

Bringing Grace and Peace  
Christ the King Sunday  
November 25, 2018

Sean Kelly  
First Presbyterian Church  
Lake Forest, Illinois

I know I say this every time I have the opportunity to share with you from the pulpit, but it truly is an honor to share with you this morning... That feeling is amplified today as we Celebrate Christ the King Sunday this Morning in Worship!

‘Christ the King’ Sunday is celebrated the last Sunday before the start of Advent, and Celebrates the FULL Authority of Jesus Christ as King AND Lord of the Universe!

My intention is not to make this morning into a history lesson, but I am FASCINATED by History, specifically Christian History, so if you might indulge me for a moment I think it would be helpful to highlight that Christ the King Sunday was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius the XI (*the Eleventh*) to emphasize the Authority of Jesus Christ... At the Time Pope Pius was witnessing many Christians beginning to DOUBT the Effectiveness of the Church... And, even more alarming, Pope Pius was witnessing Christian’s beginning to DOUBT the Authority and EXISTENCE of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

So Pope Pius the XI (*the Eleventh*) instituted ‘Christ the King’ Sunday as a reminder, and as an opportunity, not only to Worship God, but also to remember and honor Jesus Christ as the All-Powerful and Ever-Reigning King & Lord of the Universe...

-----

But I think it is also helpful to acknowledge this morning, that we too could use this reminder! It is all too easy to look at our World today: Locally//Nationally//Globally and wonder ‘*What is going on?*’... Look at the heartbreak, Look at the devastation, Look at the division, Look at the hopelessness!!

My Prayer this Morning, My Hope this Morning... Is that we collectively, and each of us individually, are reminded and encouraged that Christ is Lord... Christ is King... And Christ HAS BROUGHT PURPOSE AND HOPE...

-----

As we read in our New Testament Lesson, Revelation 1:4b-8...

*Jesus Christ... The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth. To him (Jesus) who LOVES US and FREED US from OUR SINS by HIS BLOOD, and MADE US TO BE A KINGDOM!*

*{Made US to be} Priests serving His God and Father... To Him (Jesus) be GLORY and DOMINION forever and ever... AMEN!*

This is a Powerful Passage, with incredible implications, so let's unpack these words for a second...

We start in v. 3 by reading what is the first of SEVEN Blessings (*'Grace to You and Peace from HIM who is and who was and who is to come...'*) ... These Blessings are given to those who Hear AND Keep God's Word... In the Early Church one would read the scriptures ALOUD, which is why it says to those who HEAR/KEEP; but it can also be described as to those that READ/KEEP... The Point Remains the Same, in that these Blessings are promised to those that Know the Scriptures AND Obey the Scriptures ((When I was learning to drive my Dad and I spent a lot of time together... I am originally from PA, where, in order to drive, you must obtain your Driver's Permit by Passing a Written Exam, then complete 200 Hours of Instruction over a 6 Month Period BEFORE You Are Eligible to Attempt your Driver's Test...

My Dad, never one to short-change the system, ensured that I completed ALL REQUIREMENTS before he allowed me to schedule/attempt my Driver's Test... All 200 Hours and NOT A DAY Short of the 6 Month Permit Period... That Meant A LOT of Father Son Time in the Car!!

Now My Dad took this One Step Further... He Read that Driver's Manual Cover to Cover SEVERAL TIMES to ensure I, his Son, was well-prepared to complete my driver's test; that I knew every rule of the road (both written and unwritten); that I could recite every Road Sign by Color AND Shape; and that I was extremely well-versed on EVERY country road of our BELOVED HOMETOWN...

But it was during this 6 month period that my Dad realized that his efforts had a counter effect - - He had prepared me so well that I was now well aware of each and every time he himself did not follow/obey the rules of the road - - And I made sure to point out each and every shortcoming I witnessed while my father was driving!

There was one time, in particular, that my Dad was driving while on a family vacation in which he was both speeding AND ran 2 consecutive stop signs while 'exploring - - my Dad's term for being lost' the local streets of Ocean City, MD. Before I could say anything he looked at me and said, 'Do as I say, NOT as I do!'...))

But you see my Dad was wrong that day... I see now that it was important to him that I become a safe driver. It was important to him that I stay alert and recognize the potential danger that could ensue if I didn't respect the road, the vehicle and each of every driver/pedestrian/variable I would encounter... My Dad modeled for me what diligence and thoroughness looked like! My Dad was preparing and equipping me to handle any circumstance I might encounter

- - - -

John here in our New Testament Passage is attempting to do something similar. Although in a more profound way with much greater implications, John is attempting to prepare all believers to be diligent and committed Followers of Christ...

Reminding us of the importance of the Scriptures...

And That as Followers and Believers of Jesus, we are to study and emulate the lessons and actions of Jesus' life!

In the greeting of John's revelation text to ALL CHRIST'S SERVANTS - - John is emphasizing Jesus as the Faithful Witness, Jesus has TRIUMPHED OVER DEATH, and Jesus is SOVEREIGN OVER ALL EARTHLY POWERS...

And John wraps up his greeting by stating that Reconciliation is Offered Through Jesus' Death & Resurrection, and is Available to ALL WHO ARE FREED BY CHRIST'S BLOOD THROUGH FAITH...

- - - -

Jesus is portrayed in the Book of Revelation as the ALL-POWERFUL KING: Victorious in Battle and Glorious in Peace.

My Hope this Morning is that through the Scriptures we would allow the Truth of Christ to Penetrate our Lives, Deepen our Faith in Jesus and Strengthen our Commitment **by accepting God's Invitation** to Follow God Out into the World as Advocates of Grace AND Peace...

- - - -

Throughout the Gospels we read of the Disciples learning at the Feet of Jesus as they witness Christ's miracles, interactions and teachings... And time after time we read of the Disciples being 'dumbfounded' and 'confused' because, simply put, they just don't get it...

Christ, time and time again, emphasizes that the content and reflections of our hearts as being the true measure of our obedience and being... Without a pure, god-loving, faithful heart our actions cannot be aligned with those of God's Kingdom...

I believe our passage is reminding us this morning to fill our lives, fill our minds, fill our hearts with the Words and Teachings of the Lord... Seek God above ALL ELSE... So that we too WOULD NOT be left 'dumbfounded' or 'confused' but that we might recognize and understanding the Lord's

teachings and guidance - - And that we might be faithful to our Calling to be Christ's Ambassadors in the World!!

I was reminded this Week that Satan's Greatest Weapon is a Person's Ignorance. That we each have a Spiritual Battleground within our Minds that Satan attempts to Fill with Lies/Temptation... But our only effective response, our greatest counter, is to fill our Minds & Hearts w/ God's Word...

Psalm 119:105- *'Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...'*

In our Old Testament Lesson we read of Daniel, a devoted servant of God, who had a vision of,

*"one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven... {That} to him was given dominion and glory and kingship... {That} his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."*

In this passage, from Daniel 7, we read of *'The Son of Man - - That scholars widely agree upon as representing Jesus'- - coming with the Clouds...* *'The Clouds of Heaven'* detailed in Daniel portray *'The Son of Man'* as being Divine - - Throughout Scripture CLOUDS represent DIVINITY, MAJESTY AND AWESOME PRESENCE! We read of God's Glory appearing in a Cloud at the giving of the Law at Sinai in the Book of Exodus... We read of the Cloud's Parting and the Heaven's Opening as the Spirit descends upon Jesus in the Form of a Dove at Christ's Baptism before God declares, *'THIS IS MY SON WITH WHOM IM WELL PLEASED...'*

- - - -

And we read of Christ's Coming with the CLOUDS of Heaven in our New Testament Lesson this Morning, in Revelation 1:7:

*'Look! He (Jesus) is coming with the clouds;  
Every eye will see Him;  
Even those who pierced Him;*

*And on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail...'*

In this passage, John is describing Jesus using the IMAGERY FROM DANIEL'S VISION IN DANIEL 7!

Revelation is FILLED with QUOTES and ALLUSIONS to the Old Testament... John is writing at a time when being Christian was an EXTRMEMELY DIFFICULT AND AGANOZING PROPOSITION/THING!!

John himself knew banishment, imprisonment and hard labor... And John knew of many others who experienced DEATH in the most cruelest forms on account of their faith and declaration of Jesus as LORD and KING! But through our passage, John is demonstrating that the BEST WAY to maintain courage and hope in such circumstances was to REMEMBER THE PAST!

The BEST WAY to be certain God would NOT FAIL in the present, is to remember God had not failed in the Past!

John strengthened his soul, and encourages us to do the same, by continuously remembering the GREATNESS and the GOODNESS of God in the Past, and holding to our Convictions that God will Triumph!

-----

Our passage ends this morning, in Revelation 1:8, with the words: '*I Am the Alpha and Omega*' says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty,'.

In the Greek Alphabet, '*Alpha*' and '*Omega*' are the FIRST and LAST letters - - Symbolizing that the LORD GOD is the BEGINNING and the END!! God is Eternal - - Ruler of the Past//Present//AND the Future. Without God we have NOTHING that is Eternal, Nothing that can bring Everlasting Change and Purpose to our Lives...

-----

Today we celebrate 'Christ the King Sunday' ...

Our Worship Service this Morning is centered on Bringing Glory and Honor to Christ OUR KING - - The KING and LORD of ALL THE UNIVERSE...

This Morning we are reminded to HONOR the ONE who is the Beginning and End of ALL Existence//Wisdom//Power...

- - - -

*"To HIM who loves us & freed us from our sins by His Blood, & made us to be a Kingdom, priests serving His God & Father, to Jesus be Glory & Dominion FOREVER & EVER... AMEN!"*