

The King and The Kingdom

We are beginning a new sermon series today: The King and the Kingdom. During our Advent series, In Pursuit of a King, we talked about Jesus as a different kind of king. He was nothing like the earthly kings with which the people of the first century were familiar because he was unlike any other man. He was Jesus, Savior. He was Immanuel, God with us. He was God incarnate, fully God and fully man. He was King of kings.

At his trial before Pilate, Matthew's gospel tells us Jesus was asked, **“Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, ‘Yes, it is as you say.’”** Jesus was and is a king, but that means he must have a kingdom, right? John's gospel tells us Jesus also told Pilate, **“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.’” John 18:36-37**

Jesus told Pilate he came into the world to testify to the Truth of his kingdom, to make his kingdom and his salvation known. We talked about the nature of our heavenly king, how different he was from all the earthly kings during Advent. Now Jesus says his kingdom is different as well. It's not of this world, so what is his kingdom like? And does that matter? Does it matter that he's the king and we are part of his kingdom? What does that look like for us? That's part of what we are going to explore over the next few Sundays talking about the king and the kingdom and what it means for us to be subjects and citizens of his kingdom.

The bible teaches that forty days after the resurrection Jesus was “taken up” or ascended bodily into heaven. It means that Jesus, in his resurrected body, went to heaven where he will forever be our Savior, Lord and Redeemer. It's one of the reasons we know we aren't some kind of disembodied spirits in heaven because it was the resurrected Jesus they talked with and touched and ate with that they saw ascend into heaven. Luke's gospel tells us, **“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple praising God.” Luke 24:50-53**

Notice Luke said when Jesus ascended into heaven they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. The dearest friend they ever had, their Savior and Lord just left them.

Why are they filled with great joy that Jesus has gone back to heaven? It isn't just where he went, or that he went there in his resurrected and physical body, but it is about what happened when he got there. Does it matter? R.C. Sproul tells us, **“The New Testament idea of ascension means something far more weighty than merely going up into the sky or even to the abode of the heavenlies. In His ascension, Jesus was going to a specific place for a specific reason. He was ascending into heaven for the purpose of his investiture and coronation as the King of kings and Lord of lords.” ...R. C. Sproul**

Jesus ascended into heaven and took his place upon the throne as the King of Kings! Understanding that lit a fire in the hearts of the disciples. It became part of all of their preaching in the New Testament, that Jesus died, was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven and they used this phrase, that he is “seated at the right hand of God.” In fact, this is apparently the Old Testament verse most often quoted or alluded to in the New Testament, **“The Lord says to my Lord; ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Psalm 110:1** It's referred to in the New Testament 23 times. God the Father says to Jesus the Son, “take your rightful place upon the throne and sit in victory at my right hand as King of kings!” That phrase is part of what lit that fire in the disciples. Jesus is King and he is going to rule and reign with justice, conquering every enemy and we get to share in his triumph.

That reality, that doctrine was part of New Testament preaching from the beginning. At his ascension they understood, they worshiped, they rejoiced and they proclaimed this truth: **Jesus the risen Savior rules and reigns as King!** In his sermon recorded in Acts 2 Peter told the listeners on the day of Pentecost, **“God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord has said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:32-36** Crucified, raised to life, ascended and seated at the Father's right hand! Messiah (Christ) and Lord and King!

The writer of Hebrews declares, **“When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.” Hebrews 1:3**

Paul, in the book of Romans and speaking of Jesus declares him to be the one **“...who died, yes who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us...” Romans 8:34.**

We could go on, but the point is Jesus is seated in power and authority, our permanent advocate and intercessor, reigning as King. We use the term “sitting president” meaning the current president. Donald Trump is a sitting president. Jesus is seated as the King of kings, but it makes no sense to have a king without a kingdom over which to rule. Over what is Jesus ruling? He is the head of the church, ruling over God’s people, but that isn’t all. He is ruler over all creation! He is king and ruler over all! He is seated at the right hand of God and all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Does it matter that he is seated and ruling as king? I think it does.

In Ephesians Paul writes, **“That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm, 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. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” Ephesians 1:19-23**

Do you see that? “Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title, now and in the age to come.” That about sums it up! Jesus is King, Sovereign, now and forever. We can’t picture him any higher! He is the victor and as someone said, “To the victor belong the spoils.” Through his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, the victory is won and the spoils belong to him. Through his victory he triumphs over hell and plunders those sinners that were held captive (that’s us!). We are the spoils of his redemption! To the victor belongs the spoils – us! Now we are part of his royal kingdom. He has been installed and enthroned as King and we are under his protection, his lordship, his sovereignty and he rules and reigns over every power, principality, ruler and authority. He is the ultimate Sovereign and he is able to provide total redemption for us and ultimately for this world. It matters that he is King and thank God we are part of his kingdom!

He is seated in authority and notice that phrase again that Paul uses “God placed all things under his feet.” Again it’s a reference to the passage from Psalm 110, “Sit at my right

hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” What does that mean? Some scholars suggest that ancient kings and conquerors, to demonstrate their complete and total triumph over their enemy, would lay the defeated king or general on the ground before the people and then place their foot on his neck. Making your enemies a footstool for your feet is a sign of triumph over your enemy. Under your feet. (Walked all over them...mopped up the floor with them.)

When we believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord and we believe he is seated at the right hand of God, we are saying we believe he is crowned with glory and honor because of who he is and what he did for us on the cross, and we believe he has ultimate authority over all things and all enemies will ultimately and finally be under his feet. That’s good news because his enemies are our enemies and it is assured, guaranteed by his death, resurrection and ascension to the throne, that all his enemies will one day be a footstool under his feet.

Does it matter that he’s king? Can you see him now, clothed in royal robes of glory and authority, seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned as the conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with his foot on the neck of his enemies? Can you picture him someday with his foot on the neck of his and our enemies: Satan and sin, sickness and disease, cancer and Alzheimers, diabetes and cerebral palsy, Parkinsons and a million other things that have brought pain and sorrow? He has his foot on the neck of the one that robbed us of so much in this life. It matters that he is king! The reality is it’s only a matter of time until all these things are placed before him as his footstool and he will rule and reign over it all, including death itself, the final enemy, swallowed up and defeated. Even though the devil is fighting and trying to destroy us, our victory is certain and sure because Jesus rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and God the Father said to him, “Sit at my right hand until I make you enemies a footstool for your feet.” Be encouraged today. It’s a done deal. The Father is wrapping up a few final details, but Jesus is already seated at the right hand of the Father. He is already seated in power and authority. Jesus has conquered and he already rules and reigns in victory as our Sovereign King and Lord.

Can you see him at the right hand of the father when things are going wrong in your life? When it seems like the enemy is winning the battle? Stephen was a deacon in the book of Acts, martyred for his testimony of Jesus. Just before they stoned him to death the bible says, “**But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” Acts 7:55-56**

With angry men shouting and screaming at him, dragging him out of the city to stone him to death, Stephen saw the risen, ascended, living Lord, crowned in glory, at the right hand of God. It mattered then, it matters now. For Stephen it was the assurance that Jesus was on the throne and everything would be all right. Even if men were turning against him, even if they killed him, it didn't matter because Jesus was on the throne, King of kings. He was still in control, even when it didn't look like it. He's still on the throne!!

We are living in a time of political and social turmoil like we haven't seen in a while. I won't say it is unprecedented because that's simply not the truth. Every generation thinks our condition is the worst. There have been other times when it seemed the world was poised to fall into utter chaos, when religious liberty was threatened, when we were on the brink of war and even nuclear annihilation. What do we do? Panic? Give up? No, we look heavenward and remind ourselves that Jesus is seated on the throne of heaven, we are his subjects and citizens of his kingdom and he is still in control.

Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament, in the southern kingdom of Judah. He knew judgment would come to Judah because of their sin and things were growing worse. Then the King, Uzziah died and everything was thrown into greater turmoil, political unrest and unsettledness. The prophet didn't know what would happen now that the king was dead. Who would come to power? Would there be anarchy? Would the king's counselors and advisors be executed? That was important because Isaiah had been an advisor to Uzziah. There were dire predictions about what would happen. It kind of sounds familiar doesn't it?

It was in that fearful period of political and social unrest that Isaiah was granted a glimpse into heaven. **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.”** Isaiah 6:1. He had a revelation of the throne room of God and he saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe, that means the glory of God's tangible presence, reached all the way from heaven to earth where it filled the earthly temple of God.

What Isaiah saw of the glory and majesty of God brought hope and encouragement to him in a troubled time. In fact, it brought fear and trembling to him when he saw it. It left him crying, **“Woe to me! I am ruined...my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”** Isaiah 6:5 He was frightened by the political conditions around him until by comparison he saw the power and splendor of the King, the Lord Almighty. That shook him to his core. The power and

glory of God was so much greater than anything that threatened him on earth that it overwhelmed him at first but then it left him with the confidence that God would handle everything. Whoever the new king would be, whatever policies would change, whatever the outcome, God was sovereign and in control and Isaiah could trust the Lord.

In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord seated on his throne. In the year 2020, when America and Iran came to the brink of war; in the year 2020 when God only knows who and Donald Trump will run against each other for President; in 2020 when the North Koreans pulled whatever they may pull or the stock market may crash or the Republicans lost the Senate or won the House, or whatever happens, good or bad, what we need to know, what we need to see, is Jesus high and lifted up, seated in authority at the right hand of God. What we need to see is that our God is still in control. **“The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad.” Psalm 97:1**

Listen to me. Jesus isn't going to be unseated as the King of kings! He was seated upon that throne 2,000 years ago when he ascended into heaven and there is no end to his rulership or his kingdom. The prophet said “and of his government there is no end.” The Roman Empire and its' cruel emperors couldn't get him off of that throne. Persecutors, skeptics and critics have tried to remove him but he still reigns. The gates of hell haven't prevailed against him or his kingdom. Jesus is going to sit at the Father's right hand and rule and reign long after every last enemy is under his foot as his footstool.

Don't let what's happening around you shake you. If you've just got your eyes on politics or political candidates, or on what's happening in the world around you, you're going to be overwhelmed with fear. But if you can get a glimpse of Jesus, seated on the throne...if you can get a glimpse of Jesus and know that he rules and reigns with authority and power you're going to be okay. The Lord reigns, let the church be glad!

Regardless of who is sitting in the Oval Office or who controls the House or Senate, Jesus is still King of kings and Lord of lords. Don't let anything shake your faith. We know who is sitting on the throne of Heaven and He rules the universe! I know there are preachers talking about President Trump as a modern day Cyrus that God raised up. I'll tell you what I know about who God raised up. God raised up Jesus from the dead and seated him on the throne and he is our Savior and Sovereign and King and to him alone belongs our confidence, our allegiance and our trust. You don't have to live in fear. Jesus is King! Can you see him on the throne? The ascended, risen, living King and Lord?

Ephesians 4 says, **“He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens in order to fill the whole universe.” Ephesians 4:10.** He fills the universe with Himself, with his glory and power. If you don’t see Jesus on the throne and if you don’t have him on the throne of your heart and your life, something or someone else will take the throne and will produce only trouble and fear. Let Jesus be enthroned in your life and live with confidence and purpose! I’m not suggesting we stick our heads in the sand or ignore what’s going on in our world, but I’m telling you Jesus said, “Don’t let your heart be troubled and don’t be afraid.” The reason to not be afraid is because Jesus ascended to heaven and he is on the throne. He rules and reigns.

John was exiled to the island of Patmos, a prison island off the coast of Turkey. The Roman Emperor Domitian was persecuting and executing Christians at that time. John was granted a glimpse into heaven and what did he see? He saw the risen, ascended and glorified Jesus. He said, “His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” John said, **“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hell.’” Revelation 1:17**

Don’t be afraid, He is the First and the Last. He was there at the beginning and he will be there at the end, seated on the throne, ruling and reigning, King of kings and Lord of lords. Look up today! See him in victory! See him as John did, as Stephen did, as Isaiah did. In your time of trouble, see him as the exalted, risen, Sovereign Lord. See him ruling over the circumstances of your life. See him with his foot on the neck of every enemy that is trying to destroy you and your family and your life. “But I’ve got cancer.” Yes, but King Jesus is on the throne. “But my kids are lost.” Yes, but King Jesus is on the throne. “But I’m broke, I’m homeless, my marriage is falling apart...Yes, but King Jesus is on the throne and your part of his kingdom! See him high and lifted up and exalted above every sin and every struggle of your life. King Jesus is on the throne and it’s going to be all right!