

**Sermon: Christ is King**  
**Psalm 93; Dan 7:9-14; Rev 1:4-8; John 18:33-37**  
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We celebrate this weekend that Christ is King - together with most churches worldwide.

We are so used to using the word King for our Lord, but what do we mean?

Most Kings in our present world are not really comparable with Jesus. They are usually rather powerless.

I used to live in the village in Holland where our royal family lived; sometimes our queen would be seen on her bicycle in the village; For a while, I used to deliver the newspaper at her palace. Nice kings and queens we have, but rather powerless.

The reason why God and Jesus are compared with Kings, is because in ancient times, Kings were almost almighty.

In the book of Revelation St John describes for us the vision that he had of Jesus as the Almighty King. We will use that text to see what his Kingship means. And what it means for us today.

**Trinitarian greeting**

John is writing this book of Revelation to seven churches in Asia – Asia was what the Romans called the western part of present Turkey. These churches were all in cities located along a Roman highway.

They had send delegates to John, who was in exile on the island of Patmos, off the coast of Asia. And so John sends them this book of Revelation back, including seven letters to each of those churches.

John begins his message to those churches with a Trinitarian greeting. He wishes the churches grace and peace from

- God the Father – who is and who was and who is to come
- God the Spirit – and from the seven spirits who are before the throne
- God the Son – Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

This grace and peace for us and for the world cannot be received separate from the giver of this grace and peace. Have the giver, and you have his grace and his peace. The giver is of course the triune God.

Of the Father, John says that he is and he was and he is to come. This is a clear reference to the name of God of the covenant in the Old Testament. Moses asked God: what is your name? And God said: JHWH. I am the one who is. The God who always is. Our grace and peace depend on him.

And grace and peace comes from the Holy Spirit – John depicts him as seven spirits before the throne. This is a reference to the seven-armed candle always burning before the throne of God in the heavenly temple.

God cannot be imagined without the Holy Spirit; He is part of God, and He is the one who enlightens our hearts and minds to know God. Without him working in us, there is no grace and peace for us.

And of course, there is Jesus Christ. In his Gospel, John says of Jesus that he gives us grace upon grace. Excessively abundantly much.

Usually the Bible mentions him as the second person in the Trinity; I think John reverses the common order here and mentions him as the third one, because he wants to describe him further now. He does it for stylistic reasons.

## **2 King of kings**

So when John speaks of Jesus Christ as King, he ensures us first that this King is the bringer of grace and peace. For Christians there is no need to fear the Almighty.

John underlines this by calling Jesus the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

We have to see these terms against the background of the persecutions of those days. And I think they are also a great encouragement for Christians today who suffer in all sorts of difficult circumstances. It also encourages Christians in Beirut, in Paris, in Egypt, in Nigeria, in Syria and Iraq.

Jesus is the faithful witness. That means, we can trust him when he reveals his Father to us. In his witnessing about God, he has shown us God and he shows us the way to God. He shows us how to receive God's grace and peace and how to be engulfed in it.

Because Jesus was a faithful witness to God, He was crucified. He became a martyr. That is the Greek word for witness – martyr. Christians have learned from the beginning of the history of the church that witnessing to Christ can easily lead to suffering for him.

What an encouragement for people who suffer for their faith, or who suffer from the miseries in life. This is an encouragement for people who suffer from diseases, or persecution, problems at work, from terrorism or any problem, or people who fear that this may happen to them.

Jesus himself became a martyr, he suffered, but he remained faithful. Just as we are called to not give up, even when times are rough or when the worries of our days distract us.

And we have hope, because He is the firstborn of the dead. He is the first, and we are to follow in the resurrection. All problems we face today are cut down to their real proportions if we see that eternity awaits us. Grace and peace extends into eternal life.

And then John describes Jesus as the ruler of the kings of the earth. He is the King of all kings. This we know, because he is seated at the right hand of the father in the throne of the universe. He is at the helm of the ship of existence.

For people being persecuted by emperors, governors, presidents or local rulers, by ISIS, Boko Haram, or even by just problematic neighbours, this is so encouraging. All these people think they are almighty and that they can do as they like... but they cannot. They have a King who will one day open the books – and then they will pay the price.

Jesus is ruler of the kings of the earth; this will be clearly seen when he returns, but it is a fact even today. Now his kingly rule is not enforced over the world yet, and often we wonder where he is, if he is so mighty....Why does he not send down his fire today?

Those evildoers and snatchers of power in this world are lucky; Jesus Christ is patient and does not wipe them out immediately – because he gives them time to repent and live for him. Just as this gives us time to live for Him. This is our time to choose.

But the time will suddenly be over, when he no longer gives us the chance to make up with Him. When we die, or when he comes back. So make up your mind today, when we still have a chance.

He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. (Rev 1:7)

This is not a promise for the world, but a warning. The book of Revelation is full of divine retribution. Our Lord Christ comes to avenge his brothers and sisters. Those who inflict suffering, those who do not obey our Lord and King, should be very worried. The end of ISIS and all evil governments is near.

Those who suffer today for Christ today experience some of his grace and peace, and our eternal peace is secured. John explains how we can be so confident. This ruler of all kings, the King of the universe, He loves us and He has freed us from our sins by his blood.

### **3 King over us**

It is this King of all kings, the Captain of the Universe, the Almighty... who died for us to bring us back to God. He does not use his regal power to tax us or to fight wars against us... he uses it for the welfare of people. The Lion of Judah, the King of Kings, is the Lamb of God.

He is King over us, and for us, this is not something fearful, but something joyful. He is on our side, and he has reconciled us with God, and he has made us kings with him as well.

In Rev 5:9-10 we read more of this, when we get a glimpse of heaven. All heavenly beings fall down before Jesus Christ and sing:

Worthy are you [...] 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.

Those who belong to Him today will one day reign with him. The roles will be reversed. Those trampled here on earth will be lifted up, and those who are high will fall down.

So those who suffer from the policies of evil rulers, or from terror, or just from the insults of neighbors or colleagues, can be encouraged. Worry not too much.

Our King is on our side, and right now, he is with us today, with his grace and peace, and one day, our life will just overflow with grace and peace, when our King takes action against all evil.

And it is important to know, this kingdom that we are part of, is defined by the fact that we are all priests. We are not kings who trample all those that we do not like. Priests are known to pray for people, even for their enemies.

We are connected with Jesus through our faith, so we will be kings and priests like him. We are already kings and priests right now, though the full implementation is still expected.

Even today, we are called to rule as priests. 'He has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father'. These words are the fulfillment of what God said to Moses on Mount Sinai. 'You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.'

This means, as subjects of the great king, we exist to worship God, to pray for the world, and to bring the world back to God. Not to rule or avenge or kick people down.

Yes the great reversal, the great divine retribution, is coming, but this does not make us into mean little dictators; we should not rejoice too much in the overthrow of the enemies of God. Yes, we will be kings and reign, but not as the rulers of this world who lord it over people.

Like Christ, we use our life, our power, our positions, for being a blessing for people, even for those who do not deserve it. As we did not deserve anything from him. The grace and peace we have received from him, that we pass on to the people around us. We have enough, so we can hand out liberally, even to those people that we do not like.

## **Conclusion**

Christ is King; totally one with God his Father and with the Holy Spirit, He rules. He rules in the first place by his overflowing love for us. Be connected with him and grace and peace overflow in your life. What a reason to praise him and to live for him!

Christ is King; his enemies better be careful. Jesus even rules over all those rulers and any people who make the life of his church hard. What a reason for us to be encouraged and to have hope!

Christ is King; he rules over us, we are part of his kingdom. And we, like him, are patient with all people, even those who do us harm. Our Lord gives us grace and peace; and we share this grace and peace with all people we meet.

**Amen**