

Prayer of the Day:

Lord Jesus Christ, by your victory you have broken the power of the evil one. Fill our hearts with joy and peace as we look with hope to that day when every creature in heaven and on earth will acclaim you as King of kings and Lord of lords to your unending praise and glory; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Alleluia. (Revelation 22:13)

Sermon Text:

Well, here we sit at the end of another Church Year. Right on the cusp of the beginning of the festival half of another. Next week, the refrains of Advent will begin to aim our hearts toward Christmas like a hunter aims at his prey. The joyfully angelic refrains will once again announce the birth of our Savior Jesus. This Sunday however, our eyes drift farther forward than all of that, through the pages of history, back to that triumphant final day that we have been talking about when our emotions will swirl around with the wings of the angels who come to gather us. Here our Savior is no child wrapped in linen, no infant requiring the protecting arms of mom and dad. John allows us to behold the Great King appearing on the clouds just as the angels promised at His Ascension. Here every eye beholds Him as He truly is *the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*. This is Christ the King. Ah, but then so often in Scripture as we begin to take a good look at the picture, we note that God's ways are not our own, and His glory is often so different than all that we would chase after in this life and so it is with this King. Jesus, our King, is A **KING UNLIKE ANY OTHER**.

In our world today, it sometimes seems like there are more voices than there are faces claiming to be in control of it all. Wait five seconds and see how much control they truly have. Make no mistake about it, however, Jesus Christ is the King, the one controlling all creation. Scripture makes that fact absolutely clear. You can't miss it in the words of our lesson today, *Jesus Christ, who is* (among other things) *the ruler of the kings of the earth* (Rev. 1:5). In Psalm 2, God laughs at those who would claim this position for themselves and then announces the truth, ⁶ *"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."* ⁷ *I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."* ⁸ *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.* ⁹ *You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery* (Ps. 2:6-9). Jesus Himself announced this truth to Pontius Pilate as the Roman governor, who mistakenly thought he had control of the situation interrogated Him. *"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. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me* (John 18:37)."

This is not theory, empty words with no real reality or substance. It is absolute fact and one day all will know it. *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen* (Rev. 1:7). Some will mourn because they have refused to acknowledge this reign, some because they actively opposed His rule, some because they simply didn't believe He as in charge of it all but all will mourn because the truth is finally evident to them. Jesus is the King of all things. John will later account His coming, ¹¹ *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.* ¹² *His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.* ¹³ *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of*

Revelation 1:4-8

⁴ John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷ Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

God. ¹⁴ *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.* ¹⁵ *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.* ¹⁶ *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS* (Rev. 19:11-16).

Ah, but perhaps you have already begun to tilt your head as you view the picture. Was the blood on the robe that of His enemies, or His own? This King has been pierced? While earthly kings rule territories and lands with clinched fists and threat of unmerciful and powerful armies, who do their dirty work for them, our lesson speaks of a different rule. *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen* (Rev. 1:5-6). Did you hear it in there? Christ's kingdom is not marked by boundaries and fortified by fortress and fighting men. Again, the discussion Jesus has with Pilate in our Gospel lesson today illuminates this truth, *"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* (John 18:36).*"* Or as the Great King will tell His disciples, *"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹ nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you* (Luke 17:20-21).*"*

You and I are the kingdom and the priests, the servants and the soldiers. And this King does not rule over us with power and wrath and frightening might. John addresses the seven churches in the province of Asia and forever after Christians of all time with these words, *Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth* (Rev. 1:4-5). Grace is that which comes to us because of the one-sided underserved love of God. This is our underserved pardon found nowhere else than in Christ Jesus. Peace is the quite confidence that comes from knowing that regardless of what this world throws at us, regardless of what it embraces as truth, God is on our side. And it comes to us from a changeless Deity who announces that He simply is. It comes to us as the seven spirits, or the sevenfold Spirit, the Holy Spirit wings it into our hearts through faith given in word and sacraments, secured by the almighty Son of God, our prophet, priest, yes, our almighty KING!

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen (Rev. 1:5-6). Peter describes it wonderfully for us, ⁴ *As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—* ⁵ *you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ...* ⁹ *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy* (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10). These sacrifices are not to take away sin but show our appreciation as Paul tells the Romans, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* ² *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will* (Romans 12:1-2).

This King's kingdom is a living kingdom bought and paid for by His own blood, spilt upon the cross, by His very life given up for the sins of the world. Because He is the firstborn of from the dead, we have the promise and assurance that even death could not defeat Him and will not defeat us. Yes, in the power of the Gospel promises He wins for us, we serve not because we "have to", but because we understand the privilege and honor it is to be called sons and daughters of the King of all creation, to be free from sin and death and satan. Find me a King, a ruler, a power like this anywhere else than in the person of Jesus Christ. Good luck!!

Oh, how I love the picture of our triumphant King standing for every eye to see on the last day. I can't wait to see my Savior standing in all His glory, coming on the clouds of heaven, to take us to be with Him forever. **WE HAVE A KING UNLIKE ANY OTHER!** *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*