

Title: Who is this King of glory?

Text: Revelation 1.12-20

Theme: What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?

Series/Event: Easter 2006

Prop Stmt. If you are going to be a follower of Christ, you have to know Who He is.

Read Text: Revelation 1.12-20

This morning, I am beginning a three-part series on what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Part one is – Who is He? Part two – What did He do? And Part three – What must I do? Though you may think that you have heard all of this before, I beg you to not be cavalier about this and take it lightly. This issue is intense because there is so much at stake.

Have you ever noticed that the more that something matters, the greater, the level of risk; and the greater the consequence? For example, if later on today, you are asked if you would like a ham and cheese sandwich or peanut butter and jelly, it really won't matter which one you choose. You can be rather ambivalent about the whole thing and say, "I don't really care."

But, if you are the keeper (goalie) in a league championship soccer game, that is being decided by a shoot-out, and it has come down to this – meaning that if you stop the last kick, your team wins, but if you don't, it is over, you had better not say, "I don't really care." What's the difference? The difference is there is a whole lot more at stake in what you as a keeper decide to do, or how you react, than what kind of a sandwich you eat. No one is standing to their feet, or holding their breath, or squeezing someone's hand to see what kind of a sandwich you will choose. But, if you are in goal, you and your parents and your team are in a white-knuckle situation! The thrill and drama of an air-punching victory, rests on a razor's edge to a head-in-the-hands defeat. If you win, you can't wait to see everyone and anyone, but if you lose, you want to crawl under the grassy turf and disappear. What would you think if your dad chose a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch, and then thrust his hands in the air, yelling, "Oh that was awesome – baby!" While it might be funny or embarrassing depending on who was around, the truth is, it would be pathetic, if he really meant it. Why? Because a child does not understand the difference between something that does not matter and something that does. We expect adults to figure out what is something that is worth our passion and praise, and what is something that is a "I really don't care." We don't expect little kids to respond at funerals like adults. We laugh when children ignore the toys and play in the boxes the toys came in at Christmas. But when an adult lives for childish things, it is sad because the adult is trading what really matters for what doesn't.

The greatest tragedy in all of life would be for you to live all of your days and then die without knowing and experiencing what your life is about. The Easter story is more than a story of a person who was able to bounce back after a defeat. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is colossal! And it remains colossal not only because of what happened, but because of Who was involved. Jesus Christ is the hero of the Easter story. He is the hero

of the Bible, the star of the universe, the Creator of everything outside of God Himself and therefore He is the very reason for your life. You were created to love Him, worship Him, obey Him, follow Him, relate to Him and live in His kingdom. If you live for anyone else or anything else above Him, you will never be satisfied and never at peace. Your Creator made you for the ultimate purpose of honoring Him by perfectly relating to Him and living with Him. Some of you may simply want a safe Jesus. Someone, whom you can put in a bottle like a genie and take out when you want him or need Him. But this Jesus, is not a safe Jesus, He is God, He is ruler, He is king and He made this earth as the territory for His kingdom. He made us to be the people who live in that kingdom and under His authority as king.

That theme goes back to the garden of Eden where God planted a garden and put in that garden, two caretakers, Adam and Eve who's responsibility was to live in submission to the king by extending the borders of that garden. They failed by rebelling against the kingship of God and attempted to usurp that place of authority! The consequences of their sin were immediate, personal and cataclysmic. God responded by providing a sacrifice for their sin, that was a preview of the ultimate, infinite payment to be made on a cross. The descendants of Adam and Eve were now born with a sin nature and expressed that in their actions. There were a few who understood God's rightful position as king and submitted to him, but the vast majority of them rebelled and decided to create their own rules. Their rebellion was so intense, that God judged the earth with a flood. God is jealous of His kingdom and yet, God rescued one family from which He would eventually call a nation of people for Himself. From the descendants of Noah was a man named Abraham, through whom God established the nation of Israel. He gave that nation a land. He gave them a constitution. He gave them a system of government, a system of worship, a system of sacrifice, a way to eat, to marry, to relate, to farm, to wear clothes, in fact, he gave them an entire way to live. After all, they were to be His people, showing the rest of the world what life could be like to live with and under the king. God gave them temporary kings who were to function as caretakers of His people and His land until as Jacob promised Judah back in Deut. 49.10, "until he comes to whom it (the scepter) belongs." There has always been a promise to the people of Israel that one day, the real king, the Christ, the Messiah would come and take that which is rightfully his.

"A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel." Numbers 24.17 promised. Even though the nations conspire together and the people plot against him, Psalm 2 says that "the One enthroned in heaven laughs; he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath saying, I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: he said to me, "You are my Son, today I have become your Father."

Moses understood this clear back in Exodus when the nation of Israel stood on the banks of the Red Sea watching the enemies of God floating away and sang about God saying, "You will bring them (your people) in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance – the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, your hands established. The LORD will reign for ever and ever." (Exodus 15.17-18)

In preparation for arriving in that land, Moses was given explicit instructions on the construction of God's throne room on earth. It was called, a tabernacle. What was in the tabernacle? The ark of the covenant. What was the ark? It was the place where God sat. It was His throne. What was in the ark? There was a copy of the law because God rules on the basis of His promises. What did the priest do once a year, he brought in the blood of sacrifice because God could only dwell with people if something was done about their sin. The tabernacle gave way to the temple. The temple was established in Jerusalem as the place, the holy hill, the mountain where God lived. God will live here. God will reign here, but God will not live with a rebellious people. God will have a people who follow Him in spirit and in truth.

In Psalm 2, He is the Anointed One, the King of Zion, the Son. In Psalm 3 he is the shield who protects his people and answers prayer from his holy hill. In Psalm 16 he is the God who provides refuge and good things for the saints in the land and the God who will not let his Holy One see decay. In Psalm 23, He is the shepherd who provides everything that his sheep need. In Psalm 24 he is the King of Glory, the LORD Almighty who lives in his holy hill. In Psalm 47 he is the great King over all the earth, who reigns over the nations who is seated on his holy throne. Psalm 48 tells us that our Lord is great and most worthy of praise in the city of our God, in his holy mountain, Mount Zion. Psalm 50 says the Mighty One, God the LORD speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth. Do you see it? God is the king who has established the world as his kingdom, and Jerusalem as His capital city. But you cannot live with all of the benefits of His kingdom if you rebel against the king. If you reject the king, you do not get the kingdom. That is true for the Jews, that is true for us.

There were some in the OT era who understood this. In Psalm 79 we read, "Help us O God our Savior for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake. Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" In Psalm 80 (3 times) we read, "Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." God loves to restore His people. God said in Psalm 82 that if my people would just listen to me and follow me, then I would feed them with the finest wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you." But they wouldn't! Over and over, the ways of the King were rejected, but God kept sending his prophets who kept telling them of the time when the king would come and would establish his kingdom. Isaiah calls it, "in that day." In Isaiah 32 we read that "Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field." In chapter 60, we read, "Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn." In the closing days of the monarchy in Judah, when the northern kingdom had been destroyed and the southern kingdom was about to be disbanded, Jeremiah said, (23.5-6) "The days are coming...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." During the days of Judah's destruction Ezekiel's prophecies promised that the house of Israel would be re-gathered from the nations and brought back into their own land. God said (37.22) "I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms."

Open up the pages to the NT and what do you read? Matthew's genealogy of Jesus says in essence—do you remember David the king? Do you remember the promise that from his line a king would come who would reign forever and forever? He's here! This king is here and this is no ordinary king. This is Immanuel – God with us. The one born in Bethlehem, the ruler from Judah, the one to whom the right belongs, who will shepherd my people Israel. No wonder Herod tried to kill him. Herod was an imposter, a human toad, squatting on the throne of Israel who was threatened by the real deal. What was John the Baptist preaching? Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near. (3.2) What did Jesus preach? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” Why did both John and Jesus preach that message? Because the king was here. The king had come! Luke records a fascinating event at the beginning of Christ's ministry. Christ went into a synagogue in his hometown, read from Isaiah 61 about the Messiah, and said, “This Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” He could not have made it more plain to them. The king is here! In Matthew 5 – 7 he explained what life is like in His kingdom. He began by saying that the people in his kingdom are humble, meek, merciful, and pure in heart. They are out of step with the current kingdom and will even be persecuted by those imposters who think they are in charge. He goes on to describe how we are supposed to live now, as we anticipate and long for the day when he sets up his kingdom. He told his disciples in Matthew 10 to preach that “the kingdom of heaven is near.” And to Peter he said, (chapter 16) “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” In chapter 18 he said that “whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Preach the kingdom, because the king is here to take His throne. Live the kingdom, because the King is here to take his throne. The prophecies were being fulfilled. So many of the pieces were coming together. The king was here, and on that Sunday before Passover, the king was riding into Jerusalem on an incredible wave of enthusiastic public support. Here is the king. He is coming to His Holy Hill, He is coming to his temple, He is coming to reign. And five days later he was dead!

There would be no kingdom! The king was betrayed before he even got to the throne. The king was rejected before he could even reign. His thousands of followers turned into a handful of people and even those disappeared into the shadows. It was over. There would be no kingdom, because there was no king! The prophecies that had come to life now lay dead in the tomb with his lifeless body. All those who wanted to reign over their own lives could breathe a little easier because this One whose eyes and looked past their fancy clothes and titles into the wickedness of their own hearts, was gone. They had killed the would be king. They were free. Free to sin. Free to connive. Free to stay in power. Free to be in control. Free to use people and love money. Free to elbow their way to the thrones.

If your team has just defeated your greatest rival for the last time, you are so relieved that you do not have to face them again. What would you do if your greatest enemy died? The relief is wonderful. But, what if your enemy came back to life? What if, your greatest threat, turned out to be the King of the Universe who could not be destroyed? You see, what happened on Resurrection Day is at once the most incredible and the most terrifying thing that has ever happened!

To those who believed Him and believe Him the Resurrection of Christ is incredible because it validated everything that He claimed. Christ claimed extraordinary things. There have certainly been delusional people who have claimed to be God, and there have been mystical people who have claimed to be religious, but no one has claimed to be God like Him and has followed it up with a rather public resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is incredible because it validated everything that He did. His life really was perfect. His death really was intended to be the full and final payment for our sin.

But, if you are part of the vast majority of those alive today who are living for their own gratification and living for yourself, you are living as an imposter king and the Resurrection of Christ is terrifying. It is terrifying because He is the true king and he cannot be destroyed. It is terrifying because He is the true king and you have to face Him. It is terrifying because the true King is returning to take back what rightfully belongs to him. Jesus Christ is more than a religious, historical figure who did nice things, died a painful death but was able to overcome all of that. He is the king to whom you will surrender. You will bow to Him either in love and joy because of his gospel, or you will be crushed by his wrath. Either you will be embraced by Him in love or you will be condemned by Him in anger. He made you with the need to worship Him and to live in His kingdom as One who follows Him with your entire heart. But if you do not, if you live as if you are king, then this gracious, loving king, will become your greatest nightmare.

When the jets were flown into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center on nine-eleven, there were many people who were trapped in the floors above the area of impact. Some of these people jumped out of the windows 90 floors up. It wasn't a few, it was many. Why? Why jump to a certain death? You only do that when you think that the terror of certain death is not as bad as another terror. Revelation 6.16 describes the day when people will scream to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and crush them so they can be hidden from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. These people would rather face the terror of certain death than the terror of facing the Lamb in his anger. Friends, that is intense! The wrath of God is intense, but so is His love. In fact, the wrath of God against sin and the love of God for sinners was put on display in an awesome show of His grace on the cross.

The only way that we could live with the King and be part of His kingdom would be if our sin was forgiven. The only payment that would satisfy the perfect and holy wrath of God was a perfectly righteous payment. So, instead of punishing us, God punished His Son in our place. Jesus experienced the wrath of God upon Himself, when He died for you on the cross. He paid your penalty so that you would not have to. But, if you do not completely trust in Him alone as your Savior and accept Him as King, then the payment that he made will never be credited to you, and God will treat you as your sins deserve. I will explain this in much more detail next week but do you see how Christ treated John in the passage I read at the beginning of the message? Christ said to John, "Do not be afraid." You do not have to run in fear away from Christ. The power and authority of

Christ is for your hope and joy. The first and the last, the living one, the one who was and is and is to come, the one who was dead and is alive for ever, the one who holds the keys to death and hades, is the one (1.5ff) 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 for ever and ever! Amen. Look, He is coming with the clouds! Just like he went up into the clouds he is coming back and will set up his kingdom because He is king!

I plead with you not to be cavalier about this, because it is so important and we are so easily deceived. If your life has no passion for the king, no longing for God, no thirst for holiness, no mourning over sin...if you are a stranger to holiness, uncomfortable with His Word, distant from His people, and really bothered by this sermon can you really claim to be a citizen of his kingdom? Who is this king of glory? Who is Christ? He is God. He is a Lion from the tribe a Judah and the lamb of God who died for you. He is King, and He is forever. That question is settled. He lived for you and died for you. The question is, do you really get it? Do you seek first His kingdom? He is not a safe lion, but He is good. Do not live for the peanut butter and jelly, or the ham and cheese. Eternal life is forever. His grace is amazing and His joy is infinite. Live for what matters. Live for the King. Seek the kingdom.