

November 25, 2007

He Reigns!

Last week I ended the sermon with an invitation to join us, a traditional church that will be celebrating a traditional Christmas. That tradition begins today. A traditional follows the church year and today is the last day Sunday of the church year. If you've been watching your bulletin you know that for the last 33 weeks we've been in the season of Pentecost. This is the 34th week the last week and we give this week and this Sunday a special name; it is Christ the King Sunday and week. This week we are to begin each day with the thought that Jesus is our king and that He reigns on high. Interesting enough, next week the, first week of Advent, and the first week of the new church year focuses on Christ's return. To be honest, I believe that these two Sundays are two of the most important and two of the most misunderstood. Let me explain.

In the last century there has been a new doctrine that has become fairly popular within a large segment of the Christian church. It's called dispensationalism but most people know it by more simple terms such as the rapture. In a nutshell it is the belief that Christ will return to the earth, rapture or take up all believers to be with Him, and then He will return to earth to establish an earthly kingdom, which is often called the millennium. Now, there are many versions of this doctrine and some of it can be quite complex but all of them contend that Jesus needs to return to establish His kingdom. This, of course, doesn't quite agree with the church year in the doctrine of the traditional church. If we call this Sunday "Christ the King" Sunday it must mean that Christ has already established His kingdom and that we can proclaim, take hope, and have the joy of saying He reigns. But I also want to make it very clear that in this sermon I am not bashing some of our Christian brothers and sisters I respect them deeply, I pray for them, many of them on a daily basis, but today I want to focus on what we believe, why we believe it and hopefully the wonderful reaction we should have because of it. So lets begin to explore Christ's kingdom and reign.

First, lets acknowledge that it was foretold. The entire Old Testament revolves around God's promise to send a Messiah who

would save us from our sin. It begins at the fall in Genesis where God says that the Messiah will crush Satan's head but Satan would bruise his heel. It continues to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 where God says, "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." This promised Messiah's mission is perhaps most clearly defined in Isaiah 53:4-5 where the prophet writes and says, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed." The Messiah was pierced for our transgressions, those transgressions are called sin. Crushed for our iniquities, those iniquities are called sin. The Messiah came to pay the price of our sin. But it continues in verse 10, "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering he will see his offspring and prolong his days and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities." The Messiah paid the price of our sin but the Messiah came to be crushed and die to rise and to defeat death.

You see, this the threefold promise of the Messiah from Genesis, he'll crush Satan, from Isaiah, he's going to defeat sin and again from Isaiah, he's going to rise he's going to defeat death. That is what was foretold about the Messiah. The second point is the New Testament echoes this message clearly. The Bible is consistent from old to new. John 1:29, John the Baptist say, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." 1 Peter 3:8, "For Christ died for sin once for all the righteous and the unrighteous to bring you to God." I Corinthians 15:3-4, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures." And in all honesty I could spend the next hour or two reading scriptures that say Jesus came to conquer sin, conquer death and conquer the devil. But let me finish this with one last verse Hebrews 10:12, "but when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins He sat down at the right hand of God" which leads to the third point, He reigns right now. If Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God He is in the position of the king. Paul makes it clear in Philippians 2:8-9 where he says, "and being found in appearance as a man He (Jesus) humbled Himself and became

obedient to death even death on a cross therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.” Here’s the point, the job is done, and we don’t worship a savior who didn’t complete his mission. He did it all of it and God has exalted him to the highest place. He is the King.

Now some may ask but Matt what about the last days doesn’t Jesus have to return and establish His kingdom? Let me answer both as quickly as I can with scripture. First the last days when are they? You might be surprised by the answer. Acts 2:16 the scene is Pentecost, Peter and the disciples are speaking in the language of all the different people. Some scoffers are there and they say that the disciples are drunk and so Peter launches into a sermon. He says to those scoffers, “No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Listen carefully, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people.” The last days began on Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Jesus told us he would send us His Holy Spirit, the Old Testament prophets said that God would pour out His Holy Spirit and that is the time of the last days. We have God’s Holy Spirit now therefore; we are living in the last days.

What we need to understand is that when it comes down to it there are two distinct times or age mentioned in the Bible. One is earthly and one is heavenly. Jesus says this in Matthew 12:32 when He says, “Anyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven but anyone who speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or the age to come.” There are two ages, two time frames there is this age and the age to come. Again Ephesians 1:21 Jesus is “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.” Did you hear it? Jesus has the rule and authority over this age he reigns. But also He has the rule and authority over the age to come. What is the age to come? Well lets let Jesus answer that Luke 18:29-30, “I tell you the truth no one has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.” The age to come is eternal life. It’s not a limited 1,000 year reign this age to come is ushered in by judgment day by Christ’s return, which we will explore next week. But today we celebrate that Christ has won.

He doesn’t have to come back to re-establish himself it is the central call of Zion. If you look at the window in the front of this

church when I talked to Dr. Heunneman about it he said the central thing is people come into this church they're drawn to that front window and the center of that window is Jesus He is the Lamb of God. Above him there in the crown he is the King. Sin is defeated, death is defeated Satan has lost game over, Christ is King and he reigns and he has given us the task of spreading His word to all people. Oh what joy this brings to know that we serve a reigning king who will come to take us to his home the age to come heaven. He will come to us this way to take us there either in our death or on judgment day. But he didn't leave anything incomplete he won. And so we have Christ the King Sunday. He is the King of this age and he is the king of the age to come.

In our Savior's name, Amen.