

A Good King for All

Ascension Day – 05/13/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Psalm 47:1-9 Pastor Keith Besel

- v. 2 **“For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.”**
v. 5 **“God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.”**

Introduction

- ⊗ As Americans, we haven’t had many good experiences with kings. After all, that’s basically how America came about, isn’t it – by revolting against an unjust king in England.
 - ➔ Since then we’ve had a number of dealings with kings in the Middle East that have gone sideways, and kings in Russia and Germany early in the twentieth century that led us into wars.
 - ➔ So, why would we want a king today? What good would a king do us, and why would we have any interest in this image that the Bible gives us when it talks about God being our King?
- ⊗ In particular, on this Ascension Day, it’s a valid question for us to ask, “Why would we want a king who has ascended on high?”

I. Earthly kings vs. Yahweh as King

- ⊗ To answer that question, let’s run through a quick comparison between earthly kings and our God, Yahweh as King.
- ⊗ When we think about earthly kings, we have to acknowledge the truth that every king who has, or ever will rule here on earth – even those we might consider to be the very best – seeks after power.
 - ➔ Most of them want to use their power to bring others underneath them. For what purpose? So that the king will be served and have his way. Even if the king believes that he is ruling “for the good of the people”, he still exercises his agenda and what he believes is “best” upon those who are under him.
 - ➔ And when a group of subjects don’t agree with an earthly king’s rule or plan, it often escalates to the point of rebellion; even war, whether it has to do with trade, land, cultural disputes, or blatant oppression.
- ⊗ When we compare that to Yahweh as our King, what does verse two of our text mean that He is “the Most High...to be feared” as a “great king over all the earth”?
 - ➔ The “fear” that the Psalmist is talking about here is that of awe and worship; faith and trust. And yes, He is “great” in power and even punishment when it is warranted, but more than that our God is greater than all others as He exercises His greatness in giving His love, protection, provision and order; in the fact that He is a gracious, forgiving and saving King for those whom He has made to be His people.
- ⊗ You see, he does not use His power simply to oppress us? Yes, verse three tells us that people are subdued under His rule, but there’s something quite different about the way this happens with the LORD.
 - ➔ The New Testament writers tell us that Yahweh rules in the person of Jesus. In Ephesians 1:18-20 Paul talks about having the eyes of our hearts “enlightened” so that we might know of the riches of God’s glorious inheritance in us, His saints, and of the “immeasurable greatness”

and “power” that He has worked for us “in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places”.

→ And in Revelation 5:9-10 John describes the “new song” that he heard being sung about Jesus when He ascended into heaven and took up His throne. “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

→ You see, the difference is that Christ the King has used His great power to conquer the enemies of His people; the enemies of sin, death and devil so that we might now be pardoned and freed from the deadly sentence that we actually deserve.

⊗ And in doing this He then sets us up at His side to “reign on earth” as His representatives; as His mouth pieces of truth; as His servants of love.

→ And we do this, not because He forces us to do it, but because we are filled with gratitude; because He has first served us in His death and resurrection. We actually want to bow before Him in worship and awe. We want to serve others in humility because we have seen firsthand how His humble sacrifice has earned us new life before His eternal throne.

⊗ Yes, living with Jesus as our King is much different from life under the power of earthly kings. Jesus serves us; He frees us; He gives us what we could never have. Even more, He promises His constant presence and protection.

II. Our King provides protection.

⊗ Historically kings have lived in high castles. Throughout Europe amazing examples of these castles abound.

→ The best castles are big, foreboding, strong and impenetrable, which is why they still stand to this today.

→ And while castles appear to be a stand-alone building, most of them were a part of a city.

→ In many cases the King’s palace was at the city’s center and around the entire city were great walls. This was how the king would provide protection for his people.

⊗ This is another way that our King, Jesus stands out as different. Even as He is now ascended on high, He does not stand apart from us as foreboding and overbearing. And yet His protection of us far exceeds that which any city walls could ever provide.

→ While many would argue that we Christians are not protected at all since the world’s enemies threaten and attack us every day, the enemy from which Jesus protects us is much stronger and more dangerous than the worst earthly terrorist or evil army.

→ Yes, Jesus’ death that has reconciled us back to God is the only protection ever against the deadly schemes and tyranny of Satan himself.

⊗ And His protection is not confined to just one certain place like it is with a stone wall. Our King Jesus protects us not only here in this church building or at your home, but anywhere and everywhere that He is present with His people in Word and Sacrament and Spirit with His gift of faith. As Psalm 46:1 assures us, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”.

III. Our King provides order to His people.

- ✘ Beyond His power and protection, we see that our King, the ascended Jesus provides us so much more than any earthly king or kingdom could ever offer. In His reign He provides us the order that what we need each day.
 - ➔ In any earthly society, past or present, when order is either absent or is taken away, the results are quick – chaos and anarchy rule. Even oppressive kings are often able to provide the order their people need through edicts and laws – at least for a time.
 - ➔ They establish military and police forces to enforce those laws and maintain order in their kingdoms.
- ✘ Now that our King Jesus has ascended on high, is He able lord His Law over us? He may be able, since He is all-powerful, but His Law is different from that of earthly kings.
 - ➔ When Jesus was asked which commandment was greatest, He quoted Deuteronomy and said in Matthew 22:37-40, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And then He said, “Love your neighbor as yourself”.
 - ➔ Do you see how Jesus’ reign over His people is different from that of rulers here on earth? Most laws tell us what not to do. But Jesus’ Law is founded upon and comes out of His love for us. He points us toward what we can do with His saving power in order to love both God and our neighbor.
- ✘ This obedience in love not only brings order to our society and our lives, it also reflects what His own reign is like toward us. He loved us before Himself to the point of His own death on the cross. It’s His love that brings us freedom. His love gives us protection.

IV. Our King is King over all the earth

- ✘ The result of this is declared for us in verses 8 and 9. Jesus, ascended to the right hand of the Father, not only reigns and rules over us Christians, but He “reigns over the nations” as King of kings over all the earth.
 - ➔ This speaks to the common false understanding that since Jesus has ascended on high, He is then “up there far away”; distant and aloof. No! He is “a great king over all the earth”, says verse two; ruling, reigning, protecting and providing order not only for us Christians who love and worship and believe in Him, but He is King for all the earth! He died and paid the price for all sin of all mankind.
 - ➔ He loves all people and “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Timothy 2:4.
- ✘ Unfortunately, not all people will recognize Jesus and His gracious reign as King. Some never will submit to His rule and reign intended for their salvation – that includes both people and rulers; both princes and governments here on earth.
 - ➔ But for some, with patience and persistence in love and compassion, they will eventually be led to see Jesus as the great King over all and the Savior of their souls. So, Jesus remains on His throne, working throughout His people around the globe to bring each person under His good and great reign; into His protection and order.
 - ➔ This is where you and I are pleased and happy to serve our ascended King. For we are the ones whom God has gifted to display what His reign looks like to this world. So the Psalmist calls us to our task in verses 6-7, “Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!”
 - ➔ It’s obvious there, that he’s not calling us to sing those praises only into a mirror, or only here in the safety of a church building, right? And even if you’re tempted to use the excuse, “Well, I

can't carry a tune in a bucket", nothing is stopping you from "singing praises to our King" without using even one note of music. Instead you can "sing" with words of love and encouragement or sharing the gift of a shoulder to cry on or a basket of food for the hungry or offering the assurance of forgiveness or the willingness to help someone see Jesus in some other tangible way.

Conclusion

✘ Yes, in all that He has done for us, we see that Jesus, as our King, is different from all other kings. And where there might be similarities to good kings, Jesus far exceeds even the best on earth as He alone is King of kings.

➔ His coronation to that throne above all thrones is what we celebrate here tonight. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He did not leave us just to go and sit on His throne as the rightful King. No, He entered heaven to be with us every day around the clock; to protect us and provide for us and to bring us into His eternal reign of glory – that is what came to fulfillment when Jesus "ascended into heaven" to sit "at the right hand of the Father".

➔ So, clap, shout, blow the trumpet, and rejoice in Jesus, the King of heaven and earth. For He who "has gone up with a shout" (v.5) now reigns as the King of your life today! Amen.