

## The Last Sunday of End Times – Christ the King

November 25, 2018

Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church

Farmington, NM

**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, **5** 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, **6** 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.

**7** “Look, he is coming with the clouds,”

and “every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him”;

and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”

So shall it be! Amen.

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

### “Your King Returns”

Among the time-honored traditions of gorging ourselves on a Thanksgiving feast and then spending on Black Friday deals, come the need to relax after all this consumption. Nap on the couch while football games provide some white noise. Finish cleaning up dishes and storing leftovers so you can enjoy a family favorite movie to cap off your holiday.

And depending on your perspective, there is a movie which some people call one of the funniest or dumbest movies ever. In Monty Python’s Holy Grail, King Arthur is on a quest. He and his knights pursue their goal to the sound of coconuts clapping together instead of actual horses. The mythical, fanciful elements clash with characters that bring them back to reality. For example, King Arthur introduces himself to a peasant subject as her king. She replies: “Well, I didn’t vote for you.” He sets the record straight: “You don’t vote for kings.” She’s not convince: “Well how’d you become king then?” Music swells and the legend of King Arthur claiming the sword Excalibur and the right to rule is narrated with otherworldly grandeur. The peasant woman just shrugs it off. Whatever kind of king comes from such nonsense is no real use to someone like her in her daily life.<sup>1</sup>

And it’s not just for movies. The very idea of a ruling monarch in our world today sounds like either ancient history or some fanciful fairy tale. And we wonder how much good a sovereign ruler could really do for us anyway.

In the opening chapter to the Book of Revelation we learn about the coming of Jesus Christ. The opening verses describe Jesus as **“the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead,**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071853/quotes>

**and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”** (Revelation 1:5) But unless we understand what Jesus is promising us in these verses, this concept can easily turn into something confusing. We can have lives filled with false expectations and unrealistic hopes. We can be consumed by uncertainty and doubts. Instead, because we have the promise of the return of Jesus as our King, we can be filled with confidence. We can live inspired by the certain hope of his return and motivated to faithful service because of the kind of rule he brings.

Talk of kings and rulers feels very easy to dismiss in our day. None of us has voted for a king. Even in places where there are kings and queens, princes and princesses in our world today, they are essential just figure heads without any real power. So a king would be someone for us to avoid, not even bother thinking about. We are too busy thinking about trying to find enough hours to pay for our bills or schedule enough free time so we can figure out our finances, trying to support our loved ones without letting them drag us down with their poor life choices. We don't want royalty. We don't need them.

On the other hand there is still something appealing about a conquering hero. When things seem too much for us to take care of and find solutions for, we want a ruler who will set things right. We look for any authority who will punish evildoers. That's why it is interesting that there is a resurgence of longing for royalty in our world today. So many places around the globe are plagued by lawlessness and disorder. Having someone with nearly limitless power step in to put things right sounds appealing. Even if citizens around the world have gained rights in the past few centuries since at the expense of ruling monarchs. For people who want government to just leave us alone and don't interfere in our lives, who joke about how badly elected officials will just mess things up once they get involved, it can be a bit ironic.

Living in Portugal for a year helped me understand the appeal of royal families. The modern era has been a tumultuous one since the collapse of the monarchy. They first switched to a republic, but that soon brought on all kinds of chaos. A strong man stepped in to provide order, but ended up becoming a dictator for 40 years. When the dictatorship fell, the country was once again in chaos, on the verge of communism. Now with a democratic form of government, many average citizens still look to the leaders to provide solutions to the daily problems they face. While politicians bicker and fight, while the democratic process slows solutions to glacial pace, the people start to long for the good old days when a ruler could come and make things right without any hassle or opposition.

God's people have such a longing for an easier, better life. We have such a strong desire to be spared of inconvenience or hardship or suffering that we substitute our own dreams for the promises of our returning King. My heart's own misunderstanding fuels confusion about my king. False expectations fuel our understanding of the kind of king we look for. It turns into a sort of unfaithfulness as I wait for him to come back. My life becomes all about me instead of all about preparations to welcome back the ruler of the kings of the earth. It's a different variety of insubordination, but still false hopes to greet Jesus. It's a different brand of rebellion that waits for the return of Christ the King.

The book of Revelation shows us a ruler who identifies himself as **“who is, and who was, and who is to come.”** (Revelation 1:4,8) There is an obvious connection between the one who is speaking to God’s people undergoing trials now and the God who revealed himself as “I Am” as he was about to deliver them from slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 3:14) This name God gives himself emphasizes he is eternal, without beginning or end. He is infinite, not limited in power. He is the God who reveals himself as the rescuer and deliverer of his people. He is not the kind of ruler who will be mocked or taunted.

And Jesus displayed the power of the great I Am throughout his earthly ministry. He healed the sick. He cast out demons. He confronted the self-righteous and the self-important. Not everyone loved Jesus or appreciated what kind of kingdom he was building. But it was obvious he was unleashing the sort of power that would make average people want to be part of his kingdom and those who oppose him shudder in fear.

And then something remarkable happened. Jesus was captured. He was put on trial and subjected to every injustice ever seen in the courts. He looked weak as he stood silent before his accusers. He appeared vulnerable when fists and then whips rained down on him. His enemies thought they had finished him off when they put him on the cross. Yet his crucifixion caused all their plans to backfire. When it came time to ensure execution was progressing for Jesus as for the other criminals, the authorities found he was already dead. But there was something more at work. In John’s gospel we learn: **“These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”** (John 19:36,37) The death of Jesus was no accident or sign of weakness against his enemies. Jesus conquered greater than bad people or bad situations in our lives. Jesus defeated sin’s hold on your heart. And when he rose from the dead on Easter morning, Jesus put his foot on the neck of Satan.

His second coming will mean all things are completed: **“Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be!”** (Revelation 1:7) No more waiting. No more patience. Now more delay. Some will dwell in a sense of dread when they realize it is too late.

Yet for all those looking forward to his return, it will be reinvigorating. In the book and movie by J.R.R. Tolkien, the return of the king meant serious struggle. There was no guarantee the battle would be a success or the good guys would come out victorious. But it did mean that engaging in a mighty battle would allow the good guys to carry out their plans and finish their business to set things right for good in Middle Earth.

The Book of Revelation was written so God’s people would know how it ends. God wants us to be realistic about the dangers and troubles we face. But he wants us to know that in the end Jesus wins. Jesus wins, so your struggle is not in vain. Jesus wins, so your battle is not wasted. Jesus wins, you can engage each day in faithful service to you king. Jesus wins, all the effort is completely worth it.

So Jesus wants us to understand how he sees us as we await his return. Even praise for our conquering King helps us see this: **“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!”** (Revelation 1:5,6) You are loved by your King. He has freed you from your sins in his blood. You are a kingdom. You have a position right now. You currently rule with him. Even though things don’t always look rosy, even though sometimes things look rather bleak, Jesus has conquered your soul’s greatest enemies.

You aren’t required to offer any more sacrifices. You don’t have to pay for your acts of insubordination, big or small. You don’t have to suffer for your attitude stuck in rebellion. But neither will you have to worry about mourning or weeping when Jesus returns.

You don’t have to live defeated as you wait for him to come back. The people around you who don’t share your faith aren’t enemies. We don’t look at them with glee in expectation of the vengeance that will rain down on them. They are fellow rebels freed from their sins by a benevolent Lord just like you and me. You know how it will all end. We want the welcome parade to include as many as possible.

You may not have voted for Christ as your King. But Jesus elected you to be his own and live in his kingdom. You have his grace right now from all the gifts of God’s love through Jesus Christ. You have his peace as you enjoy the blessings that overflow out of God’s grace. You are at peace with God. You have peace for your troubled conscience. You have peace for your heart and soul.

+ *“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 him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”* +