

Sermon Palm Sunday 2018

March 25, 2018

John 20:12-43

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Lord and crucified Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on both Gospel Lessons that were previously read.

When we read the Scriptures we see that Israel doesn't exactly have the best history with kings, do they? I was reading the Old Testament this week and I was reminded of this in relation to the king Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom, where the ten tribes were. Jeroboam ruled right after Solomon and in contrast to his counterpart over Judah Rehoboam, he implemented all sorts of false worship in his kingdom. In fact Jeroboam was so wicked in this regard, the Levites actually fled to Jerusalem because he forced them out of their rightful and God ordained place of serving at the altars of the Jews. Of course as I say that Rehoboam wasn't exactly great either. You see Jeroboam responded as he did because Rehoboam told the Northern Kingdom that he was going to be harsh in ruling over it, so they split off. So that's an indication.

Of course, that's nothing compared to another king: Ahab. Ahab under the influence of his wife Jezebel actually persecuted the Levites and the Prophets of God, including the prophet Elijah. So, there was another example of how that had gone. In fact, if you recall, part of the problem with Israel and choosing kings was precisely that in and of itself: they decided they wanted a king. You see, they had judges that ruled over their nation for the first centuries in the Promised Land, and that didn't go the best always, but the common pattern was that the people would fall away, then God would send them a faithful judge who would call them to repentance and faith.

But then they got the bright idea to mimic the nations around them and have a king. God said that wasn't how they should want it because He was their King, but they insisted and so, as God often does when we insist on things He doesn't want, He gives us what we want despite that. And just as with sin, there are consequences. We see those consequences in the kings I just mentioned, and we see it even in the first king, Saul. Sure, Saul started off pretty well, but you might recall that before it was all said and done, he fell off his rocker and wreaked all sorts of havoc in his insanity. But God told them this would happen. When He conceded that they could have a king, he told them that the king would fail. And fail those kings did. Even David and Solomon, the

greatest of the kings, even they failed: David with his indiscretions and murder, Solomon with his penchant for polygamy which ultimately led to clear spiritual adulteration as well.

But here we are on the first Palm Sunday, and the Israelites are finally getting it right. Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah, and the people are getting it right! With palms in hand they cry out, **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”** Here He is! Here is the King! The One coming in the Name of the Lord! Jesus!

But of course, even here there's a problem isn't there? Even still something's not right. I mean, we know that this isn't going to end well. We know that Jesus is crowned on Sunday, but coronated with thorns on Friday as He is placed upon His throne of the cross. So something isn't right here, is it?

Now of course, I think I have said this on other Palm Sundays, part of it is that people are fickle. Look at how quickly we turn on public figures. For example think of sports coaches. One minute John Fox comes in and the masses look forward to his rebuild, but a short time later, they're ready to move on. Or I've even heard people are calling for Quenneville's job because of the Blackhawks showing this year. He won three Stanley cups in five years, not that long ago and people are already calling for his head. Well, the crowd in Jerusalem shows that same mentality, right? But there's a deeper problem in the case of Jesus. Look at why they want to crown him. Look at what John says, **“The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.”** So why do they want to crown Him? He raised a guy from the dead!

Now don't get me wrong, that's definitely a sign that they should crown Him. Getting excited about a man who can call dead people out of their tombs is a big deal. But do you see what they're thinking? They're thinking that Jesus is going to bring the earthly Kingdom. They think that the Messiah is all about freeing them Rome, and giving them a return to their status under David. They think that Jesus' work as King, as Messiah, is all about being the bread king who is going to make sure their plates are full and their homes are safe.

But by Thursday night and into Friday at the trial, it's pretty clear that's not going to happen. What kind of king gets arrested and put on trial? What kind of king has to

endure mockery and beatings at the hands of the ones ruling the temple? What kind of king stands before the Roman ruler and won't claim his throne? And so when things turned, when it looked like Jesus had failed, then they turned too. And once again they chose the wrong king.

But as I say this, we are not immune to this problem either are we? We are not immune to putting the wrong king up on the pedestal and expecting all the glory to come now, are we? Think about our kings.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago how we are ruled so much by our feelings in our day, how it wasn't that long ago that we were ruled by our reason. We certainly have made those things kings, haven't we? How do we determine what is right, that is how do we determine what rules us? By how we feel, by rationalizing it.

Broadly speaking we could say that we've also made science, or I should say "science," our king. Properly speaking science is the human observation of the world around us. Can we learn a lot from that? You bet, look at all of the things we have learned and the way that our technology has advanced by it. But isn't there a lot we can't learn? Isn't there also a lot where science and technology, or one of the greatest benefits of modern science, medicine, isn't there a lot where these things have actually become mixed bags? Yes my computers allow us to calculate enormous figures nearly instantaneously, yes it allows me as a pastor to search a vast library of writings through the history of the church so I can see what those who came before me wrote about Scripture in their wisdom regarding God's Word. But, look at the trouble these things also create: social media bullying which has magnified so much of the division in our society, even resulted in the suicides of how many teenagers; not to mention financial and identity theft, the vast availability of pornography; the vast amount of useless websites which suck so many from far more productive and beneficial things. Should we throw out technology, or medicine, or science, then? No, but we need to be sure who our king is.

And of course there are other kings we enthrone as well, aren't there? There are our media sources, our political figures, our ideologies and our finances. What is your king? What is the thing that challenges your faith the most when it comes to placing Jesus in His rightful position? We all have those things.

In fact, this has been our problem since the fall. Since the first time man coronated someone other than the Lord. Did you catch who that king is? Apart from all

of the things that we put in place of God did you catch who Jesus said rules this world? I've mentioned this before, but who is it? After the voice came from heaven, Jesus said, **"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."** Who then is the ruler of this world? The Devil. The Serpent. When God made the world, He gave dominion to man, He gave it to man to rule, and yet what happened? Man gave that dominion over to the Serpent. And we have been suffering ever since. In fact, in a sense the temptation hasn't changed. Adam and Eve wanted the shiny new thing of being like God and knowing good and evil, and we still want shiny things ourselves.

I'm reminded of the scene in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, if you ever saw that. There's a scene where they are trying to pick which of a number of cups was the Holy Grail, the cup Christ used at the Last Supper. The people choosing are drawn to the ones that are the most ornamented, the most bedazzled, the shiniest. And that's us. We are drawn to the shiny things, the bread kings, the ones that will make us healthy, wealthy, and strong in this life. But ultimately in the movie, the grail was humble.

And Christians, there is our True King. He is the Humble One. He is the One riding the humble donkey into Jerusalem. Riding on to His death. He is the Humble King who the crowds call for on Sunday, but crown with thorns on Friday. That is His humble crown, His humble throne, the tree, of the curse of your sins. You haven't made Him King. I have not made Him King. We haven't chosen Him. But thankfully, brothers and sisters, He has chosen us. He has chosen to be our King who bled and died that we would be freed in the judgment of the ruler of this world. He has chosen to bear our sin and iniquity that we would be forgiven for our rebellion against Him. He has humbly emptied Himself that He would be exalted in His resurrection and ascension, and us with Him.

Christian, He has chosen you, washed you in baptism that you would be His subject. Promised you citizenship under His gracious reign in His Word. He has fed and nourished you in the famine of your sin with His body and blood. He has done all of this when it was so undeserved, when just like Israel you would crown another king. But He has done this for you, because He is the rightful King. He is the King of Glory, and as much as we are drawn to the shiny and false kings in this life, He still speaks to you and purifies you now that you could have the greatest of things in His Kingdom. His Kingdom that will never end. Thanks be to God. Amen.