

**+ Genesis 49:8-12 + Our Future Belongs to Our Glorious King +
+ Last Sunday of End Time: Christ the King + 22 November 2015 Morning +**

This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

There was nothing glorious about the man hanging on the rough, wooden cross. Blood dripped from his forehead where soldiers had pounded a crown of thorns into his head. Welts, cuts, and gashes covered his body from repeated beatings and floggings he had received over the past twenty-four hours. His clothes were gone, gambled away by heartless soldiers. He had no way of covering his shame because large nails pinned his hands and feet to the cross. The loss of blood and lack of sleep caused him to nearly go into shock. To ridicule him even more, a sign courtesy of the local governor hung above his head proclaiming what everyone denied, ***“This is the King...”*** (Luke 23:38) There was nothing glorious about that man on the cross.

Crowds had followed him outside of the city to the hill known as “The Skull” to see how he would come to his end. They freely took verbal potshots at him, while their leaders sneered, ***“He saved others; let him save himself...”*** The soldiers guarding him joined in the mockery of this “King,” ***“If you are the King..., save yourself.”*** (23:35, 37) Things got so bad that even ***“the robbers who were crucified with him...heaped insults on him.”*** (Matthew 27:44) There was nothing glorious about the man on the cross. Yet behind all the blood and humiliation was the King of kings doing what he had come to do for all of them, for all of us. Yet for so many people, they couldn’t get past the blood and humiliation and weakness of the ***“man of sorrows.”*** (Isaiah 53:3)

Does that ever happen to you? When you imagine Christ the King, do you ever find yourself wanting to get past the suffering and the nails and the blood and the humiliation of the crucifixion? Do you ever find yourself wanting to get past all of that to get on to the glory, the honor, the power, the dominion that we all wish Jesus would show in our lives?

You don’t want to see Jesus like this. You don’t want to see again what your sins have caused him—pain and shame and death. You would rather move past all that. Then Jesus can take away all your problems and give you success in all you do. You can lead a worry-free life...but then he doesn’t display that power in your life. He allows difficulty or problems to rise up, and you start to feel disappointed, even ashamed of this suffering King.

Rather than a bloody ***“man of sorrows,”*** we would much rather prefer to see ***“the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”*** We would rather hear of the glory and dominion and power that Jacob promised on his deathbed to the descendants of his son Judah 2,000 years before Christ. ***“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you... The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”***

Now that’s a glorious picture of a glorious line of kings! God in his grace and wisdom would make it happen. Over 400 years after this promise, Judah’s descendants would lead the way as the Israelites would take the land long-promised to their forefathers by their gracious God. Eventually a long line of kings would come from Judah starting with a young shepherd named David from a little village called Bethlehem.

David would be a great king over all Israel—unifying and expanding the kingdom. Above all, he would be a man after the Lord’s own heart—faithful to the Lord, but this shepherd-king would only partially fulfill the prophecy. He was still a sinner who brought violence and shame to his family. His son Solomon would have even greater splendor, even building the great temple dedicated to the Lord, but he too would fall prey to sin’s wickedness. The generations of kings that followed would have great heroes of faith like Josiah and Hezekiah, but many in the royal line would reject the true God for dead fertility gods and demon worship. Eventually the Lord would cut off their earthly glory for their wickedness as the Lord declared through Ezekiel, ***“A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it.”*** (21:27)

Not all that glitters is gold or glory. From his deathbed Jacob’s prophecy was more than a preview of the glitter of a royal line of kings descended from his son Judah. ***“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.”*** Yes, David would partially fulfill that promise, as would kings like Josiah and Hezekiah, but there would be a King who would come before whom all nations would bow, who would fill all nations with expectation. To that King would belong all glory and honor.

Who is this King of whom Jacob speaks? Or as David sang of his greater Son in Psalm 24(:8), ***“Who is this King of glory?”*** As Jacob looked out from his death-bed, could he have known or seen this King? Could Judah have possibly known what his father was saying as he blessed his family with promises of victory, eternal rule, and unending prosperity? They had a glimpse of the Christ to come, but as we peer through this prophecy to its fulfillment in the New Testament, we see Christ for who he is—the King.

We see a King who left his heavenly throne not to establish an earthly kingdom and an era of unending prosperity, but a King who came in lowliness and poverty, shame and humiliation. We see a King whose birth was announced by angels in all their glory, yet his first visitors were lowly shepherds and his first crib a feeding trough. We see a King who willingly set aside his almighty power and holy glory to live the life of a human being under his own holy Law, yet without the stain of sin. We see a King without roof over his head, shunning every opportunity for his own glory. We see a King who gave only three disciples a glimpse of his true glory to prepare them and himself for suffering and humiliation to come.

We see a King willingly march into Jerusalem not on a mighty steed at the head of a glorious army, but on the unbroken colt of a donkey with disciples and children and regular people praising him as ***“the Son of David”*** who finally came to save. (Matthew 21:9) We see a King who made himself a servant down on the ground washing his disciples’ dirty feet. We see a King who gives himself with mere bread and wine not for them to simply remember his glory, but to receive his forgiveness again and again. We see a King betrayed by one of his own, attacked by those who should’ve remembered the promises, and humiliated by their injustice and ridicule. We see a King covered with blood and shame and sorrow, but yet a King who had come to save those who rejected him and were ashamed of him as Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:19-20), ***“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”***

Nowhere was that more evident than as Christ the King hung from the cross. At some point during all the jeering, the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of one of the criminals. By faith, he saw the King through the blood and the humiliation, and he rebuked his fellow criminal. ***“Don’t you fear God since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong...Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*** (Luke 23:40-42)

What did the King do? Did he reject this criminal for his previous blasphemy? Did he laugh and mock his faith-filled plea? That sinner deserved nothing, but Jesus did the most royal thing he could do. He put his love on display as he assured the man, ***“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*** (23:43) Christ proved to all that he is the Savior-King not by some glorious reign, but by allowing his blood to be shed for us as the prophet Isaiah wrote, ***“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.”*** (Isaiah 53:5) What’s more glorious than that? What’s more glorious than seeing Christ on the cross for you?

...But there’s more to see because we see the King conquer sin and Satan with his death on the cross. We see the King abandon his tomb because death could hold him no longer. We see the King ascend into heaven because his work was complete and it was time to take the position of power and authority over all things for the good of his people, the Church.

Yes, the King now goes unseen, but we will see him again. A time will come when we will see Christ the King come in glory and power, honor and dominion. Jacob’s ancient prophecy will be fully fulfilled. The trumpet will sound and Christ will come again. At his name, every knee will ***“bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”*** (Philippians 2:9-11)

The Lion of the tribe of Judah will possess the scepter for all eternity and his enemies—sin, Satan, and death—will be hurled into the depths of hell for all eternity. Death will no longer be able to hold sway over humanity, but Christ the King will call all from their graves—unbelievers to eternal condemnation and believers made righteous in his blood to eternal life with him in the glorious rest of heaven, where our joy and bliss and blessing will never end.

As we bring another church year to a close and begin another, watch for the King! See the King of kings in all those ancient prophecies and fulfillments for you. Look through the shame and the humiliation to see the King’s real glory in the manger and the cross and the emptiness of the tomb. See the King who will come again just as he promised and rejoice for your salvation is drawing near. See the head once crowned with thorns and rejoice because our future belongs to that glorious King! Amen.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!