

Last Sunday of End Time / Christ the King (November 25, 2018)

1764

O. T. Lesson: Daniel 7:13,14

Morning Praise: p. 45

Epistle: Revelation 1:4b-8

216 vs. 1, 2

Gospel: John 18:33-37

Text: Revelation 1:4b-8

Psalm 45

Look, The Alpha And Omega King!

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I. He is “the faithful witness.” [Prophet]

Offering: 341 v.3, 4

II. He is “the firstborn from the dead.” [Priest]

216 vs. 3, 4

III. He is “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” [King]

IV.

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” [Rev. 7:10]

Revelation 1:4b-8

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

King of kings and Lord of lords, “Thy kingdom come!” Amen.

Dear friends whom Christ has made to be his kingdom.

In the front of our church we see two Greek letters. The one looks like our capital letter A. The other looks like a horseshoe. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega. Jesus uses these letters to describe himself. When he says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” he means that he is the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

“Look!” says the child in excitement from the back seat of the car on the family vacation in Montana. “Look at the mountains!” But it still takes an hour to drive to the mountains after seeing them far in the distance. Today we see something far more spectacular. We see something far more distant, from the beginning of time to the end of time, and yet so close! **Look! The Alpha and Omega King!** He is the faithful witness. He is the firstborn from the dead. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

In court the witness testifies, swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the witness sets forth the story in graphic detail. The Son of God is “the faithful witness.” He is the witness of every crime that has ever been committed by you, not only in your actions, but also in your heart. But more than that, he is “the faithful witness” of your forgiveness, of the eternal salvation of mankind wrought by the almighty hand of God from one end of time to the other. Of that “faithful witness” John says elsewhere, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....Through him all things were made....The Word became flesh and

made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth...No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." [John 1]

On that night before he died, this is what "the faithful witness" said to his Father in prayer, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them." [John 17:6-8a]

Hebrews 1 describes, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

In the Old Testament when "the faithful witness" came to Isaiah, this was his first reaction, "'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.'" [Isaiah 6:5]

Dear friends, look, the Alpha and Omega King! The eternal almighty king of all has come to you! "The faithful witness" has proclaimed to you his holy word of truth. How glorious beyond glorious is that! How awesome! How all unworthy we wretched sinners are, for we have despised his holy word, broken it and rebelled against it. Surely the word of "the faithful witness," the King and Judge of all, must condemn us.

But no. The King says to us as he said to Isaiah, "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." [Isaiah 6:7b] The King says that because as our High Priest, he himself carried out our salvation. He is "the firstborn from the dead."

Look! The Alpha and Omega King left the throne in heaven. Taking the very nature of a servant, he was made in human likeness, [Philippians 2:7] so that the magi had to be led by a star to find that poor, lowly infant King. So that the Jews thought that they could by force make him their bread king to feed their bodies for a time here on earth, while rejecting him as food for their souls for all eternity. So that on Palm Sunday he had to be carried by a lowly donkey into Jerusalem while the crowds sang "Hosanna to the King," evidently ignorant of what his kingdom was all about. So that he tried in vain to explain his kingdom to Pontius Pilate as we read earlier. So that the soldiers in mockery dressed him in an elegant purple robe and pressed on his head a crown—of thorns. So that on the cross "there was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." So that the dying criminal next to him could say, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus could answer him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." [Luke 23:42,43]

The cross would seem to be most out-of-place for the Alpha and Omega King. Yet here in the center of time he fought the battle against our sin, death and hell, and by his death won the victory and established his kingdom of grace so that he now rules our hearts with his word of forgiveness. But death could not keep its hold on him.

On Easter morning Jesus became "the firstborn from the dead." In Jewish families the firstborn received the inheritance and the other sons and daughters were blessed in line with him. All who are God's children by faith will be blessed in line with the resurrection of "the firstborn from the dead." "The Lord Jesus Christ...by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." [Philippians 3:20,21]

What can we the members of his kingdom say in response to his saving deeds? Let our text help us out: “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Our great Prophet and great High Priest is also our great King. He is “the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Now, who are the “kings of the earth”? Surely Jesus is over and finally in control of all worldly rulers, no matter how much they might rebel against him. But in Christ’s kingdom even already now here on earth, we are the kings. The familiar “Hallelujah Chorus” echoes the glorious words from the book of Revelation: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” That’s speaking of us! Revelation points out numerous times we are the “kings” and “lords” who are privileged to reign with Christ. Jesus has all power in heaven and on earth. We call this his kingdom of power. Ephesians 1 tells us, “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” Philippians 2 says that finally, “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, to the glory of God the Father.”

Even in the deepest distress, we need not be afraid. We know who’s King. And we are privileged even now to reign with him. Even when his Church appears so threatened on every hand, need we be dismayed? Has he not said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”? [Luke 12:32]

Finally we will reign with him in his kingdom of glory for all eternity in heaven. “Look!” The greatest of anticipation for us—the greatest of excitement for us—the greatest of horrors for the unbelieving peoples of this world! “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

Look! You who rejected the word of the King, and in your futile attempt to escape his judgment exclaim to the mountains “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”

Look! At his hands and feet. In Psalm 22 the King foretold, “They have pierced my hands and my feet.” [16] In the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, the King foretold, “They will look on me, the one they have pierced.” [12:10] Look on him, you who pierced him! Let us not forget, “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.” [Isaiah 53:5a]

O disciples who lost sight of him behind a cloud and then heard the angels say, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Now “Look, he is coming with the clouds.”

O Job who of old declared, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” Now Job, “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.”

O many prophets and righteous men who longed to see what we see but did not see it, and to hear what we hear but did not hear it, [Matthew 13:17] now “Look,...every eye will see him.”

O dear friends, look now with the eyes of faith and know that on that day when the trumpet sounds and the Lord empties the graves of the dead your eyes will see him. Then his final promises will come true, “I will see you again and you will rejoice” [John 16:22] “He will wipe every tear from their eyes.” [Revelation 21:4]

Christ the King Sunday. We might be a bit confused as to just what holiday we’re celebrating today. Today marks the end of the church year, so is it New Year’s Eve, or New Year’s Day? Every holiday celebrates Christ the King—Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ascension. This is the eternal holiday the Lord has wrought for you!

Amen.

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” [Rev. 11:15] Amen.