated by the angelic choir rejoicing: *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (Revelation 11:15)

Jesus' power is supreme, and it is forever. With that truth we may rest secure, secure in our relationship with God, secure in a strife torn world that would oppress the Church and suppress the gospel. They cannot and shall not prevail any more than the devil prevailed on Calvary. Indeed Christ our King brings us greater blessings --

II. As Our Benefactor Exalting Us as Kings and Priests.

Normally kings reign over peasants held in subjection. While we are His subjects, and we ought to be obedient subjects, Jesus was not content as our Benefactor King to leave us in lowly circumstances. He declared us to be His brothers. He redeemed us so that He could raise us up, and here I am not referencing resurrection, but granting us an exalted station in life. Now, before you start thinking that you don't have such an exalted station in life you best consider that which the Lord regards as important and not what the world sees as important. He --

Revelation 1:6 *“has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

As we engage in the kingdom work which the Lord has set before us, as we live in this blessed relationship with the Lord our God this makes an extraordinary difference. This instills confidence within us as we seek to glorify the Lord, and it is a great comfort to us that we can come before the Lord personally with all our prayers and petitions. We have access and we have power! Yes, of course this access and influence with God are totally derived from Jesus, but that's the point isn't it! As our King Jesus has chosen to give us an exalted position of power and influence with our heavenly Father.

It is as Peter explains in his first epistle: *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Simply put, our King lifted us out of sin's gutter. He took possession of us at great personal cost, redeeming us to make us His own special people, and then declared us to be a royal priesthood. In connection with Christ our King we also are kings and priests. We are put in this position to show forth Jesus' glory to the world, that all the world might know Christ as King and Savior, while there is still time.

Time is running out. Soon we shall know Christ the King --

III. As Our Judge Securing the Final Victory.

Our text declares:

Revelation 1:7 “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

He is coming, and He is coming from above in the clouds, but that will not limit the visibility in the least, In fact at His coming Jesus will make it visible for all to see. It will be a universal appearance. Every eye will see Him in His glory. That little statement that appears in our text says so very, very much, **“even they who pierced Him.”** What conclusions do we draw from this prophetic statement? First, since those who pierced Him have been dead a very long time this involves the resurrection of the dead, all the dead. So then, not only the living but also the dead will see Jesus’ Coming in glory. What Job declared in faith “My eyes shall behold,” shall be true for unbelievers as well. This will be a day of vengeance for our God.

The Judge shall appear and all will stand before Him and for those who have done good it shall be a resurrection to life, but for those who have done evil it shall be a resurrection to condemnation. And so yes, it will be a day of mourning for all tribes, for among every nation under heaven there are far too many souls who spurned the grace of God that comes to us Christ our King.

But for us who have been the recipients of His grace and favor, it shall be a day of jubilee! This shall be the day of our final redemption. It is the last act in God’s plan for our eternal salvation. Paul tells us: *“He (that is Christ our King) must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”* (1 Corinthians 15:25-26) Then we shall be raised in glory for that 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians assures us: *“we shall all be changed— ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”* (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

That is the final victory, already secured; we await its delivery. We anticipate with eagerness the coming of our King, and all the wonder and glory that He shall bring.

And so it shall be! That is the power of the closing words of our text the words of Christ Jesus. He declares:

Revelation 1:8 “**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.”

Christ our King, our Champion of salvation, our Benefactor who raised us from our fallen state, our Judge who shall receive us into glory! He is the Alpha and the Omega! There is nothing that is beyond His presence, His power, His being! He is the Almighty! This is Christ, our King who in the greatness of His love and grace rules over all for us and our eternal salvation. To Him be glory forever and ever. AMEN! And --

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.