

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity, November 17, 2019

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 222, 17:1, 341, 160, 244.

Lessons: Daniel 7:13-14, Revelation 1: 1-16, John 18:33-37.

Text: Revelation 1: 4b – 7.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What do you think of when you hear the word “king”? Many of us don’t have much of a frame of reference – we don’t see kings, and they aren’t real prominent in our lives, and even in the entire world today. Maybe children have a picture of a king from cartoons, or we may think of a castle – like Disney’s “Cinderella” castle when we think of kings.

But the Word of God today gives us a picture of a great king. Today let’s take time to consider

CHRIST THE KING

1. **He is a king, but not a king of this world.**
2. **He loves you and has freed you from your sins.**
3. **He rules in your heart now, and will rule all things in eternity.**

John writes by inspiration: *“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, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”*

Grace and peace – what does that mean? You hear those words at the beginning of every sermon. Grace is God’s undeserved goodness and love. Peace is knowing that Jesus satisfied God’s anger over our sins and has declared an end to the war between himself and the sinner. God’s forgiving love in the heart of a believer creates this peace. One writer said this peace is “the quiet confidence that God is on our side in life’s daily struggle.” It is knowing God isn’t angry with you because of your sins – because Jesus atoned for all them.

Our text then gives us a picture of the triune God. The Father is the one *“who is, and who was, and who is to come.”* He has existed forever, from eternity, before man can even imagine, and he does not change. That is the eternal, unchanging God, who also happens to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who, by faith, is also our Father. Our Old Testament lesson speaks of him as *“the Ancient of Days.”* Daniel 7:13 (NIV)

What does our text mean by the “seven spirits”? This is the third person of God, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost. This is a strange picture, unless you hear one picture of the Spirit of the Lord with his gifts from Isaiah chapter 11: *“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”* Isaiah 11:2 (NIV) This is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost. Some Bible students think that the number 7 symbolizes God’s dealing with man, being the sum of three for the Trinity, and 4 for the world, the earth, and all people. We might think of North, East, West, South.

And finally, greetings from *“Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”* This is a picture of Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet, he is witness to all who will listen. He is the Prophet who witnesses to the truth and gives us the truth in God’s Word. As Priest, he is the one who sacrificed himself for the sins of all mankind and came back to life. After his sacrifice of himself – his high priestly work – he rose from the dead – the first-born of all who will rise to eternal life. He is the king, the *“the ruler of the kings of the earth.”*

In the Old Testament, kings fought for the people and ruled the people. Jesus Christ, as our king, fought and won the victory. He rules in the hearts of believers and rules over all things.

Today we want to look especially at Jesus Christ, the king. He tells us in the last verses of Matthew's Gospel that **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** Matthew 28:18 (NIV) **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."** (KJV) That's the kind of king he is – all powerful. But there is more. Jesus loves us and freed us from our sins. He is our Redeemer-king. He has fought the battle against Satan and redeemed mankind from sin, from the power of Satan, and from eternal death. He not only loves us but has also freed us from our sins by his blood. Remember the pictures from the first Passover which you heard about last week?

He is not an earthly king, as you heard in our Gospel lesson. Jesus gave personal witness to Pilate, a ruler on earth that he is a king, but not an earthly king. Pilate's question **"Are you a king then?"** is a question still being asked today by doubting, wondering, and questioning people. But the Word of God we look at today is reassuring us, and reassuring anyone who will listen to the Word of God, that Jesus is truly a king. When Jesus was crucified, **"Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, 'Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.' Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.'" John 19:19-22 (NIV)**

So, despite what men thought then, and what men think now, Jesus really is a king.

And he **"has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father"** because Jesus Christ is a king and rules over us. We are in his kingdom and recognize him as our supreme king. And because we are part of his kingdom, we must – and do – give Jesus and God the Father and God the Holy Spirit all honor, and glory and dominion now and forever!

Because of all that he has done for us, we want to serve him. We have this admonition from Paul: **"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."** 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV) Honor and glorify him forever – even now, in all you do.

This is our king. Remember what he has done for us. Jesus loves us and set us free from our sins by his blood. This is the same love found in John 3:16. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** John 3:16 (NIV) This is God's undeserved love for the world.

As members of his kingdom, we began our living in his kingdom at the moment we were bought to faith. **"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."** Ephesians 2:4-7 (NIV) Every joy and privilege of kingdom membership begins when one comes to faith in Jesus Christ and continues into eternity.

Our purpose is to serve God, who has become our God and Father by faith in Jesus Christ. Our service is to offer up sacrifices as his priests. Jesus completed the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Since our sins were taken away by his sacrifice, **"there is no longer any sacrifice for sin"** Hebrews 10:18 (NIV). But we are still priests, and the sacrifices that Jesus' priests bring to God are not offerings to pay for sin; they are thank-offerings. In serving him, we want to show him to others and praise him who rescued us. **"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."** 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

Paul writes in Romans of our sacrifices: **"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."** Romans 12:1 (NIV)

When we think of the priesthood of all believers, we remember what Peter has written: **"As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – 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. For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and, ‘A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. 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.” 1 Peter 2:4-9 (NIV)

This priesthood of all believers is not only a New Testament idea, but is also found in Exodus. *“Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” Exodus 19:3-6 (NIV)

In Jesus’ kingdom the priesthood really means the daily life Christians live to please God.

In heaven, in eternity, we will reign with Jesus forever. Later in the book of Revelation, we read: *“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”* Revelation 22:3-5 (NIV)

Our king is coming to judge the living and the dead. *“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!”*

We think of the angels in the sky at his birth, and at his ascension into heaven. But he is coming in the clouds again to judge. Everyone will see him and be forced to bow before this king who shall come to judge all those living and all the dead. The piercing of Jesus is a sign of his humbling himself before his victorious struggle for our salvation. Every eye will see him because all will be raised from the dead.

In heaven all who believe will finally share in Jesus’ ultimate ruling.

Now let’s think about heaven for a moment. Can you imagine visiting the place where a king would live or stay? Can you imagine staying— spending a night, or a few days and nights, or even a full vacation visiting a king – a president, a governor? Perhaps you’ve visited a mansion where an important person lived. Maybe you’d want to live there, maybe not. But can you imagine living with the king? Like a king? Being an adopted brother of a king? That’s what it will be like in the joys of heaven.

We have Jesus’ glorious, comforting promise: *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* John 14:1-3 (KJV)

These are the words of your king! This is an invitation to you! *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* Mark 16:16 (KJV) What a marvelous promise from your king! Amen.