

# **Sermon Text for November 22, 2015**

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II Samuel 23:1-7, Revelation 1:4b-8

## ***“Christ the King”***

If you stepped into the church yesterday between 9 and noon you would have thought that it was the most happening place in Strasburg. It has been busy around here. Nearly 20 people formed a commando unit to get everything all set to decorate the church today at 12:15, another half dozen or more were preparing the Samaritan’s purse shoe boxes, there was a flurry of activity in Fellowship Hall getting ready to celebrate Jim and Nancy’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and then the Scouts started coming in and filling up the secretary’s office with food.

As all of this was taking place it all felt a bit surreal as across the seas people were still counting the lost in Paris, Presbyterian missionaries were writing about the violence and death in Iraq and Nigerians from my church in Moscow wrote to me about the killings that are taking place of Christians in that country. It seemed a bit out of place our frenetic activity and out of sync with the statements made about refugees and security as we blissfully decorated, brought food in, celebrated an anniversary, and filled show boxes with supplies. People tell us we should be afraid and fear ought to dictate our thoughts and actions.

Well, Happy Thanksgiving and on this stewardship Sunday we celebrate the last Sunday of our liturgical calendar called Christ the King Sunday. Our Scriptures will lead us to a place where we will find that if Christ truly is our king in all things then it will affect our stewardship, our view of finances, our view of relationships. Yes, if we believe that Jesus is King, then it will even affect our stance on the refugee question.

All of this comes down to the question that we have to ask today: Who is Jesus to me? In the midst of all this, who is Jesus to me? Our Scriptures have an answer to that question and the answer will have an impact on every single aspect of our life. Let’s read.

So this Friday I had chapel with the preschool kids and we acted out the story of Jesus and his disciples on the boat when the storm came while they were on the water. And the waves crashed and the wind blew. Jesus stood up and said be still, and the storm stopped and everyone lived happily ever after. So I asked them a series of questions: were the disciples afraid? Yes. Why? Because of the storm. Was Jesus afraid. No. How do you know? Because he was sleeping. Why wasn’t he afraid. And one little girl said: he wasn’t afraid because Jesus is God and God isn’t ever afraid.

To the question: Who is Jesus to you, that little girl knew the right answer, Jesus is God to me. In II Samuel we read the very last words of King David. You remember him. He was the who killed Goliath. He played the harp for King Saul. He had an adulterous affair with Bathsheeba, he built up the kingdom of Israel. He wrote many of the Psalms. And after this long life of service to the Lord, peppered with disobedience, he has some final words. As he looks back he is able to say in vs. 5: “The Lord has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?”

Who is the Lord for David? He is the one who follows through in his covenant and makes him to prosper. So that he can say in 24:24 of II Samuel, just a chapter later, “I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.” He trusted the Lord enough that he was willing, he felt compelled and so with joy he offered to the Lord his tithe. The ability to tithe comes from an ability to answer the question of who is Jesus to me with the answer: he is my King, ruler of my life, so I will trust him in all things, even in my giving.

This takes us to the concept of tithing, a concept which is commanded by Scripture. I’ve given in the past the Scriptural basis for tithing, just trust me when I say that it is a Biblical mandate, it isn’t something that I just made up. I know, some of you think it is old fashioned, others as impractical, and others see it as a recipe for disaster. I am here to tell you that tithing is not for the sake of the church, but rather for your sake and as a measurement as to whether the Lord is your king or not.

Lately tithing has been a subject brought up in the debates, but it is in a context that has nothing Scriptural about it. There is nothing in Scripture that says you should give the government 10%. I don’t care whether it is sound fiscal policy or not, I am not opposed or in support of it, but it has nothing to do with the biblical concept of tithing, let’s be clear about that. Don’t be confused that if 10% is good enough for God then it is good enough for the government. Not Scriptural. Tithing was established by God as an opportunity for the giver to grow in their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ. At the vision team meeting we had quite a conversation about it. What if I can’t afford a tithe, can my time replace the financial tithe, or what if I don’t want to give my money, can I serve as an elder or a deacon or a trustee and that takes the place of my tithe.

I answered all of those questions in my usual diplomatic fashion and said...well, no. Money is such an important aspect of who we think we are, that’s why Jesus spoke about money more than any other topic besides the kingdom of God. It has a tendency to dictate so much of our life. No show me the money clip. When we tithe we are declaring who Jesus is to me, he is

my king. He is Lord of my life. I need you to trust me here and listen to me carefully. If you are spending your money wisely and you have never tithed, if you started tithing in January, this January, you will not be in need. It is a command accompanied with a promise from God. It is your answer to the question of who is Jesus to me. When you tithe you are saying Jesus is my king, the dollar is not king, Jesus is.

Some practical notes on tithing. Tithe at the beginning of the week or the month, not at the end. As soon as you get your check, do the 10%. This is not for the sake of the church, it will change your life and I promise God will meet your need. Some ask, well, what if I give to other organizations. I tell you give 10% to the bride of Christ, the local church. If you want to give to other organizations that's great, but that isn't your tithe, at least not according to Scripture. Stacy and I we give 10% to 1<sup>st</sup> Pres, and very little, if anything, to other organizations. We see it as a command.

When we tithe, we then see God answer prayers miraculously. There is one area of the church that has recently been running a deficit. We have a bunch of kids who come to the Well, supervised, but they come almost every day and so the supplies are being taxed, really taxed. It had been running about a \$600 deficit for the year and we didn't know how to make that up. We knew that it was a vital ministry, but it has always been my experience that if a ministry is of the Lord then he will provide to meet the needs. We were in a deficit, He was not providing.

Last May we had submitted a grant to Presbytery laying out a program dealing with youth at risk. The school has been sending us youth at risk and Brett works with them as an alternative to them having charges pressed against them. We've had 3 kids and 2 have made it through the program and one, just this week, was picked up and arrested again and did not make it through. But it is a vital ministry and the Well has a part in all of it.

But since May when we submitted our application I had not heard a thing. At the Presbytery meeting in November I asked Dan Snyder who heads up the grant program what our status was. He looked at me a bit strange and said, don't you know, you all were given the grant right away, we really like what you all are doing. Didn't you get the check, no we didn't get the check. He sent me an email on Thursday and told me that they had mailed the check to us, \$1000. God is faithful in our tithe and he will be faithful and provide as David said.

So what is it that prevents us from tithing? Most think they simply cannot afford it. How quickly we forget that all we have is a gift from God to begin with. He can choose to take it all away at any moment if he wanted. What we have is all due to the way in which God ordered creation. But when we say that we answer the question of who is Jesus to us with an answer that

is something less than a king. Maybe the words of Revelation 1 will help to remind us of who Jesus is.

If you look at vs. 5 you will read that who Jesus is to us needs to be seen primarily as the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood. Jesus loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, that is who Jesus is for me. Earlier in vs. 5 Jesus is called the faithful witness. The word witness in the Greek is martyr. Jesus the one willing to be martyred for our sins because of how much he loves us.

Again, vs. 5 tells us he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Vs. 6 he has dominion forever and ever. God is in charge of our lives, he is the king of our existence. When we believe these words and Jesus becomes king, ruler of all and over all, does it change your perspective at all on what you need to live on? Financially if Jesus is King and will meet your needs then does your life need to be so complicated?

If Jesus is king and you are in a relationship where the only value you have comes from how the other person views you, when Jesus becomes king of your life he loves you. He loves you not because you do certain things for him, or you can check certain boxes, no he just loves you and shed his blood for you. Completely different perspective.

When Jesus is king, he is not afraid. He does not allow us to make decisions based on fear. Those who try to take Jesus' control by bombs and violence will only be met with a reality against which they have no defense. Those who want to make policies based on fear and hatred and not on what Christ would want us to do, need to ask the question of themselves, who is Jesus to me?

Can we say keep everyone out and say that Jesus is king in the same breath? No, we cannot. Can we say we have to govern out of fear. I would say if we do, then Christ is not our king.

If Jesus is king then the church and its people need to see things from the perspective of Jesus being in charge. Who is Jesus for us this Thanksgiving? He should be the same for us as he was for the pilgrims who even in the face of a hostile environment and uncertain future were able to give thanks with their tithes and their offerings as they were able to celebrate Christ their King. Amen.