

“THE PROMISED KING.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: Luke 1:26-33; Ephesians 1:19-23

Introduction.

Last week I started out by blowing holes in the rugged individualism and independence of the American spirit and just how self-sufficient we think we are but really aren't.

We are completely dependent on PSE to light and heat our homes. We are dependent on Comcast for our internet and cable. We are dependent on the postal service and UPS to bring Christmas to us. We are totally dependent on our grocery stores to make arrangements with huge distributors who have arrangements with farmers, fishermen and manufactures to raise crops and animals and make things we need to eat and to live. Children are dependent on parents for provision and protection. Teenagers are dependent on parents for wisdom and guidance.

I have been dependent on Galen for help with our vehicles this week. I am dependent on this church for my income and housing.

We are not an independent, self-made, free-standing, autonomous people needing nothing from no one. If we think that we are deceived and proud.

I also pointed out last week that our dependence really comes to light when we consider our spiritual needs. We absolutely need someone to stand in for us between us and God, someone to be a mediator, a priest, a Savior.

In order to pay for my sin there had to be a perfect sacrifice and a perfect person to make the sacrifice. On earth there was no such person. So Jesus came, the perfect God/man to make the sacrifice and to be the sacrifice. I am utterly dependent on Him because He is my only savior from my sin, from my anger, hatred, impatience, pride, greed, selfishness and on and on. In fact every time I sin it is a fresh reminder of my need and dependence.

This week we come to consider the third OT office or role that Christ came to perfectly fulfil. He is the long awaited and promised prophet, priest and king. In the OT no one could be all three, but in Christ they are perfectly brought together in one person.

Jesus is the promised King. This promise is clearly established in Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders ... 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He

will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

God gave the prophet Micah another revelation of this promise:

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel.

Mary is told of the same promise about to become a reality in our text, that Jesus will sit on "the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

This testifies that our need and the world's need is for a Savior and a King. But what does that mean? Having a king is foreign to us, we haven't had one in nearly 350 years since we declared our independence.

Jesus is not our president, we don't elect Him to the job. Jesus is more than our commander and chief, He's not our leader just in times of battle or conflict. He's more than our boss, because He's not just in charge when we're at work.

What does being our king mean?

A king is a person with no equal and no superior. That's what makes him king. He is king of the hill, above all others in his kingdom. We call lions the king of the jungle, because they dominate, they rule, without fear of any real enemies.

Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the King of all kings and the Lord over all lords. He has the greatest title, the name above all names. He has the highest throne, the largest dominion, the greatest riches, the longest reign. "Thy throne, O God, will last for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). "He has many heirs, but no successors" (Watson, p. 187). Christ's kingship is universal and eternal. He has all power and authority to rule over all things in heaven and earth for the glory of God.

But wait a minute. If all of this is true then why doesn't it seem that way? When we read the newspaper there is lots of mention of kings and rulers but little mention of Jesus. We read about President Obama and President Putin and President Bashar Assad (Syria). We read about Prime Minister Trudeau (Canada) and Cameron (England). We read about the UN and Pope Francis. Where is this King who is supposed to be great? Where is this powerful ruler Paul writes about in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:19-21 [God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Jesus' kingship has two aspects. He is king in two ways; He is king over two realms. There is His spiritual kingship over His people, His church; and there is His kingship over the universe.

This is a fine point of theology but I mention it because it teaches us a very powerful truth that should give great comfort and encouragement to your souls and will give you great insight into how to make sense of what is happening in our world.

Christ is the head of His Church. He is the spiritual leader of His people, having all power and authority over them. It is a spiritual kingdom and only those who have the Spirit are a part of it.

It's Christ's purpose to establish the permanent spiritual kingdom of God for the glory of God. But He must do this in a very hostile environment. In the words of *Joy to the World*, Jesus must operate in a world where as far as you can see there is the effect of the curse. This is a world that is under the power of sin and filled with principalities and powers hell-bent on frustrating and hindering all His spiritual efforts.

But God has given to Christ all power and authority to control all the powers and authorities and forces and demons and rulers in the entire world. Get this. Christ's kingship over the world is subservient to His kingship over His church. In other words, His rule over the world serves His rule over His church. His kingship over the world will end when the world ends, but His kingship over the church, over His redeemed people will be everlasting.

The truth I want us to hear that will encourage and strengthen us lies in the relationship between these two kingships and how Christ uses His kingship over the world to serve and help the church.

As King of the universe Jesus controls and guides the activities and destinies of individuals, rules, groups and nations in a way that promotes the growth and brings about the purification, sanctification and final perfection of His people whom He has redeemed by His precious blood. He rules the world with the interests of His blood-bought church always in mind. Everything that you read in the newspaper every day is under the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ and is serving His perfect purposes.

As King of the universe Jesus protects His own against the dangers to which they are exposed. He secures a safe footing for His people and guards us against the onslaught of evil and the powers of darkness. And not only can these powers not defeat His purposes and plans, but they are constrained to actually serve His purposes and plans. What was meant for evil, He turns to the church's good. The persecution, enslavement, imprisonment and slaughter of Christians in North Korea, Syria, Middle East and North Africa today is actually advancing the kingdom of Christ on earth. The more Satan tries to

defeat the church, the more it grows. The gates of hell and all the governments on earth cannot prevail.

Dear friends, all that happens in our world, all that goes on in governments and between nations, and in the spiritual realms, all of it is under the sovereign rule of Christ and all of it is being directed by Him to serve and strengthen and promote and advance His great kingdom. Take heart, don't fear, don't be defeated or discouraged. Everything is subservient to Him and to His will for His church.

In I Corinthians 15:25 Paul says Jesus must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Christ is reigning now and he is reigning to win. Jesus says in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." In other words, "I am the rightful King over all the peoples of the earth. I have triumphed over the devil and the powers of darkness on the cross (Col. 2:15). Now, go and tell people everywhere to turn from sin and to accept me as King."

Jesus Christ is right now, at this moment putting all his enemies under his feet. Every rule and every authority and every power will be conquered. They will be defeated.

On the day of His return in power and glory His authority over all the earth will be fully recognized. Every tongue will confess that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:10). He will finally be seen for what He really is, the greatest ruler the world has ever known.

With an election year approaching it is good to consider and remember that Christ occupies the supreme seat of all cosmic authority. Kings, prime ministers, presidents and judges of the world may ignore His reality or even resist His rule, but they will never undo it or overthrow it or even frustrate it for one second. ***Our universe is not a democracy***, it is an absolute monarchy, before which one day, every knee will bow, either in joyful worship or humiliating defeat.

No nation and no government will long prosper which refuses to recognize God and which refuses to recognize that its citizens have eternal souls meant to be guided by moral law. No authority will long remain in authority that says it is of no consequence whether you bow to God or Baal or money or sex or no god at all. Such a government has a death wish and doesn't have the best interests of its citizens at heart. Those who do not rule in righteousness and in the fear of the Lord, will fall under the fearful and awesome judgment of a holy and righteous King.

Two Implications and Applications.

First, as we are to imitate Jesus as prophet knowing and sharing the truth in love; and as we are to imitate Jesus as priest in seeking to reconcile other to God and in praying for one another: so we are to imitate His kingship by ruling over ourselves. By His power, Word

and Spirit through faith in Him we subdue, oppose and overcome every enemy, the world, the flesh and the devil.

Do you face temptations that are wearing you down? Do you feel like there are sins or bad habits that you can't kill or defeat? Appeal to the king. What is too strong for us is nothing to Him. By His Spirit He defeats the power of sin in our lives. Appeal to Him, go to the throne room and there you will find great help.

“If the enemies of your happiness are the enemies of Christ, then you can take heart that Christ will fight for you with all his kingly power... There is no disease, no addiction, no demon, no bad habit, no fault, no vice, no weakness, no temper, no moodiness, no pride, no self-pity, no strife, no jealousy, no perversion, no greed, no laziness that Christ does not aim to overcome as the enemy of his honor. And the encouragement in that is that when you set yourself to do battle with the enemies of your faith and your holiness, you will not fight alone” (John Piper on I Corinthians 15:25).

If Christ is Lord and King over everything then He should be Lord and King over every aspect of life, over government, politics, business, schools, decisions, etc. Our faith cannot and must not be private, but go public and encompass everything. But all our rule must reflect His rule and cause others to marvel at Him and His nature.

Second, we are to submit to His kingly lordship. Some people try to have Christ as their Savior, but not as their Lord. But that is impossible, they cannot be separated. To say you have one but not the other is to say you have neither. If Christ is not your king then you are His enemy. If Christ is not king to rule over you then neither will the blood of the Savior save you (Watson, *Body of Divinity*, p. 191).

I urge you not to be one of those who will submit against their will, like Satan who will have to confess though he hates every thought of it. Submit willingly, for He is a good and great king.

Do you search for Him who was born a king? Do you know Him as your prophet, priest and king, your teacher of truth, your savior and sacrifice from sin and your Lord and leader? Is He Lord of your heart?

And if you know Him, then rejoice in His promise that by His free grace you a citizen of the greatest kingdom ever on the face of the earth. Give Him glory and praise that He has seated us with Him in glory to rule and reign with Him forever, after we have suffered here for a little while. Don't lose heart, don't give up, don't grow weary, persever, press on to the end when your cross will be exchanged for a crown.

Right now we carry the cross and we share in the fellowship of His sufferings. The only crown this world has to offer is a crown of thorns. But the day is coming when those who

are faithful shall exchange the cross for a crown. Preserver to that day and look forward to that promise.

I urge every true Christian to think often on these things and to meditate and reflect on this glorious promise of our reigning and soon coming King. Reflect on how despite appearances the gospel will prevail, Christ is coming again and His kingdom and the kingdom of His saints will have no end. All the kingdoms and nations and powers of this earth will become subject to the kingdom of Christ.

He is a true king and He has a true kingdom but *His kingdom is spiritual*. He enters into a heart, dethrones the powers of darkness and sets up His throne in the hearts of those who receive Him by faith and submit to Him as Lord. He writes His law on that heart.

I pray that His kingship becomes increasingly evident in your own life. Pray thy kingdom come. He reigns in a way no other king can, in a place no other king can. He rules over wills, affections and consciences. His kingdom bears no resemblance to the kingdoms of this earth.

Let me sum it up in the words of two great old saints:

Jesus Christ has the highest throne, the largest dominion, and the longest reign.

There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him.

He has a multitude of heirs, but He has no predecessor and He'll have no successor.

He can't be impeached and He's not going to resign. His opposition is impotent.

His power is unlimited, His wisdom is unparalleled, His justice is perfect.

He's the greatest Lord and King that has ever crossed the horizon of this world.

Do you know Him? Have you submitted and surrendered to Him? He is my king, is He yours?

(see Watson, *The Body of Divinity*, p. 187; and S.M. Lockridge).

Prayer: Jesus, rule and overrule. Subdue our stubborn and rebellious hearts. Set up your throne in our hearts and homes and churches. Cause all things in our lives to build us up and strengthen us. We pray with new understanding and new fervor, your kingdom come, your will be done for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.