



THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF END TIME – CHRIST THE KING

The Lionheart Rescues Rebels for His Kingdom

Colossians 1:13-20 (NIV)

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

What do we want in a leader? We want someone who is strong and powerful – a warrior. But we also want someone who is selfless and compassionate, someone who knows how to show mercy. We want someone who is brave, not afraid of enemies, no matter how daunting they appear. But we also want someone who is wise, who will make balanced decisions that will benefit his people. We want a kind of balanced leader who has all these great traits, but if we only able to get one trait over another, we would rather have the strong and powerful warrior who fights for his people no matter the odds, who crushes his enemies, over someone who will let his enemies defeat him. In other words, at the end of the day, we want a lionheart kind of leader.

A lionheart leader is what God promised in our Old Testament Bible reading from Genesis, a powerful and courageous leader such as this guy Judah having his hand on the neck of his enemies, one who would be like a lion successfully returning from the hunt with the prey in its mouth, that because he is so powerful and courageous the scepter will never depart from him. Because of prophecies like these, the Jews expected a lionhearted ruler to be their chosen Savior, their God.

The Jews and all who hoped in the Messiah expected a powerful leader, and they got one! Listen to the description that Paul gives here in his letter to the Colossian Christians. “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” (verses 15-16) He is powerful enough to make all things and that’s exactly what he did. Everything we see, every aspect of nature that takes our breath away with its awesomeness and its beauty, this all came about by his doing. The fact that it all continues to turn, that the earth continues to rotate, the sun continues to rise and fall, that we still have breathable air and blue skies, that we have all four seasons, that this earth doesn’t just spontaneously combust, this is because this Jesus holds all things together. “And he is the head of the body, the church.” (verse 18a) He is the one in charge. He is the leader, the lionhearted ruler descended from Judah. “He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead.” (verse 18b) He rose from the dead like a victorious, conquering king, as a preview of what he will do for us making a complete restoration of our bodies on the Last Day. And what’s more is that “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.” (verse 19) This Jesus is entirely God; he is supreme!

This is the kind of leader, kind of king that we want. I mean, he’s all powerful. He holds all things together. He has conquered death. He is the one in charge of our church. He is fully God. He is awesome! He is the Lionheart that we want!

But do we really want this kind of leader, this kind of king? I ask because I know myself. God has revealed his will to us, what he wants us to do. He wants us to love him above anything and everything else in this world, but I know that I serve myself and put myself as priority over him. He wants me to love my neighbor as myself, better yet, to love as God has loved me, to look out for my neighbor, to protect and help him, to serve him, but I neglect my neighbor. I don’t always help him. I hurt him. I look down on him.

I think that I want Christ the Lionheart as my King, but my actions say the opposite. My actions say that I would rather serve myself and make myself king than follow Jesus and submit to him. I am a rebel as I reject the rule of king of all creation.

What should Christ do with a subject like me, a rebel? Well, what would you do to someone who is supposed to serve and obey you and yet refuses to do so, someone who actively goes against you and tries to usurp you? You’d put the rebel down, right? You’d squash their revolt for the sake of peace and order, expel them from your kingdom. And so should Jesus. When we rebel against

him, he should cast us out of his kingdom. He should throw us out into the dominion of darkness, away from his mercies, his kindness, his power, his wisdom, his compassion, and exile us to hell, that place of outer darkness.

Yet, what did Christ the Lionheart actually do with such rebellious subjects as you and me? Look back at our Gospel reading. Here is Jesus, nailed to the cross, blood pouring from his wounds, running down his back from where he was scourged, blood dripping down his face from where the crown of thorns pierced his brow. The written charge was posted above him: "This is the King of the Jews." (Luke 23:38) In this miserable state, his onlookers, his would be subjects, sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." (Luke 23:35b) The soldiers offered the same mocking challenge. Even the criminals getting crucified to his right and left called his power and royalty into question. You can imagine their thoughts as Jesus hung on the cross dying. "This is supposed to be the Son of God, the King of the Jews, who made everything in the world and holds it all together, who healed people of incurable conditions and diseases? If you really are the Lionheart, the king descended from Judah who reigns over all, the least you could do is save yourself and then us. C'mon, Son of God, Lionheart, do something! Be victorious! Crush your enemies! Show us your power!" And when Jesus remained on the cross dying, mostly silent, seemingly resigned to defeat without any resistance, some of them had their thoughts solidified: "Some kind of king you are."

Are we not tempted to think the same of our King? We confess that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the fullness of the deity, that he is the visible, perfect image of the perfect God. We confess that he made everything and holds everything together. We ask that he show us his power. We ask the Lionheart to defeat our enemies. We ask him to cure our diseases. We ask him to lift us up out of the much and pit of despair. But our enemies persist. Our diseases linger, remain, kill us. I see more and more enemies of the cross, of you, of me as Christ's followers. C'mon, Lionheart. Do something. What kind of a king are you, anyway?

We're told time and again that Christ is the all-powerful God, the one who created all things and holds all things together. We see him dying on the cross and think, "Do something! You don't have to take this abuse! Smite your enemies!" Except this King is unlike the kings we know. He doesn't operate in the way we think kings should. He certainly could save himself. He had the power at his disposal to come right down and obliterate his enemies. So, if he has this power but isn't using it, that means he is purposefully choosing to suffer and die. This King, this Christ, does what no other king or leader does. He actively goes to his preventable death so that he could win back into his kingdom the rebels. He sheds his blood to make peace for those who rebelled against him, those who left him for the dominion of darkness. He did this to bring these rebels back into his kingdom so that they could enjoy all the benefits he offers. He stayed on the cross as the King of all creation in order to "reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (verse 20) This is the true Lionheart King.

Christ the Lionheart stayed on the cross, took the beatings, took the insults, took the execution, and knowingly did not make use of his God power so that we, the rebels, would be rescued from the rightful punishment of our own actions. He stayed on the cross to grant us a full pardon after the just punishment meant for us was taken out on him. Because he suffered death in our place, we have been rescued from being cast away from his presence forever. "He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (verses 13-14) What kind of King punishes himself for what his subjects did wrong? This is not the King we always wanted, but he always was and is and forever will be the King we need. Christ the Lionheart is our King who stepped into our place and was punished for us so that we who rebelled against him could be brought into his kingdom forever and ever.

You and I, we have been rescued from the dominion of darkness by Christ the King and brought into his kingdom. How will you respond to the King who rescued you with his own life, his own blood? Will you live by his rule? Will you serve your neighbor as your Lionhearted King has served you? Will you love your God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength or will you continue to try to place yourself upon his throne, make yourself King instead of the one who rescued you from the dominion of darkness?

Christ the Lionheart has made us his subjects in his Kingdom. He did this by already having forgiven us for our rebellion against him, having made peace between us and himself. May Christ be our King forever. Long live Christ the Lionheart! Amen.