

“SOVEREIGN SAVIOR.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

December 18, 2016, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Luke 2:1-11; Acts 2:36; Romans 10:9, 13; II Peter 3:18

Introduction.

This Advent season we have been focusing on Jesus as Savior. Christ is our Sin Savior who saves us from our sins and from the judgment and condemnation our sins deserve. We are great sinners and Christ is our great Sin Savior.

Christ is our Sole Savior; He is the only name given to mankind by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12).

Christ is our Shepherd Savior, He knows us and cares for us and protects us and willingly lays down His life for us and rewards us with eternal life.

Our text this morning makes a stunning revelation about another aspect of our Savior. We have heard the Christmas story so many times we don't hear the shock of it.

Shepherds listen up, “Today in Bethlehem there has been a baby born who is the Messiah, and this baby is your Savior, and He is also the Lord Himself come from heaven.”

No wonder they reacted the way they did, first with fear at the angel's message and then with perplexity at this strange thing the angels said. No wonder the people wondered at what the shepherds said.

Those words of the angels would have been an utter shock to first century Jewish ears. First of all, that the long expected Messiah has come as a baby. And then that this baby is also **Lord**, meaning God Himself. How is this possible? No one saw this coming.

Lord means sovereign, and I want us to consider our Savior's sovereignty in *two ways*.

First, His Lordship over all creation and His power and authority as God to do all things.

Second, His Lordship over us and our responsibility to submit to Jesus not just as our Savior but as the Lord over our lives.

Sovereign Savior who has all power and authority.

First, with regard to Jesus power and authority as God to do all things, we could easily spend an entire sermon giving all the Scriptural proof that Jesus is God and can do anything God can do. Let me just give a very summary reminder.

He calmed the sea and walked on water to prove He had power and authority over nature.
He healed bodies to prove He had power and authority over disease and deformities.
He cast out demons to prove He had power and authority over Satan and the spiritual realm.
He made wine out of water and feed 5000 to prove He had power and authority to create.
He raised people from the dead to prove He had power and authority over death.
He forgave people their sins, proving He is God.

Another way Jesus exercised His sovereignty as God is seen in how He spoke. He did not say as the prophets said, "Thus says the Lord." Rather He said, "You have heard it said, but I say to you." That's a stunning claim to divine authority.

At the end of His ministry Jesus declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18).

So great is the sovereign authority and power of Jesus that the future eternal state of every person in the universe depends on what they do with Jesus, whether they accept Him or reject Him.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Do you need more proof? Do you believe Jesus is sovereign, having all power and all authority over the entire universe and over our world and over our history and our lives? Is this a settled issue in your mind? Do you believe it?

If it is settled for you as I believe it is for many of you then you have been given a great gift. In fact, a gift so great that you may not realize it or appreciate it. People who have been born and raised in the reformed tradition take for granted the solid foundation that has been laid for you.

People who have for decades have sat under that kind of preaching don't realize how their worldview has been shaped and influenced to believe by faith that God is who He says He is and can do all He says He can do. Let me show you the difference in two contrasting lives.

A Wheaton classmate.

Last Saturday afternoon at the reception for my dear friend's funeral, I sat with an old Wheaton classmate. In our conversation he shared he was really struggling with our friend's death, it seemed so random, so unexplainable, so unnecessary. Why would God just take a 60-year-old, in the peak of health, a true servant who would do anything for any one?

His understanding of God wasn't helping him. He wasn't sold out to the sovereignty of God. He didn't have the foundation our Biblical doctrine gives us. He didn't have the peace of mind that sound theology gives you.

He couldn't quite say as Job did, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." And "Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil?" And "though he slay me, though he kill me, yet will I hope in him." (Job 1:21; 2:10; 13:15).

Let this be a settled truth, that God is God and the earth is the Lord's and everything in it and He can do with His creation and His creatures whatever He pleases. Let us learn to say, "If it pleases the Lord, it pleases me."

Yes, the absolute sovereignty of God raises all kinds of questions, questions about evil and sin and where is God's hand in all of that, and why does God allow bad things, and why doesn't God protect us or spare us from certain things. But those questions point to a deficiency in our understanding, not a deficiency in God or His character.

Zach's text message:

Let me contrast that with something that happened on our family vacation in October on Catalina Island. Zach had to leave a day early by himself to get back to college. He is a fully capable adult but it's no small thing getting from Catalina to the airport. He sent this text:

"I chatted on the ferry with a cool guy named Mark for a while. Arrived at the terminal and the shuttle wasn't there. The driver called me and said he couldn't get to the terminal because of the Long Beach Marathon had closed off all the roads to the terminal. People were running everywhere. So I started walking to where the shuttle was which was a long ways away. I decided to stick my thumb out while a car drove by and it happened to be Mark. He picked me up and was able somehow to get me to where the shuttle was. I was the only one on the shuttle with the husband/wife drivers who were from Japan. I had a fantastic conversation with them all the way to LAX. Got checked in and through security and everything is on time.

"Feeling in awe at the little, cool interesting providences of our great God. If He orders these events in my little insignificant travels, how much more does he direct the world, creating beauty and order out of seeming chaos?"

That's a Biblical worldview. That's a way of think about our world and how it works that is infused with a biblical understanding of the sovereignty of God that extends down to the most minute details of our lives.

That's a worldview that believes we live in an open universe, a universe created and ruled by a personal sovereign God, a God big enough to be in control of all the details of all our lives.

Jesus has all authority and is sovereign over all the big things like space and time and history and Caesars and censuses. And He is sovereign over all the little things like the time of a young Jewish girl's pregnancy.

Not a hair from our head turns gray or white or falls from our head without Him. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His will. Sparrows were sold for a penny, they are inconsequential, they are nothing, but they are completely under His watchful eye and care.

What does this mean? God has us covered. God knows us and loves us and has us under this watchful eye. Nothing gets past Him, nothing catches Him off guard.

Let this be a settled truth in your soul. Let this be another truth that is cause for worship for you. Let this truth be on your lips as you instruct your children and encourage the saints.

Because this universe and our earth and each of us belongs to God and is under His sovereign control, this means we need to think more seriously about our relationship with God and with His Son who is our Sovereign Savior and Lord.

Sovereign Savior to whom is owed all faith and obedience.

Most church going people would say Jesus died to save us from our sins and if we want to go to heaven we have to believe that. If we profess faith in Jesus, then we have our ticket into heaven.

Pray the prayer, walk the aisle, make a public profession, be a member of a church, live a basically decent life and that's it. Right? Isn't that a fairly accurate description of what a lot of people believe it means to be a Christian?

People talk about trusting Jesus for our salvation and being born again, but stop at that point and don't go any further. The problem is that's only half of what it means.

Peter made it clear at Pentecost when he preached:

Acts 2:36-39 "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both *Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Acts 2:21 Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

Romans 10:9, 13 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ... 13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Jesus is not only Savior; He is also Lord. And if Jesus is not our Lord, then He is not our Savior. He died to defeat death and to save us from our sins. He rose again from the dead and ascended to heaven and is seated on the throne as Lord and King over His Kingdom.

He died to be our Savior from sin, He rose and ascended to be our Lord and King.

Confessing Christ only as our Savior doesn't go far enough, we must also confess Him as our Lord, meaning we willingly submit our lives to His Lordship, to His authority.

Jesus is called Lord over 700 times in the NT. It can't be made clearer. What does it mean to have Jesus as Lord?

It means to take our saving faith in Jesus to the next level, to continue to repent and forsake all known sin and seek by the Spirit's help to live in continual obedience to Christ, to take Him at His Word, to trust Him for wisdom and guidance, to willingly follow Him wherever He leads.

We all know perfect obedience is not possible in this life. But there must be fruit, there must be evidence in our lives that shows somehow that Jesus is Lord.

Lordship is submission to His will and authority. If we won't make that commitment, then we haven't had our hearts changed by the Holy Spirit.

It is impossible to have Jesus as our Savior if we will not also have Him as our Lord. You can't say the Lord is my Shepherd unless the Shepherd is your Lord.

Jesus has a legitimate claim on you and your life. He is the Lord of your life because He created you, and He is Lord of your life because He has ransomed and redeemed you with His own blood. He owned us when He created us, then we fell away. So then He bought us back with His own blood.

When He becomes our Savior, He makes a claim on us as our Lord and the rest of our journey is a slow submitting and give over to Him more and more the reigns of our lives.

The Lordship of Christ in our lives is not a one-time thing, it is a ten thousand-times thing, a daily and sometimes hourly surrendering and yielding. It's daily saying, "Thy will be done, not my will."

To say Jesus is Savior and Lord is a heart issue. At Pentecost when they heard this preached they were cut to the heart, they responded. We must respond.

We are created and called and saved to serve Christ all the time, in all of life, with all of our heart. He is to be Lord of our thinking, our speaking and our acting. And in order to do this, we are not left on our own or to our own devices. Christ in His grace equips us and gives us many helps, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, prayer, preaching, worship, Bible Study, the sacraments, fellowship with others Christians, Christian books and literature.

To seek to serve Christ all the time in all of life means that we have a Christian worldview, we look at ourselves and the world through a different set of lenses. We look at authority different because we know all authority comes from God. We look at the law different because we know God is the original law giver. We look at ourselves and each other different because

we know we are all created in the image of God and reflect the image of God. We look at finances and business and marriage and parenting different because we have different goals and priorities and a much longer and higher perspective.

What must we do today to make Jesus Lord over every aspect of our life? What are the concrete ways we can show we are seeking to obey Christ in our home life or work life or school life? May we live our lives with such clarity that when others see it they too are cut to the heart and want to know what they must do to be saved.

When the most glorious person in all the universe comes and willingly and sacrificially pays all your debts at the cost of His blood and forgives all your sins and satisfies the wrath of God and reconciles you to the Father and then invites you to come live with Him and enter into the joy of His presence, how on earth can we imagine a better life than a life lived in obedience to such a good and loving Savior and Lord?

Pursuing holy, righteous, God-fearing, God-honoring living is a life-long, day to day way of saying thank you to God for His incredibly generous, abundant and daily grace.

When He has done all He has done, how can obedience to His commands be anything less than our best expression of pure gratitude?

Even if He demands that we lay down our life, how can that not be anything less than His very best for us and for our ultimate joy?

The Holy Spirit is never inactive, He is always at work within us making us more and more conformed to the image and likeness of Christ.

Our world may not know it, our world may deny it, the headlines in the newspaper may tempt us to question it, but it doesn't matter, the truth remains.

Philippians 2:9-11 God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.