

## Long Lives the King!

Resurrection of our Lord – 4/9/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Psalm 146:1-10 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 10, “YAHWEH will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!”

### **Introduction**

✘ Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed!* Alleluia!

✘ Throughout the season of Lent, we have worked our way through the books of Chronicles, considering the list of the so-called “good” kings that have reigned and ruled over the people of Judah, including one very “bad” king on Good Friday, to see how they all served as God’s crucial lesson; His real-life illustration of their need – and our need – for the One and only King of Kings, our Lord Jesus Christ.

✘ You see, for 400 years after Yahweh brought His people through the Red Sea; rescuing them from their slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt, they had only one King – the LORD God Himself. In this way they were different; unique, holy and set apart from all of the other nations around them. But the people were not satisfied. They kept asking for an earthly king; a human ruler to lead and “judge” them “like all the (other) nations” (1 Sam. 8).

→ So, when God’s prophet, Samuel finally relented and brought the people’s request to Yahweh, He gave in to the people and said to Samuel, “...they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them” (1 Sam. 8:7).

✘ Yahweh told Samuel to anoint Saul as the very first king of Israel. And when Saul was presented before the people, 1 Samuel 10:24 says that “all the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’” And from that time forward; from King Saul to King George, whenever a new King/Queen has taken up the throne that has been the common cry of the people.

→ Grammatically, “Long live the king” is an awkward sentence, though. You see, when the word “live” is used as a verb like that, it is what’s called a “subjunctive” verb. It does not declare a fact or certainty, but instead it expresses something that is wished for and desired.

→ Most nations wish that their king will live long because stability in leadership is of course their desire. Few things are worse than a quick succession of governments and the uncertainty it brings. “As the king goes, so goes the nation.” When the king dies young, the nation is left in turmoil. As we considered the kings of Judah these last weeks, we’ve seen these realities play out in our sermon series.

### **I. The end of all kings is still death**

✘ The structure of the Books of Chronicles in the Old Testament is very clear. Whenever a king dies, there’s a burial story, followed immediately by the beginning of the next reign.

→ But whether or not that next king is young or old; reigns for many years or only a few, one thing is certain, the new king will eventually die and another king will take his place. So the cry of succession from the people becomes this, “The king is dead. ... Long live the king!”

→ The other thing that the Bible tells us as we go through the Chronicles of the kings is whether or not the current king was faithful to Yahweh. Usually he either followed or abandoned the ways of his father David. The point is this: the king had a major influence over the direction of the nation. A good king like David or Josiah led the nation in righteousness, but a bad king like Manasseh led the nation into evil and judgment. Whatever the case, the blessings or punishments inevitably fell not only on the king, but the people as well.

- ⊗ So now we come to this beautiful Psalm of praise and assurance that I read earlier as our Old Testament Reading on this, the Day of the Resurrection of our Lord; Psalm 146. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*
  - And it proclaims a hugely important lesson, not only for the people of Israel and Judah who have been enduring the swivel-door of good and bad kings coming and going, it is an important lesson for us even today, some 2500 to 3000 years later.
  - The question is, “Where do we put our trust folks? I mean really place your trust for survival, protection, food and shelter, happiness, meaning in life and ultimately eternal life?” Verses 3-4 says, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.”
- ⊗ Love them or hate them; the reason we have so much division and conflict and consternation in our nation right now is because we place so much importance and trust in our political rulers – federal, state and local alike. But God’s Word to us on this special day, dear Christians, should already be obvious to us all, they cannot save you!
  - They live and die just like everyone else. Even the best leaders of men see their plans perish, reversed and forgotten when their “breath departs”. Even if the king (or president) is wonderful, his successor might undo everything he did. We saw that in the constant cycle throughout Judah’s history of God’s holy temple being repaired only to be plundered and defiled soon after.
  - As King Solomon speaks of throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, a king cannot control how his children will rule when he is gone. Solomon had now idea that his son Rehoboam would split the kingdom in two by his tyranny! In the end, the only difference between one of the great kings of Judah and any peasant in the land is the size and place of that man’s tomb.

## II. The King is Dead. Long live the same King!

- ⊗ “The King is dead. ... Long live the King!” Today you and I as Christian believers celebrate the one thing that is different among all of the millions of doctrines believed throughout all of the various religions and beliefs in this world, and yes, that even includes the “religion” of atheism – trusting in the delusion that there is no god.
  - Every belief that exists, except for one, believes in a system or a god, #1 that is dead, and #2 that is an uncertainty. In other words, theirs is a subjunctive belief; a wish or desire in all of those beliefs instead of a fact. Even the atheist who places his/her confidence in the absence of God, is trusting in something that is not there.
  - But there is one king in all of history who breaks the cycle that all kings one day must die only to be succeeded by another king. That King came from a line of kings, but was not born in a palace. Instead, the angel Gabriel announced His birth to his mother, saying, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David” (Lk. 1:32). An angel also told Joseph, that “He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). This One was worshiped as King by Magi from the east. He was christened as King with the Holy Spirit at His Baptism in the wilderness. And Peter says in Acts 10:37-38 that “after the baptism that John proclaimed ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power”.
- ⊗ Indeed, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds cried out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (Jn. 12:13). But those crowds, much like the people of Israel who pestered God to give them a king back in the Old Testament, based their hopes and beliefs upon a wish and a desire instead of a known certainty. They saw or heard of Jesus feeding of the 5000 and they thought that this guy could

feed them for free too. Free food, no taxes, free healing of ailments; that's the people's idea of a great king – back then and still today.

→ But the time had come for Yahweh to bring this whole king-situation back to the place that it should have always been. And so He had to show the people – all of us, that the worldly definition of a truly great king is all out of whack.

- ✘ Those earthly wishes and desires had to be blown apart. And so, the only crown Jesus ever wore was made of thorns, not gold. The only purple robe He wore was stripped off of Him after He had been mocked. The inscription of His kingdom was posted not upon a palace but on a cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”. And most astonishing, the day of His coronation was the day of His death. That was not a long life for this King – certainly the shortest reign of any king of Judah. The King is dead; buried in a tomb.

→ This morning though, we celebrate the only King ever to succeed Himself, because, Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* Long live the King! No, let's change that from a subjunctive; from a wish and a desire to what it really is: “Long lives the King Forever!”

### III. He's different from every king

- ✘ Yes, Jesus proved to be different from all other kings before Him. To begin with, He kept His word more than any of His ancestors. He said He would suffer and die and rise on the third day and that's exactly what He did. This is the one and only Son of Man that you, my friends, can always trust, because He is the only King ever to save His people!

→ In fact, even as His Spirit departed on the cross, His plans all came to their fulfillment. He left nothing undone; “it is finished”. His life's work of forgiving and paying for the sins of the world culminated at His death. And His plans didn't go away; neither were they reversed once He entered the tomb. They were actually completed as He conquered the power of death at His resurrection on the third day. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

- ✘ Yes, Jesus' reign as King was not passed on to another, but only grew in power and scope now that He had been raised and ascended to His heavenly throne as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Ephesians 1:20-23 tell us, “The [Father of glory] seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And [the Father] put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Jesus is the King that God's people were always meant to have, even as the world thinks He does not fit their mold for what a king should be.

→ He didn't wage war against neighboring kingdoms. He didn't build a temple, palace, or city walls. He didn't preside over a booming economy. Instead, His mission was healing and justice. Verses 7-9 give us the summary of His mission, “The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the sojourners; He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked He brings to ruin.”

- ✘ His victory was greater than all other kings of Judah or any other nation, because He robbed death of its sting; winning the forgiveness of sins for all who believe in Him, and guaranteeing freedom from all that is bad and a new life filled with eternal joy at His side in heaven. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

→ As John wrote in Revelation 1:5, Jesus is “the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth”. The cycle of anointing a new king and wishing he will be better than the previous is over. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords; He is alive and He is here right now and He isn't going anywhere...ever!

→ And that's good, because Psalm 146 begins by saying, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being". Well, because Jesus is our King and His victory over death means our victory over death, then folks, we have a long time to sing those praises. Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

#### **IV. Drop the subjunctive!**

✘ So, grammatically and spiritually, we've got great news to celebrate today. We can drop the subjunctive. No longer is our shout, one of "wishing" or "desiring" something that will never come to be. No more shouting, "Long live the king" but instead we boldly cry out the fact, "Long lives the King!"

→ As verse 10 says, "Yahweh will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!"

→ Now we know it is true; we have a kingdom with peace and stability, because Jesus is our King. As Martin Luther says it in his meaning to the second article of the Apostles' Creed, now we "may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity."

✘ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!* "Long lives the King of Kings!" Amen.