

Daniel 7:13-14

Last Sunday of End Time: Christ the King  
November 21, 2021

Fascination with royalty seems commonplace. In the Bible we find the Israelites requesting a king so that they might be "like all the other nations." Fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella have their handsome prince and there's the pampered Princess and the Pea. What little girl hasn't dreamed of being a princess or dressed as one for Halloween? Knights of old jousted to win the hand of the king's daughter. King Arthur's Camelot is legendary. Even though our history includes the Revolutionary War to break free from the King of England, the royal weddings and news dealing with Queen Elizabeth and her family draw many followers here in America. Schools select royalty for homecoming and prom events.

Those activities are far removed from what we consider on this final Sunday in the church year entitled Christ the King. When we look at Jesus in today's readings we see

### CHRIST IS NO ORDINARY KING

- I. In his person
- II. In his position

The extraordinary nature of Jesus was communicated through a special vision. God's people, which by the time of Daniel included only the Southern Kingdom of Judah, were in captivity in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar and his armies had swept into the land three times over a twenty year period, defeated the nation and carried most of the people back to his land. The Lord had allowed, even sent, this trouble as a correction for his people as they had been unfaithful to him and turned instead to idol worship. After seventy years a purified remnant would be allowed to return home.

Among the captives was Daniel, who had been taken in the first wave to go into exile. He received training and became part of the government in Babylon. As the captivity stretched on, Daniel had a dream. In it he saw four strange and powerful beasts appearing in succession. An explanation of the dream followed. The four beasts were four kingdoms of the world. They were powerful, but they all eventually passed away. Reading through this entire chapter later today would give you a fuller understanding of the dream. History buffs identify the kingdoms as the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks under Alexander the Great and

the Roman Empire. They covered most of the remaining centuries before the birth of Jesus.

The portion of the dream recorded in the verses of today's text revealed a special person. "I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven." Here was one in human form, not another strange beast. Yet he was no ordinary man. He was coming with the clouds of heaven. They surrounded him like they were his vehicle. There are frequent references in the Bible to clouds in connection with God, such as today's Second Lesson. This being with human appearance was brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days. That latter name is unique to this dream. It is a reference to God, who is ancient, in fact, eternal. He has always existed. He predates the created world. This ancient one doesn't change and isn't replaced. Since the one like a son of man was worthy to come in to the presence of the Ancient of Days, he is also a divine being. This greater one is the Son of God.

The text referred to him as "one like a son of man." Jesus regularly called himself the "Son of Man." That title reminded people that he was true man and one of us, yet it also reflected this scene and the fact that he is God. He is both God and man. By coming as a humble man, he showed that he did not aim to frighten us or overwhelm us but wanted to gain our confidence.

What a marvel he is: both true God and true man. We find it difficult to visualize how the divine and the human natures fit together, or better, how the human can contain the divine. That's one of those matters we accept by faith. We merely repeat what the Scriptures tell us.

God had a reason for this special way of sending his Son, and that was to redeem us. His dual nature made him perfectly equipped for the task. He was able to live a perfect life as God, but as God he was the giver of the law and stood over it. Becoming human brought him under the law, which he then kept for us. As man he was also able to die. His death was effective to pay for the sins of the whole human race since he was God.

That extraordinary Christ's mission was needed because we could not approach the Ancient of Days. We have corruption in our hearts. Our minds are puffed up with pride or agitated with worry and lack of trust. There is deceit and filth on our lips. Our hands are polluted with sinful deeds and our feet rush to our own evil ways. Instead of honoring him we use his name to curse. We challenge or ignore his ways. Do you get the point? You and I are thoroughly sinful. We are lost on our own. God sent Jesus, who was perfectly suited to meet our need. He was no

ordinary king. He was special in his person and used that unique makeup to rescue us from sin. He is our Savior.

## II.

His activity also shows he is no ordinary king. He rules with everlasting dominion. He has supreme power. "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power." That authority is the highest authority. He is in charge, absolutely number one. His authority is more than saying, "The buck stops here," that he has the last word on everything. He has the first word: he gives the directions. Nothing happens without his permission.

Our Lord Jesus has glory. It is part of the divine essence. He receives honor and majesty from us. We look up to him as one who is above us all. Believers acknowledge his position as we honor and worship him. As we have noted other times, even the unbelievers, idol worshipers, atheists and agnostics will admit to his position come Judgment Day as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

He has sovereign power. Literally it says he has a kingdom. Ruling is his activity. He governs the universe in power, directing all that happens. He is supreme in the hearts of believers by his Word, in his grace. He rules over heaven in glory. He is king of all. That position is far different from the way he lived on earth. As he stood before Pilate in today's Gospel reading or other steps along the way to the cross, he appeared anything but royal and supreme. He was serving us and making the ultimate sacrifice of his own life as the King of love.

Christ our King rules over a worldwide kingdom. "All people, nations, and men of every language worshiped him." The terms are similar, but by piling them up Daniel emphasized the totality of Christ's rule. There are no exceptions. People of all races, ethnic backgrounds and places of origin are included.

No earthly ruler matches a kingdom of that extent. The vision is fulfilled in no other person. We see his unique position also when we note he has an eternal rule. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." Those other kingdoms pictured earlier in the vision came and went as foretold. Although fierce and powerful, only traces of them remain. Nothing human lasts.

Christ's kingdom endures. Humans may oppose and resist, but they won't defeat him. They will bring about their own destruction, and by that I mean their eternal

damnation. Their attempts to throw off his rule will not alter the fact. Christ is and remains the king eternally.

That message brought assurance to the people of Judah who were living in captivity. Since God was in charge, they would survive. That meant the Messiah was still coming, just as God had promised their forefathers. They had a bright future through him. Things were looking up!

It is no less vital for us to know the position of the one who is looking out for us. Our King is powerful and lasting. That fact is reassuring to displaced people, like the Afghanistan refugees wondering if God cares about them, if they will ever again see their homeland or enjoy stability in life. It brings us comfort when we wonder if our lives will return to normal and if God is still running things. We all have days when we feel low and the circumstances of our lives look discouraging. There is pressure at work. Deadlines stare you in the face. You tried your best but didn't succeed in getting the promotion or making the team or achieving a good grade. People you were depending on let you down. There's trouble brewing at home. Bills are piling up. Inflation is making you pay more for necessities and challenging your budget. You made some dumb choices. Your anger got the best of you and you spoke or texted harsh words that you didn't really mean, but all the apologies in the world can't seem to restore the damaged relationship. You feel defeated. You wonder how you can face the future with all the obstacles, challenges and opposition. In the midst of those times we're looking at ourselves and our own abilities and that's why we'd like to throw in the towel and give up.

Don't! That's where Christ the King Sunday is helpful. It raises our sights to our mighty heavenly King and shows us we are on the winning side. He is in charge and he carries out his will, which is always good for us. His supreme power supports and strengthens us. Have I overstated the case? Listen to verse 27 of this same chapter, in the explanation of the vision which Daniel recorded. "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High." You and I are those saints. That's how God views us because he looks at us through the life and death of Jesus. God credits his work to us by faith, so we appear sinless and holy. God is telling us here that as believers we rule with Christ our King. We are not a persecuted minority, but royalty. The Bible calls us a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Doesn't that change how you view each day and the world around you? Everything is serving you as you rule with Christ, now on earth and forever in heaven. Take it to heart; be reassured. Live in confidence and joy. What is true of each one of us individually as a believer also holds true for us collectively. As St. John congregation faces the future, we do so with confidence. The call process for a permanent pastor stretches on longer than we might like. Numbers are down from what many remember in days gone by. Let's not focus on ourselves and our own weaknesses but on the one who has redeemed us and made us his own. Follow the leadership of Christ your King to carry out great work in building the kingdom of God. As he motivates and strengthens us, he will supply the ability to carry out his will. Pray daily for his guidance, knowing he will lead us in serving him.

Maybe we can't fully visualize the power and authority of Christ our King. What we can understand is marvelous. He is not ordinary in his person or position. We know and trust him as the humble servant who won salvation for us and as the mighty King who rules an everlasting kingdom. Most important is that he rules in your heart by faith. Trust him always!