

## Christ The King Sunday B

November 22, 2009

Hymns: 341 - 217 - 365 - 367

### REVELATION 1:4b-8

#### GOOD NEWS ABOUT CHRIST'S REIGN:

**\*We Serve God Incarnate.**

**\*We Serve A Loving Savior.**

**\*We Serve To Rescue Others To His Kingdom.**

**(slide 1)** Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen!

Dear Members of Christ's Kingdom through faith in His blood,

Today is the last Sunday in the Church Year. Some of you will remember a time your Lutheran congregation did not observe Christ The King Sunday. The reason is that this is the latest addition to our Church Year observances. There is an interesting story behind this day: In the 1920s Pope Pius XI saw a Europe still reeling from World War I. He saw economic uncertainty. He saw people willing to turn the governance of their lives over to smooth talking political leaders who promised to deliver all kinds of things to them. So Pius XI instituted the festival of Christ the King to assert that no human ruler is Lord but that the sovereignty of Christ extends to all time and to all space. And from that small beginning today churches all over the world are celebrating Christ the King Sunday. Even as good Lutherans we must concede to Pope Pius XI that he is right on this one!: Christ is ruling over all creation...and will continue to be King universal on into all eternity. It is fitting that we close the church year celebrating Christ as Lord of all.

John in his Revelation expresses it through rich symbolism: **(slide 2)** *“John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: 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.”* If you want to know where all of history has been and is headed, there it is—History is under the thumb of Christ. Hopefully, we understand that is good! But why? Our text makes three points of **GOOD NEWS ABOUT CHRIST'S REIGN**. Here then are those three things that we believe about Jesus that everyone needs to know and understand.....

**First of all, that as Christians we believe that we serve a Lord Jesus Who is God incarnate** – Jesus is God in human flesh. So many things about God are incomprehensible. But in Jesus we are given wonderful insights into the Godhead through the beautiful picture the four Gospels of the Bible paint of our Lord. Some of you will be familiar with a well-known study that was conducted some years back at the University of Minnesota. The study was of identical twins. A physiologist studied identical twins - not fraternal twins! - in order to prove how powerful the environment was on these identical twins who were separated from each other at birth and had lived apart for thirty and forty years. What he found was very much the opposite. Even though separated at birth for thirty to forty years, these identical twins were still very much alike in many ways--the way they reacted to smoke; the way they crossed their legs; even the similarity of their toothpaste. The physiologist measured their galvanized skin responses using electrodes in their bodies, and their reactions to stimuli were identical. Their brains responded just the same, even though the identical twins had been separated from birth. The twins had the same genes; the same chromosomes. After so many years, they were still alike. Genetics beat environment! **(slide 3)**

What the Bible shows is that the God-man Jesus, while His own person, is identical to the Father in glory and all attributes. Christ is the same substance of the Father, the same nature. If you want to know what the Father is like, look at the genetic counterpart of the Son. What is God like? Look at Jesus. On one occasion the disciple Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: *“Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”* (John 14: 8-10) Here then is the first good news about the fact the Christ reigns over all: **WE SERVE GOD INCARNATE!**

**The second matter of Good News is that we serve a Loving God and Savior! We believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world.** John writes in our lesson today from Revelation: ***“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood . . .”*** Christ came into the world to save us-- *“To Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood . . .”* As the Gospel of John says so eloquently in the *third chapter, verse 17: “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* What an important verse! We all know John 3:16 by heart: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . .” (KJV) And it is a wonderful verse. But John 3:17 is just as important: *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”*

If all we knew from the Bible was the law, we would have to conclude that the chief reason Christ came was to condemn people. The world is filled with self-righteous people who feel that they do a pretty good job of keeping God’s law. And while they would like to think that most everyone is good enough to earn their own way to heaven, they have their list of those who don’t quite measure up. Sadly the world thinks they speak for Christ. They do not. Christ even forgave those who crucified Him. And the great point of the mirror of God’s Law is that YOU and I crucified Jesus by our sins! But Christ came into this world and went to the cross for the very purpose of saving sinners – such as you and me! **(slide 4)**

There is a humorous story about a community that held an Easter pageant. Different people in the community played the various characters. Jesus’ character was played by a big, burly oil-field worker, primarily because he was the only one strong enough to carry the heavy wooden beam that was to be Jesus’ cross. As they came to the part in which Jesus was being led away to be crucified, a little man who was simply part of the jeering crowd got caught up in the emotion of the moment. He joined in the shouts of “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” As the man playing Jesus was being led away, carrying the cross upon his back, he had to walk right in front of this little man who was still shouting at the top of his lungs. The little man was so consumed by the moment that he actually spit on Jesus. Suddenly the procession came to a shocked standstill. The big, burly oil-field worker stopped, wiped his face dry, looked at the little man, and uttered the most memorable line in the entire play: “I’ll be back to take care of you after the Resurrection!”

Well, that is a very human response to being spit upon, but it was not Jesus’ response. Here is where the Divine side of Christ shines brightest! He forgives His enemies, those who cursed Him, spit upon Him, drove nails through His hands and feet. Surely someone who could do that can forgive you and me. Jesus came to save and not to condemn. There may be someone here today who feels condemned. Satan seeks his moments when he can drive each of us to despair of forgiveness. Maybe you’ve betrayed your spouse. Maybe, secretly, you’ve been nurturing an addiction. Many more of us nurse an obsession that gets in the way of our functioning productively as we ought – as an employee, a spouse, a parent, or a worker in God’s Kingdom. There are many, many reasons people feel condemned--condemned by others, condemned by Christ.

But Jesus did not come to condemn. He came to save. **(slide 6)** He is the Savior of the world. Friend, if you brought in a feeling of condemnation this day, leave it at Christ’s feet. This is the Good News about Christ’s Reign. Rejoice that He is in charge! – not Satan nor anyone else who can bring accusations against you – and know that surely you are not in charge either! This is what we believe: That as Christians we serve a God Incarnate and that we serve a loving and forgiving Savior!

But there is one thing more to be said. Listen to the rest of that verse from Revelation: ***“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.”*** Christ has called us to be a “kingdom” and “priests to serve his God and Father.” What does that mean? It means that we serve to God’s glory and basic to this **it means that we serve to rescue others to His Kingdom!**

Part of the reason Christ came into the world was to establish a group of people who would serve Him in the world. John calls them “a kingdom” and “priests to serve his God and Father . . .” Friends, he’s talking about us--you and me. We have an important role in Christ’s work. He has entrusted to us the continuing work of telling the world the Good News--that our God incarnate wants to reign in their hearts and lives as THEIR King now and forever!

In Colorado on a summer weekend in the mountains, there are countless casual hikers who have no idea what they are doing. In sandals, shorts, and tee-shirts, carrying a single container of water, they start up a trail at

mid-morning. They have no map, no compass, and no rain gear. They also have no apparent knowledge of the lightning storms that roll in many summer afternoons, making it imperative to summit before noon and head for the safety of the timberline. Volunteers for an organization called Alpine Rescue tell hair-raising stories of tourists who must be rescued from certain death after wandering off a trail, falling, or simply being exposed to a sudden hailstorm or thirty-degree drop in temperature. Nevertheless, regardless of the circumstances, Alpine Rescue always responds to a call for help. They don't tell the hapless tourist, "Well, since you obviously ignored the most basic rules of the wilderness, you'll just have to sit here and bear the consequences. We won't assist you."

Their mission is rescue, and so they pursue every needy hiker in the wilderness, no matter how undeserving. A whistle, a cry, a flashing mirror, a bonfire, an "SOS" spelled out in pine branches, a message of distress from a cell phone--any of these signals will cause Alpine Rescue to mobilize teams of medically trained searchers. Friend, have you come to see from God's Word – and especially here today – that your role as a member of Christ's Kingdom is one of rescue? In the book of Romans, Paul takes pains to point out that none of us 'deserve' God's mercy and none of us can save ourselves. Like a stranded hiker, all we can do is call for help.

Now you have been called to faith and salvation. You have been called into Christ's Kingdom! – undeserving as you are. **(slide 7)** There still remain billions who have not been brought to saving faith. Do you understand that God calls this church to be a "rescue team"? That is who we are and what we are about. Each of us must answer the question, "What will I do to fulfill my role in Christ's Kingdom in my daily life? Secondly, what will be my role in the rescue mission of Brooklyn Lutheran Church? Member of Christ's Kingdom here on earth and member of Brooklyn Lutheran Church – the Vision Task Force has put forth the best of what efforts you members want to see continued in the months and years ahead. And what you want to undertake as new rescue efforts for the future. Have you read and studied the Vision Task Force document? Have you prayerfully considered and volunteered in which area or areas you see as your passion to serve Him Who is your King – the one true God incarnate, the world's Savior and yours, the One Who has made you part of a Kingdom and and priests to serve His God and Father?!

So we celebrate Christ's reign over the world. Jesus is God incarnate. Jesus came not to condemn, but to save. And we are those who are called to serve as Christ's rescue team, seeking to save the least and the lost. Go forth and be Christ's people. Serve! – that to Him may be glory and power forever and ever! Amen!

Now to Him Who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.