

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Last Sunday In The Church Year, November 26, 2023
Last Sunday After Trinity

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

Hymns: 244, 95:7, 132, 511: 221:5-6.

Lessons: Jeremiah 23:1-6, Colossians 1:1-23, Luke 23:35-43.

Sermon Text: Colossians 1:13-20

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Are you afraid of what is happening in our country and in our world? Are you afraid of what the future could bring?

Well, God's Word gives us a pretty clear picture of what will happen in the future. Destruction is coming because this world will not endure forever. God has prepared a better world for you who believe in him because you believe Jesus Christ paid the price for all your sins. I almost hate to speak of "a better world". It makes me think of the "better place" that some people speak of when a person dies. Only those who believe will inherit a "better place", a "better world", a perfect place after death. God has provided a perfect world in heaven, if we can use the word "world" to speak of an eternal, heavenly place that is infinitely better and more perfect than this world we now live in.

That destruction will not be brought about by mankind. That destruction will come suddenly, swiftly, to the entire world at once, when Jesus Christ comes to judge the living and the dead. At that time he will be totally, completely revealed as the ruler, the king of the entire universe.

The Word of God in front of us today speaks of the king – the ruler – of that perfect world and the king – the ruler – of all who believe in him as Savior.

We don't have an earthly king in our country, but God has provided leaders for us.

Today, let's look at a real king and look at what he's done for us.

YOUR KING, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, IS THE GREATEST LEADER OF ALL TIME!

- 1. We see who he is and what he has done.**
- 2. He has also provided earthly rulers and is greater than them.**
- 3. Although sin separated mankind from God, he has reconciled us to God, and so**
- 4. We rejoice that we are citizens of his heavenly kingdom!**

This text plainly tells us about who Jesus, the Son of God, true God and true man, really is and what he has done. Our text is almost a comprehensive picture of Jesus Christ. He is presented as the Creator, the Ruler of the universe, and the Head of the Church, for whom he is performing the work of his office as king.

Look at what God the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ has done: "***He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.***" How does he do this? The Triune God is all-powerful. "***For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.***" Jesus himself assured us just before he ascended into heaven: "***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.***" (Matthew 28:18, NIV84) "***All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.***" (Matthew 28:18, KJV)

He has such power because "***He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.***" We confess publicly in the creed that he is the "only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity."

Our text includes one of the strongest arguments about the divine nature of Christ found anywhere in the Bible. Christ is not just equal to God. He is God. As the image of the invisible God, he is the exact representation of God. Because he is God, he reveals God to us. We read in John's Gospel: ***"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."*** (John 1:18, NIV84)

As the firstborn over all creation, he has all the authority of the firstborn prince in a king's household. He came from heaven and not from the dust of the earth

All powers were created by him and receive their power and authority from him. He has provided earthly governments, yes, even the evil ones under which Christians are persecuted. He tells us in the Scriptures, even through those inspired writers who were persecuted that we are to honor those ***"thrones or powers or rulers or authorities"*** whom he has placed over us. We read Paul's inspired words in Romans chapter 13: ***"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience."*** (Romans 13:1-5, NIV84)

We also read Peter's inspired words ***"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king."*** (1 Peter 2:13-17, NIV84)

But we have an even greater king than any earthly ***"thrones or powers or rulers or authorities"***. Our supreme king is Jesus Christ, God's Son and to him we owe honor, glory, and obedience.

Jesus Christ is especially the king of believers, ruling in their hearts here on earth. You heard that ***"he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."*** The church is the body of Christ, and you as parts of that body have God's work to do as you live and function in that body of Christ.

Sin, starting with the sin of Adam and Eve, separated mankind from God. But we are reconciled to God through him. God sent his only-begotten Son to earth, ***"through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."***

Man sinned and because of sin, man – all mankind – was destined for eternal death and separation from God. But because Jesus obeyed all of God's laws perfectly, and then was punished on the cross, giving up his lifeblood for sins he didn't commit, he has made peace with God for mankind. God is no longer our enemy!

Believe that truth and eternal life, not eternal death – is yours! We are no longer foreigners, aliens, outsiders, but children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

We are citizens of God's kingdom, and because of the faith that God has worked in us, we are sons of God. ***"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves."*** (Colossians 1:13, NIV84) He redeemed us and has given us the forgiveness of sins. We can be sure and certain of this because his divine Word assures us of that.

As king especially of all believers, he has redeemed us and we have accepted that in faith. Of course, Jesus died for all humans. He redeemed every human. But only those who have faith in him, who believe this, will receive the ultimate fruits and benefit of his redemption. He reconciled us to God. Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth: ***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his***

appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17–21, NIV84)

While we are on earth we don't see all the fruits and benefits of Christ's Work. Some of those things are intangible while we are on earth. You can't see and always feel the forgiveness of sins, can you, like you can pick up an object like this book? (Pick up the Bible.) Oh, yes, your emotions may let you feel the forgiveness of sins. God's Word can set your mind at ease when you search the Scriptures for comfort. But we must ultimately rely on God's Word, not our emotions, for the assurance of eternal life.

Let's list some of those intangible gifts from God. You can't hold them in your hands.

These gifts from God include, as we just mentioned, that Jesus Christ can soothe our consciences. He takes our guilt and shame away, ***"As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'***" (Romans 10:11–13, NIV84)

We are God's children, ***"sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."*** (Galatians 3:26, NIV84)

We are God's beloved. We have no reason to be confused about who we are.

What about depression? God gives us every reason not to be depressed, although Satan uses our sinful flesh to do everything he can, to lead us astray and throw us into depression, false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins.

He is our king, not just here on earth in our hearts, but after death in heaven. Christ is supreme over all creation and all eternity. We must believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, that Jesus is God, or our Christian faith is hollow and meaningless. This is a central truth of Christianity.

And he is Lord over all. The Apostle Paul writes to the Romans about the Jews: ***"from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised!"*** (Romans 9:5, NIV84)

With such a powerful king, we rejoice every day that we have such a grand and gracious leader, even here on earth.

Believe this and rejoice! You can be assured from God's Word that Jesus Christ, your king, will provide you with every benefit you need for a blessed life in eternity! He is not just an earthly king, but he's given us much more than any earthly king could give us! And what he has given us is really more important than any earthly thing we could even imagine. He has provided the one thing needful for eternal life! Amen.