

**Sermon: Christ the King**  
**Eze 34:11-16, 20-24; Ps 100; Eph 1:15-23; Mat 25:31-46**  
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Our Lord is King; this we celebrate today, as we do each year in the last weekend of our the church calendar, together with the majority of Christians worldwide. Christ is King, that is the fact. But how can we be sure that we are part of his kingdom?

**1 Jesus is King - in the future and today**

The son of man will come in his glory, with all his angels, and he will sit on his glorious throne, Jesus tells us. He is speaking of himself here, of course. We know this so sure because of what He says immediately after our Gospel reading of today:

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.' (Mat 26:1-2)

The one who was crucified will eventually come in glory and sit on his glorious throne. What will he do? He will judge.

In our modern societies, kings and presidents are usually not involved in judging. We have a separation of powers - at least, that is the ideal. But Jesus is called Lord, and King, in a society where the king was almost almighty. He made laws, he ruled, he policed, he judged.

That sort of king is Jesus. Not one who is only good for cutting ribbons of new bridges, like the king in my country, The Netherlands. Or who is good for putting on postage stamps, like in the UK.

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he said to his disciples that he has all power in heaven and on earth.

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, says that 'the Lamb [...] is the lord of lords and the king of kings'. (Rev 17:14)

So the claim is clear.

Jesus is almighty, and at one time, he will come in glory to judge the living and the dead. He is the King.

But this is not just a future dream; he is already King today. Here and now. He has all power in heaven and on earth - not only later, but now.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, speaks about this in powerful words.

[God] raised him from the dead and 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 he put all things under his feet. (Eph 1:20-22a)

This is an image of a powerful Lord - today.

And listen carefully to the words of Paul. Many of us, I think, would have advised Paul to write his words slightly differently.

I think we have a tendency to say, he is almighty, he has all power and dominion, not only later, not only one day in the future, but even now.

It seems we have less trouble to think that one day, he will reign. Our problem is more with today. Where do we see his kingship today, because as we look at our world full of misery, that is a serious question.

But Paul does exactly the opposite. He says, Jesus rules today, and worry not, He does not only reign presently, but even in the age to come, that is, when He will return to renew the whole universe. When he will inaugurate his kingdom rule over all the earth.

There was no shred of doubt in the early church that the one who rose from the dead and who ascended into heaven, today reigns as King. Now. And yes, even forever.

## **2. How is he King today?**

So how is he the king today? Where do we see it?

In the first place, as the creator-God he rules the universe. He makes sure that the atoms do not collide too much; that the sun does not come too close to mother earth; that day and night continue every 24 hours.

And in a way we do not even begin to understand, he stops evil in the world around us, from being too overwhelming.

But he does allow human beings to do more or less as they please; he has granted us freedom to make our choices, to live our lives... Because our king wants people who voluntarily love and obey him, not puppets on a string.

So He gives us our space. Do what you want. And sadly too many people abuse this freedom that the loving King gives us.

But this will not last forever. He will one day bring judgement. It is important to see that it is Jesus himself who puts before us the fact that we are all held accountable for the life we lead. This is not the idea of some mean-spirited conservative theologians. It is Jesus who tells us.

How can we be sure that we will one day be able to enter into his eternal Kingdom? Simply, by making sure that we are part of his Kingdom today.

Today, where is his kingdom most visible? In his church, if we listen to the words of Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

Listen again to Paul. After he spoke in glowing terms of Jesus Christ being almighty, he says in Ephesians 1:22:

And he 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.

The Lord our King is the head of the church. So he rules over his church - over us. He is our head.

But Paul goes one giant step further - he also calls the church 'the fullness of him who fills all in all'. He is not only the head of us, and of the whole worldwide church. He, the King, also fills the church with himself.

This means, among other things, that when you see the church, you see Jesus Christ. We represent Him. We represent the King in this world.

He uses you, all of us, for his Kingly rule. His church is the bridgehead of his kingdom in the world and one day his reign will be all pervasive, with no more rebellion, no more death, no more sin, no more sadness.

But today, He already rules in our midst. Imagine that! This is amazing. Truly mind boggling. The church is his bridgehead. He uses us for his Kingly rule.

We are called to rule on his behalf - here, today - in our normal daily life.

How is this?

### **3. We rule with him today**

We learn some of this from how Jesus describes the last judgment where he is the presiding judge.

How can we be sure we are part of that coming Kingdom? If today we live in accordance with the lifestyle of the King and in accordance with the life in the coming Kingdom.

If we live as Jesus did. He fed the poor. He stood by the miserable. He comforted those who needed help. He gave water to the thirsty, clothes to those who were naked. He showed love, love, love to God and to his needy neighbors.

If we do not see signs of this in our life, what does our faith in Jesus really mean?

Jesus, the King, is our Saviour, because we believe in him. But our faith must work through acts of love. This faith, combined with Christ-like living, is the most tangible sign that we belong to his kingdom.

But I would suggest, Jesus does not just speak of acts of kindness and love in general. Those are important, but I think in what we read this morning he tells us something more.

If you look back in the Gospel of Matthew, you see that Jesus told people that the heart of religion - what God truly wants from us - is that we wholeheartedly love God and other people.

Then he spoke in many parables about the need to be prepared for his coming. Be ready! Obviously, by loving God and loving all people.

Then in Mathew 24 he warned those who follow him, that they would face wars and famines and persecutions. Many of the believers will be delivered up for tribulation, even to death, Jesus warned. And also, many of the believers will fall away and betray one another - *but he who endures to the end will be saved.*

When the King comes to judge, he will ask, did you support those hungry believers who were persecuted? Did you stand by them when they were put in prison? Did you help them when they needed you to stand by them?

Will you also fall away or did you endure to the end?

I think we have to read the description of the final judgment in this light. Did you stand with your fellow believers, or did you give up on the Christian faith? Were you known by the people as one of them? Or did you, like Peter, say: "I do not know him?"

Because that is, ultimately, the issue I think. Feeding people who are persecuted for their faith, means putting yourself in danger. Visiting them in prison means that for the eyes of all you make clear - this is my community. This is where I belong. I am a follower of Jesus the King

That is also how we rule today with our King. By caring for our brothers and sisters, and by caring for all people, and for this whole world.

If we stand by our fellow believers, we stand by Jesus himself. Who are the brothers and sisters of Jesus? 'Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother', Jesus said. (Mark 3:35)

The opposite is also true. If we persecute Christians, like Paul did, Jesus from heaven says: 'Why do you persecute me.'

Jesus our King identifies with his subjects - with us who follow him. And in as far as we identify with his followers, we identify with Jesus as well. To serve Him means to serve each other; to serve each other means serving Him.

That is how today we rule with our King - the head of his church and the one who fills us with himself. We rule by being his hands in this world. And his hands have holes in them.

We do not rule with Him by a show of power and might, but by following him in his Via Dolorosa - the way of the cross. That is the way of the church; serving others even if that hurts ourselves.

Ruling with Christ - the powerful one - is through weakness. We make ourselves vulnerable by aligning ourselves with Him and with all God's children worldwide and by serving them in their needs. Our life is not about ourselves, but about God and others.

Just as Jesus lived and died for God and others.

This is our God, The Servant King  
He calls us now to follow Him  
To bring our lives as a daily offering  
Of worship to The Servant King

## **Conclusion**

We will soon all kneel for our King, when he returns. And today we already kneel for Him. To bring our lives as a daily offering.

'Lord you are our King, even today. We depend on your mercy; we depend on your forgiveness; give us today our daily bread, our daily wine, for our salvation.'

'And Lord, we kneel beside each other. We are one body, your church.'

'And as you sustain us, we offer ourselves for sustain each other, Because that is, Lord Jesus, our King, how you lived and that is the mark of the Kingdom. Your love.'

**Amen**