

Sermon Text for November 24, 2024

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 and Matthew 16:21-28 *“The dominion of Jesus”*

There is so much celebrating that is happening today. We have two baptisms at the second service, that is always cause for celebration. It's Christ the Kings Sunday and we have our white out today, thank you to Whitney Sickler for getting that all arranged. Speaking of getting things arranged, guess what is happening tomorrow evening at 6? We are all gathering to decorate the church for Advent. It really is a good time, won't you come and join us?

Thanksgiving is right around the corner, another reason to be thankful and celebrate. The Bronkemas will gather at Myrtle Beach this year. One of my brothers just recently moved there, within this past year, and so we will all be gathered there in one townhouse. Sounds like fun! It is the one time out of the year that we all get together with our families, the only holiday in which we see everyone with everyone together.

We celebrate the birthday of the church today as well, and during these celebrations we give thanks and we like to honor our 50 year members. We have one member of this church who joined in 1940, can you imagine, being a member of this church for 84 years, now that is mind blowing for some of us, but there you have it. She might be watching so let's give it up for Elinor Rudy! There is so much we could cover and so much happening in the life of the world and in the life of the church, but here what we focus on is Scripture and how it intersects with our daily life and we believe that God is unchanging and so His Word reflects truths that guide us and direct us.

If last week was the culmination, the climax of Matthew up to that point with Peter's very clear answer to Jesus' question, who do you say that I am? Peter's answer, you are the Messiah, the son of the God, if last week was the apex of the Gospel, today is the turning point as Jesus explains to his disciples exactly what type of kingdom this Messiah will bring about and what will be an integral part of that kingdom. If we celebrate Christ the King Sunday today, and we say that we are followers of a king, the question remains what will the dominion of Jesus today. We get that answer today, but it is probably not an answer we would expect, and I would guess probably not one we would want either. Let's read.

READ

When we read in Daniel the description of the kingdom of God and what it will look like come judgment day when the Ancient One takes his throne among the other thrones, we might

be thinking to ourselves that this is what I'm talking about. I want to be a part of this kingdom. There is fire that is emanating from the thrones, a real show of power and strength. We even read in vs. 14 that this kingdom, this rule, this dominion, will last forever. Who doesn't want to be a part of something that lasts forever? When we say in the Lord's prayer for thine is the kingdom, this is the type of kingdom we would expect and most certainly want. So Daniel is speaking our love language as he depicts a powerful, eternal, strong kingdom.

But we do need to see that the Ancient one hands over the power to the Son of Man, and we saw last week that Jesus is that Son of Man. So the dominion, the power, and the glory belong to Jesus as the Messiah, and does fire emanating from the thrones sound anything like the Jesus that we have seen in Matthew so far? Does that Jesus with whom we have a relationship and who requires righteousness so that as Matthew 25 tells us that we would invest our time and energy in our neighbor who is weak and in need of help sound like the ruler that is reflected here in Matthew? It may be the kingdom that we want, but not the one that it actually is. Our Savior in our Matthew Scripture depicts a very different scene.

Our Matthew Scripture begins with the simple words: from that time on, and so that means to us that this is a pretty important verse. This moment in the life of Jesus and in the life of the disciples is a marker. We've all had marker moments when we reflect and say that we were never the same after that event or after that day or after that moment, it could be good, a marriage, a birth, a born again experience with Jesus, or it could be bad, a death, a really, really bad decision, some other tragedy. Here we see that things changed as a result of that statement by Peter that he is the Messiah and where Jesus is in his own ministry.

Jesus tells them, yes I am the Messiah and this is what my kingdom will look like: vs.21, that first verse: I must suffer, I must die, and I will be raised from the dead. If you want to follow me in my kingdom then you must suffer, and some of you will even die as a result of your faith, but don't worry, in the life to come you will be resurrected. It wasn't a super encouraging rally cry for Jesus to his disciples. My dominion will have at its cornerstone suffering and death, that will be an inevitable part of your life if you join the kingdom of God.

Peter is a bit unsettled by this, to say the least, after all, he is the one who said that Jesus was the Messiah, and he had in mind exactly what Daniel was talking about. Jesus was going to be set up a throne with fire that came out of it, and there would be twelve other thrones around him and Peter would probably have that throne closest to Jesus. The dominion of Jesus was not suffering and death, it had to be power and might. So Peter takes Jesus aside and tells him that he is wrong. He tells Jesus that God will forbid him from having to go through this. Yes, you

are the Messiah, no you are not going to suffer and die and be buried. That goes totally against everything that we have worked for. Can you imagine telling Jesus that he was wrong?

Have we ever told God that he was wrong? In the midst of suffering or getting answers we don't like, have we ever told God he was wrong. We know better? God, answer me, and the answer that we get is the wrong answer for us? As Mr. T would say, Jesus doesn't suffer fools, and so he calls Peter out and tells the one whom he called a rock in the previous verses, he now calls him a stumbling stone. Get behind me, you agent of Satan, you are not a rock upon which I build my church, you are stumbling stone who thinks only of himself and the desires of people as opposed to the desires of God. Peter, you are either for me, or you are against me, as Matthew 12:30 states.

This goes directly to the core of our foundation, like we saw last week, who is our rock, our foundation stone and what does that stone, what does Jesus call us to do and what are we willing to do if what he calls us to do is too hard? For us are we thinking of the things of God or rather are we taking inventory and only partially committed and looking at the way the world works and think that's the way I want to work, at least partially, right?

Who would choose to have suffering as a fundamental part of Jesus' kingdom, and so as followers, suffering is what we have to come to expect. That shouldn't come as a surprise to us. There are so many verses that reflect this. Let's look at some of them: James 1:2-4 we are told to consider our sufferings as joy. II Corinthians 12:7ff Paul says that we are to boast in our sufferings because it makes Jesus' power even more real. Romans 5:3-5 Paul says again that we boast in our sufferings because, as our parents used to tell us, it builds character. There are more many, many more verses that lay out for us that suffering is a fundamental part of the kingdom to which we have signed up. If you are not called to suffering in your life, you are not called to follow Jesus, there is no other way to put it.

Fun birthday sermon Bob. I'll never forget a pivotal moment in my life that changed my perspective on suffering and who God was. It was between my Junior and Senior year in high school. My dad and two of my brothers took a road trip from Atlantic City New Jersey, where we were living, to Tegucigalpa Honduras. My third brother, David, was working in Honduras at the time. We were involved in development work in this country that is the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere next to Haiti.

One day I was tasked with going with a 13 year old girl to pick up the sugar cane that had just recently been cut down and bring it back to the town. I'm 17 and wanting to show my prowess picked up about 6 of the stalks and started walking, and it was heavy, this girls picks up

at least 10, puts them on her head, and heads down and passes me. All the while she is singing Gloria a Dios quietly, just in her own world not even paying attention to me.

The next day I was given a task to help repair a roof with clay tiles and I was matched with someone who looked like they were 80 and wheezing and coughing and I tried to get up on the roof, but needed help, he scampered up and started laying these very heavy tiles, while I struggled to gain my balance. All the while he was singing quietly Gloria a Dios. The poverty was palpable, the misery should have been there, but instead what I found were people giving thanks to God for the life that God had given them, even in the midst of what I would have to define as suffering and pain. Jesus says if you are not willing to see your suffering as part of the plan, then you have misunderstood what the kingdom is. We can't run away from the truth that God's plan for his Messiah includes suffering, and even a purposeful death.

I realize that this is not the most appealing message to bring people to a saving relationship to Jesus. Here, join Jesus' kingdom and suffer with us. But why must it be so? Because we cannot be conformed to the ways of this world and anyone, as Jesus says to Peter, who focuses on the things of this world, in please people for all things, will not be able to understand a kingdom where we are called to as Jesus says in vs.24, to deny themselves. You cannot deny yourself and not suffer. It is part of this Gospel of righteousness that we have talked about. If you want to fulfill Matthew 25 then suffering is going to be a part of your life, there is no getting around it.

Who Jesus was is so opposite of who the world is that the two inevitably will clash, one will be a stumbling block to the other. How do we live our lives as disciples then who understand suffering as part of the foundation of the kingdom? I think the key is found in Philippians 4:11 where Paul states that he has learned to be content in all things. Our contentment is often defined by what the world tells us to be content over: what we have, our position in society, the power that we wield, being liked. But we have a master, we have a king, who showed us a way that is so very different.

True discipleship must accept self-denial and suffering, and even death. The disciple must be molded by the example of the master, who was the humble king. Amen.