

Christ the King Sunday
November 20, 2016

Text: Jeremiah 23:2-6

Theme: The LORD our Righteousness

1. Gathers the Remnant
2. Reigns Wisely

The election is over. Hillary has conceded. Donald Trump has won. What are your hopes and expectations for his term? Are you a never Trumper who is now hoping that he just doesn't burn the country down? Are you an ardent supporter who believes that everything he touches will be to the benefit of the country and by extension then you? Are you somewhere in between, filled with hope and yet a bit of trepidation because of how bitter the campaign was and the nasty comments he made. At this point, 2 months before his inauguration any of those are reasonable positions. There's much uncertainty. But this much is certain, however Donald Trump leads and whatever policy decisions he makes and whatever new laws he and the Republicans in the House and Senate write, Jesus still reigns. That reminder comes streaming through us on this Christ the King Sunday as Jeremiah prophesies the coming of **The LORD our Righteousness.**

To grasp the significance of his reign, we must step back a bit. Remember how the people of Israel in the days after their deliverance from Egypt were governed under a theocracy directly ruled and governed by God. But after about 400 years of vacillating back and forth between following God and turning from him only to be delivered again and again by the judges God sent, the people asked for a king so that they could be like all the other nations around them. After warning them, God granted the request telling Samuel, **Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.** (*1 Samuel 8:7*) From that point on Israel's history with few exceptions, one king after another did evil in the eyes of the LORD. It's of those kings that God through Jeremiah says, **Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done.**

Spiritually, many of these kings set aside the Word of God, the commands he had given them. They set up idol worship and adopted the pagan rituals of the countries around them. And so many of the people followed. Very few remained faithful to God following his commands and trusting his promises. The flock was truly scattered and uncared for. But God through the prophet says, that's changing. **I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number.** In spite of the lack of care they have received, God has not forsaken nor forgotten them. He will continue to gather them. No longer will they be terrified. Never again will they be scattered or left behind.

And that remnant includes you today. In spite of how much our country drifts more and more toward secular humanism. In spite of how much the world is enamored with the religions of man. God continues to call and claim for himself a remnant who do not turn away. He continues to call those who are lost and haggard and connect them to the King of kings. And he has chosen and called you to bring you to the pastures of his life giving water in his Word. You have nothing to fear. No reason to be terrified. Because of this King there is no punishment for sins.

Now it is true that in this world, reasonable people may disagree and we may not always like the policies of our elected leaders or the overall direction of our country. We may even disagree vociferously sometimes. Since we're dealing with sinful people and we ourselves are sinful, that's perhaps likely. But not so in this new kingdom because Jesus, the King of kings **reigns wisely.** Isaiah says, **The days are coming declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.** Where the kings of Israel and Judah failed to bring about peace and calm and to rule wisely, Jesus himself will bring stability and safety. Where the kings' wayward ways brought chaos and war, Jesus comes to bring peace and justice.

You have nothing to fear because he gathers us not for a life of chaos and lawlessness. Rather this King reigns wisely. But his wisdom goes beyond the ruling class today. His wisdom surpasses that of the smartest economists, sociologists and statesmen. His wisdom is perfect and his rule is perfectly just. Imagine that. It seems no matter what a politician does today, one side or another is going to claim that he favors the other side. And depending on the data that is cherry-picked, the argument is perceived as valid. But not so with this King. There is no favoritism. One side can't say he favors the other. He is constant and consistent. The work he does, he did for all.

If you wonder how that can be, then look at who Jesus is and what he did. He came to this world and lived a perfect life, not on behalf of some, but for all. And he died an innocent death not for the wealthy and elites alone or for the poor and needy alone. Not for this race or that. He died for all, the Bible says. He suffered the punishment that all had rightly deserved on account of their sins. Those who reject that receive the just punishment for their own sins, not because Jesus' death was ineffective or insufficient for them, but because in God's kingdom, God says, the wages of sin is death. (*Romans 3:23*). Those wicked kings of Israel got what they deserved.

But Jesus' kingdom is also one of grace. So that even though we deserve that same punishment, **The LORD our Righteousness** who calls us to faith, gives us his righteousness. Not having a shred of righteousness of our own to point to, we point to our King and Savior and the righteous garments he clothes us with through faith. And in that garment of his holiness, God finds us fit to be subjects in his kingdom enjoying the peace, safety and eternal blessings that come only by the King who has conquered all our enemies.

You have this dual citizenship. One here in the United States of America, under the governing earthly authorities where sometimes chaos reigns, mistakes are made and disagreements shape our political discourse. But you also are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, a gathered remnant under the perfectly just and righteous rule of Jesus the King. In his kingdom we willingly submit to his authority and enjoy the blessings of peace and safety today and always. As we await the last day when he will take us to be with him forever, we celebrate and rejoice in Christ the King, **The LORD our Righteousness**.