

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday in Advent, December 14, 2008

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Hymns: 69, 130:1, 352, 221, 244.

Lessons: 1 Samuel 8:8-22, Ephesians 1: 15-23, Matthew 13: 36-43.

Sermon Text: John 18: 36-37.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I had a difficult time selecting hymns for this sermon. There are more than 130 hymns in our hymnal which speak of Jesus Christ as king. Jesus speaks repeatedly of the kingdom of heaven, so there were many texts to choose from for our sermon text. Today we consider

JESUS CHRIST WAS ANOINTED TO THE OFFICE OF KING

1. **What the Old Testament kings were anointed to do.**
2. **What Christ does as king.**

In the United States of America, we elect a president every four years to guide our country. He does not have supreme authority, for our government was arranged with the intention of having a system of checks and balances, so the president would not become a king or some other kind of dictator. The administrative branch of the president is balanced by the legislative branch – congress – and by the judicial branch – the Supreme Court. But we are all familiar with a king. A king is the one who has power and authority to rule a country.

The Bible teaches us that the Old Testament kings of God's chosen people were anointed to rule the people and to protect them. It also teaches us that they were to fight the battles of the people. It was not God's original intention that his chosen people, the nation from whom the Messiah would be born should be ruled by a king. Through the prophet Samuel as you heard in our Old Testament lesson God warned them that they would experience evil kings as well as good kings who would rule according to God's will and guide his people according to God's will. But God did give them kings. Not all of them were good, God-fearing kings. But King David, who was considered a good king, despite his adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband was the one that much of scripture pointed to as an example, a type, a symbol of the Messiah-king to come.

In 1 Samuel 16:11-13 we read of the prophet Samuel finding David, who was a young shepherd and anointing him as king: ***Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.*** So you see that God had the kings of his people anointed. However, God permitted many evil men to rule as kings. One such was Ahab, of whom it is written ***"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him."*** 1 Kings 16:30. Ahab, remember, coveted the vineyard of Naboth, which was right next to his palace. His wicked queen Jezebel schemed to make it his and Naboth was murdered.

Especially as we read in many Psalms, King David had to fight many battles. He started by killing Goliath and it seems he was almost constantly at war with some nation or another. David often won his battles. Not all kings of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel always won their battles. In fact, God's people were

carried off to Babylon, modern-day Iraq, into slavery, only to have a remnant return to their ruined land. But through all their history you see that kings had to fight.

That the Messiah was to be a King was prophesied frequently in the Old Testament Scriptures. God himself tells the great king David ***“I will also give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.”*** 2 Samuel 7:11-14. In this way God promised to establish the kingdom of a son of David. Now Solomon was the son of David who succeeded him as king, but Solomon’s kingdom did not last forever. Jesus Christ is the son of David whose kingdom will endure forever! We read in Zechariah 9:9 ***“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*** In this we see that the entire city of Jerusalem is to rejoice at the coming of its King. Of course, Luke records the birth of Christ as of the house and lineage of David, and when he was born, the Wise Men from the East inquired about the new-born King of the Jews. On the day we call Palm Sunday, Jerusalem hailed Jesus as its King: ***“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest”.*** Luke 19:38. Before Pilate Jesus testified that He was indeed a King as you heard in our sermon text.

Just as Old Testament kings fought the peoples’ battles and ruled over them, so the great King Christ won the victory over sin, death, and the devil that he might rule in the hearts of believers by His Word.

Christ is not an earthly king. Jesus was not the kind of king the Jews, or even His disciples, expected – a king who was to ***“restore again the kingdom to Israel”*** Acts 1: 6. Jesus had said to Pilate: ***“My kingdom is not of this world”*** John 18: 36. He was not a rival of Herod and of Caesar. His kingdom is not like that of David and of Solomon. His kingship and His kingdom are far greater than that of any earthly ruler.

Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 ***“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** We read in Hebrews 2:14-15: ***“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”*** Romans 14:9 tells us ***“For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.”*** We read in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26: ***Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.***

Jesus’ kingdom is often spoken of as a kingdom of power, of grace, and of glory. This three-fold kingdom is distinct but not separate. We must not separate them as though they had nothing in common. There is a close relationship between them. There is one and the same King, who rules these three kingdoms, and there is one dominant purpose in their government. Christ rules the kingdom of power for the benefit of His kingdom of grace

The kingdom of power includes the entire universe, and extends to all creatures, visible and invisible. As a summary of this kingdom, Christ says: ***“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth”*** Matthew 28: 18. God ***“hath put all things under His feet”*** Ephesians 1: 2. And there is nothing that is not under him. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He controls the forces of nature and the destiny of nations; without His will not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor a hair from our head. Good and evil are subject to Him. He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

The kingdom of grace does not include all creatures, not even all men, but only those who through the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom have been born again. Only true believers are citizens in this kingdom. This kingdom Christ Himself describes as one which is established by the witness of the truth, and which is governed not by manmade laws, but solely by His Word. This kingdom has proved itself stronger than the kingdoms of this world. The mighty Roman Empire, which Pilate represented, has passed away, but the kingdom of the Crucified One has continued and flourished in spite of bloody persecution, frivolous ridicule, disrupting heresy, and science falsely so called, and it will continue to the end of time.

It is called the kingdom of grace, because it is the promise and offer of divine grace that wins men for this kingdom; it is the acceptance of this grace by faith that makes them citizens in this kingdom; it is the appreciation of this grace that makes them render willing obedience to their King. The essence of this kingdom is not an external organization, like a congregation, a denomination, or the visible church in the world, but ***“the kingdom of God is within you”*** Luke 17: 20. It is the ruling of Christ in the hearts of His believers. For the individual the kingdom of God consists in his personal relationship to Christ, established by faith, by which he trusts in the grace of his Savior and gives joyful service to his Lord. This kingdom, therefore, comes to us, as Luther explains, “when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and lead a godly life”. The kingdom of grace includes all those whom Christ gathers by the preaching of the Gospel, who acknowledge Him as their King, and are governed by His Spirit.

The kingdom of glory is not on earth, but in heaven, where Christ Himself shall have all glory, and where those who have been faithful unto death shall likewise be crowned with glory and honor. The souls of the believers enter this kingdom of glory in the hour of death and after the resurrection also their bodies shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them.

Christ rules the kingdom of power for the benefit of His kingdom of grace. From our epistle lesson we learn that Christ, who has supreme rule over all things – his kingdom of power – is the Head of the Church, which is His body – the kingdom of grace. This means that Christ exercises His lordship and power over all things in the interest of those people who are His spiritual body. Christ uses His omnipotent power and dominion over all things for the particular benefit of His brothers in the flesh. Thus the world continues to exist, and is governed by Christ to this end that He might gather and build His Church, bringing men to faith and preserving them in that Holy Christian Church. Because He has all power in heaven and on earth, He sends out His Christians to preach the Gospel to all men. He protects His Church so that the forces of evil shall not prevail against it. Since we know that our Friend and Savior is the Sovereign Ruler of all things, we may rest assured ***“that all things work together for good to them that love God”*** Romans 8: 28. The world continues for no other purpose than this, that sinners might come to repentance.

The kingdom of grace serves the kingdom of glory. Christ's purpose in building His Church in this world is not merely to establish a church organization which is to serve temporal interests. It is true that Christians are the salt of the earth, who by their good influence counteract the moral corruption among men. However, the chief purpose of the kingdom of grace is to win and to prepare men for the kingdom of heaven. We hope in Christ not only in this life, but are begotten again unto a living hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away, and is reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God unto salvation. Neither the world nor the Church exist for purposes of their own, but for this one thing, that sinners may be converted and be won for the kingdom of glory. In order that this may be accomplished, the government of the world and of the Church is placed in the hands of Him who came to save sinners.

Never forget that the purpose of the work of Christ in His threefold office of prophet, priest, and king is the salvation of sinners. Our role is to spread the gospel, so that by the power of the Word of God others, too, may be brought into that eternal kingdom of Christ. God grant that our lives may have such fruit! Amen.