

Christ the King

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Date: 21 July 2024

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- [0 : 00] We're going to read now together in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15. We'll read from verse 12, page number 961. Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if it's true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.
- [1 : 10] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then it is coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when it says, all things are put in subjection, it's plain that He has accepted who put all things in subjection under Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all.
- [2 : 26] Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? Why are we in danger every hour? I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I die every day. What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Do not be deceived. Bad company ruins good morals. Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right. Do not go on sinning, for some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. Amen. Jesus Christ is King. He always has been. And He is today. And He always will be. He is sovereign over all things.
- [3 : 35] Jesus Christ reigns. He is enthroned in the glory of His Father, and the holy angels worship Him. Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the face of the Father and the majesty of all heaven and earth. His ears are filled with the sounds of the praises of heaven. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

There can be no greater sight than that of seeing the exalted Christ, dressed in glory, seated on His throne, crowned with the stars, and shining like the sun.

The hymn writer Thomas Kelly put it so well. The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now.

The Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, has conquered. Had we a million years and a million words, we could do no justice to the kingship of our Lord, because to see Him as He is today goes beyond anything any of us could ever imagine.

[4 : 53] And yet, He is King for us. Just as He is prophet for us, and priest for us. He is King for us.

All Christ has done, all Christ is doing, and all Christ yet will do, is for the sake of His church, His beloved. The King on the throne may be crowned with glory, but His heart is filled with love for us.

Our fathers gathered in the Westminster Assembly in the mid-17th century asked the question, How does Christ execute the office of a king?

How does Christ execute the office of a king? And they answered, Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

The king who sits on the throne, the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, reigns for us, His church. And He does so, according to that question and answer 26 in our catechism, in five ways.

[6 : 11] Subduing, ruling, defending, restraining, and conquering. Let this teaching from God's Word tonight fill us with confidence in Christ as our King.

Fill us with hope in His sovereignty. And fill us with worship for His majesty. First of all, subduing.

Subduing. The first way in which Christ executes the office of a king is that He subdues us to Himself. Now, to subdue someone, to subdue something means to overcome it or to bring it under your control.

Christ, in His royal power and love, overcame us and brought us under His control. By nature, we rejected Him and insisted upon what we thought was our right to make our own decisions and choose our own path in life.

In reality, of course, our choices and decisions weren't ours at all. They were dominated by the sinful desires of our minds and hearts. But in His power and in His love, Christ overcame the hardness of our hearts and brought us under His control.

[7 : 35] He made us citizens of His kingdom and children of God. By nature, we were unwilling to choose Christ or live under His lordship.

But as we read in Psalm 110, verse 3, we sung this together, Your people will offer themselves freely in the day of your power.

Christ opened our eyes to see the glory of His love and the power of His kingly rule. He opened our eyes. He overcame our blindness and brought us to see Him as He really is.

From that moment onwards, we willingly embraced Him and we willingly put our faith in Him. We willingly enthroned Him in our hearts and we lovingly submitted to His lordship.

Some years ago now, Walter and Anne Matheson and Catherine and myself went for a meal at a restaurant on Dumbarton Road. And when we left the restaurant, we were met with a pretty surreal scene.

[8 : 43] A young man had stopped the traffic at the junction of Barge Road and Dumbarton Road, a little bit along the road there, and he was jumping on the roof of a car, terrifying its female driver.

And from there, he went into a local takeaway and began to cause havoc. The young man was clearly very high on drugs. Well, when the police arrived, they wrestled him to the ground, they placed him in cuffs, and they drove him away in the back of a police van.

The police subdued him because he was a danger to everyone else and to himself. In our pre-Christian state, although we could not see it, we were the same.

We were in danger of divine condemnation on account of our sin, and we lived in paranoia and suspicion. The police did this young man a kindness by subduing him, and Christ did us a kindness by lovingly subduing us to himself.

Because the truth is that if Christ our King had not first made us willing to come to him in faith, none of us would ever have willingly chosen him.

[9 : 58] If he had not first chosen us, we would never have chosen him. If he had not first loved us, we would never have loved him.

Christ did this by his Spirit through a process we call the new birth or regeneration. He opened the blind eyes of our hearts to the glory of his salvation.

Now, let's apply this truth about Christ's subduing power in a couple of ways. First, this evening, if you are not unwilling to come to Christ, indeed, if you find in Jesus the beauty and love you've always been searching for but have not yet found, it's a sign that he has sent his Holy Spirit to change your heart.

It's a sign that he's opened the blind eyes of your mind. Now is the time for you to choose him once for all as your Savior and Lord and put your faith and trust in him.

Now, not later. It's time to become one of his people. The second application is this. Sometimes what I learned at the hardness of those we love to the gospel of Christ's grace.

[11 : 27] We've tried our hardest to persuade them. We pray for them every day but still they show nothing but disdain for the gospel. That was how we were before Christ subdued us to himself.

We would never have chosen him if he had not first chosen us. In an instant he broke down the barriers of our hearts. He can do the same for our loved ones.

So keep praying and keep speaking and most importantly keep hoping that our Lord and King Jesus Christ shall powerfully and lovingly subdue our loved ones to himself.

subduing. The second thing our King is doing today is ruling.

Ruling. 2024, of course, a year of monumental elections. President Putin re-elected in Russia. A new Prime Minister in Great Britain.

[12 : 35] France dominated by the far right according to the media. Iran has undergone massive changes and we await the outcome of the American elections.

None of these elections secured presidents or prime ministers with ultimate rule not even that of Russia. There are always limits to the power of leaders.

Likewise, no leader commands the support of 100% of his subjects. How different King Jesus. Having lovingly subjected us to himself, he has the 100% willing worship and glorious adoration of his people.

But what's important is that he rules us without any limit other than that he shall do so righteously, lovingly, compassionately, truthfully, tenderly, and powerfully.

King Jesus rules over us. On a macro level, he is building his church. He is ruling over all the movements and directions and growths of the church.

[13 : 55] He rules over our mission. He opens hearts before us so that when the gospel is proclaimed, his kingdom grows. who is responsible for the remarkable movements of the Holy Spirit in China and in Iran if it's not King Jesus?

Jesus is king of his church. A pessimistic Christian sees only decline, but a Christian who recognizes Christ's sovereignty over all things doesn't see decline.

He sees development. If Jesus rules over his church, there is no need for the despair with which we so often view the church. By venting our despair, we are in danger of sinning against the church's king because ultimately it's not our church, but his, and he's promised to build it and rule over us.

But at a micro level, the rule of Jesus means that he is ruling over each one of us as individual Christians. He's our king, each one of us as individuals.

He's directing my steps. He is ruling over me with wisdom and love and righteousness, tenderness and compassion. The scepter of his reign over you is righteousness, and the banner he has over you is love.

[15 : 22] There may be things that we wish he would do different in our lives, things we wish were better. We might wish this difficult situation we're dealing with was other than it is, but all the time we must recognize the sovereign hand of our loving and powerful king.

All the times of our lives come from the nail pierced hands of our loving Lord. We often playfully think to ourselves, what would I do if I became prime minister?

I said to Catharmore last night, personally, I would outlaw quiche, and I would make Sesame Street prime time viewing on BBC One.

Seriously, though, with Christ as our king, he promises not just to direct our steps, but to give us the strength we need to take those steps in faith.

He promises to always be with us. He promises to love us even when we don't love him. How gracious and compassionate, how powerful and righteous is our king Jesus.

[16 : 35] In the Old Testament, kingship was often described in terms of being a shepherd. David was the shepherd of Israel, but David himself knew that the ultimate shepherd of God's people wasn't him, but God.

And in Psalm 23, he wrote all about it. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

If you want to know the contours of Christ's kingly rule over you, read Psalm 23 and seed it into your heart.

This is our shepherd king, the good shepherd, the one who walks beside us in the valley of the shadow of death, his rod and staff protecting us all the way through.

Even in heaven, King Jesus, our shepherd will continue to lead us to springs of living water, and his father will wipe every tear from our eyes.

[17 : 37] Is there anyone here this evening tired and disillusioned with the rulers of this age? Yep, me. There is ultimately only one king, the king of kings and the lord of lords, of whom you will never tire and who will never disillusion you, because in him is purity and love, power and wisdom.

If at all you find his rule attractive, now is the time to transfer your loyalty from this world to him. And by faith and trust in what he's done, commit your life to Jesus.

third, defending, the third way in which Christ executes his office as king.

By using this illustration, he said, in Islam, people die for their God. In Christianity, God dies for his people.

In Islam, people die for their God. In Christianity, God dies for his people. Adherents of foreign religions are often found rioting when they feel that their religious figures have been insulted.

[18 : 50] They want to defend their God. But in Christianity, because Jesus Christ is the king, we don't need to defend him. He defends us.

He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. There is no need to defend a lion. He defends his people. We don't give our lives for him as much as he has given his life for us.

And now he defends and protects us. In Matthew 22 verse 37, Jesus talks of himself like as if he is a hen, gathering his chicks under its wings.

Those who trust in him are hidden by his feathers from predators. They are kept well safe from all who would harm them. All these chicks, they may hear the dog's barking, but they will not feel its bite because they are hidden under the wings of their mother.

And the Psalms speak of this kind of defense. In Psalm 91 verse 4 we read, He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge.

[20 : 01] His faithfulness is a protective shield. In Psalm 18 verse 2 we read, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

The psalmist, he piles up defensive image after defensive image to give us the strongest message, the Christian is defended by his king. This truth has been of immeasurable comfort to the church and to individual Christians over the centuries.

For the early church exposed as it was to the merciless persecution of its enemies, it allowed the early Christians to be bold in their proclamation of the gospel. Our own fathers, the covenanters, were pursued and persecuted, yet they knew that though they may die, Christ would defend his church.

Today in those parts of the world where the church is under great pressure, it gives Christians such confidence to know Christ is king. All the time while the hatred of our enemies is raging around us, our king invites his church to hide itself in him.

We look to him, not to the storm of persecution, but to the strength of our king as he stands ready and able to defend us. As individuals, we're all under our own pressures today.

[21 : 36] Yours are not mine. Mine aren't yours. It may not even be an enemy outside. It may be the distorted thought processes of your own mind, which is your worst enemy.

Surely at times like this we need to direct our mind upward toward the sovereign throne of the heavenly Christ and through praying the promises of his defense.

Hide ourselves in him until the storm has passed. Let's pray the promises of his defense, that he would cover us with his feathers and that under his wings we would find refuge, that his faithfulness would be our protective shield, that we be safe in him as our fortress.

we must remember that our king will and must protect and defend us because he rules for us.

The fourth way in which Christ executes the office of a king is in restraining, in restraining, in restraining. early on in talking about how King Jesus subdues us to himself, I used the illustration of a man high on drugs being restrained by police officers.

[22 : 59] Prior to their arrival, that man had been jumping on cars and terrifying members of the public. Unrestrained, he was a danger to himself and to others.

But when the police came, they quickly subdued him and placed him in handcuffs before driving him away. they restrained him. They set a limit on the damage he could do by cuffing his hands behind his back.

And in the same way, Christ, our king, restrains all his and our enemies. He sets limits on the evil they can do.

They do not have a free license to do whatever they want. They are bound by the chains of Christ and the limits he set upon them. In the Old Testament, Job was attacked by Satan.

And many horrible things were done to him. But even there, God had set limits on the evil Satan could do. Christ's restraining grace at work in our world is at work in our world today, even if we don't recognize it.

[24 : 10] This world contains many evil things, but it's not as evil as it could be. There are still incredibly good things in our world which we admire and to which we aspire.

This world is not as evil as it could be because of the restraining grace of Christ the king. civil governments, when working correctly, are Christ's agents to restrain evil.

They wield the sword, Romans 12, to punish evildoers. That's why we are to pray for our governments and willingly submit to them. For as much as there are many aspects of our governments which we wish were otherwise, our society is not chaotic.

it's not as bad as it could be. The Purge is a film series where for 12 hours every year, citizens in America are permitted to carry out any crime imaginable.

Now, I've never seen any of the Purge franchise, not so much for Feat of the Violence, but of the idea behind it all. Because the world is not as bad as it could be because the heavenly Christ restrains its evil.

[25 : 33] Just as Christ restrains its evil through civil government, he also uses the church. In times of Christian revival in our nation, historically, the police and judicial system have had far less to do than normal.

Now, one way in which we can apply this aspect of Christ's heavenly kingship in restraining evil is to support Christian organizations involved in restraining the influence of evil in our society.

The Christian Institute is one such organization. In our church, we've chosen to support the Christian Institute prayerfully and financially. They're involved in legal cases, protecting the rights of citizens and families, Christian or otherwise, from moral or ethical persecution.

supporting and praying for the Christian Institute isn't about condemning society, not at all. It's about the good of our society.

It's about being agents of our heavenly king in restraining evil. Well, lastly, the last aspect of Christ executing the office of king, conquering, conquering.

[26 : 52] Now, these Westminster fathers lived in the mid-17th century, lived in very uncertain days for the church. The Scottish delegates, including Simon Rutherford and so on, were soon to endure the horrific covenanting times.

The English delegates were fighting a civil war against royal absolutism and its control of the church. Many English delegates lived through what would later be called the Great Ejection, where faithful ministers were outlawed from preaching the gospel in their own churches.

So they're not framing this shorter catechism from a position of optimistic strength. They're framing it from the clear teaching of Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15-25, we read these words together, repeating the promise of Psalm 110, verse 1, Paul says of Christ, he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

He must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet. In this context, the enemy Paul had in view was physical death. And he argues that through the resurrection of Christ, Jesus has conquered death, and that in him and through him our glorified bodies will bear testimony to the victory over death also.

Through his resurrection, Christ has destroyed our final enemy, death. Likewise, in Colossians 2, 13-15, Paul talks of how Christ has triumphed over all the spiritual enemies who would use our sins as a record against us by taking them himself upon the cross.

[28 : 45] Christ has destroyed the enemy of our sin. Again, in 1 John 3, verse 8, the apostle John tells us, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Christ has destroyed the power and works of the devil. He's conquered these three great enemies. Death, sin, the devil.

that's what the word of God tells us. But it doesn't feel that way, does it? We still fear death.

We still feel guilty over the sins that we've committed. And we're still liable to the temptations of the devil. It's quite natural as Christians for us to feel this way. The victory was won on the cross.

Satan has now been bound with a chain. but the heavenly Christ is still engaged in putting all his enemies under his feet. He's using his enemies to teach us lessons about relying upon his grace.

[29 : 54] For to whom else shall we turn when persecuted by the world or tormented by our fears and guilt? To whom else will we turn other than him?

And as his gospel is being proclaimed in more and more places, slowly but surely the heavenly Christ is subduing more and more people to himself. He is doing it in places we would never have expected him to work, giving us hope that in our own beloved nation the heavenly Christ can today work a great reversal as his powerful word continues to be proclaimed.

The sharp sword that comes from the mouth of the risen Christ is his word. sword by which he defeats his enemies. And this process of his conquering will continue until the day he comes again in his glory at the head of all the armies of heaven.

Every eye shall see him and every ear shall hear his voice and every knee shall bow before him and confess him to be Lord. on that great and fateful day the words Jesus is king shall no longer be the words proclaimed only by preachers like myself in half empty churches.

The whole world shall cry forth these words and everyone shall know it for themselves. How then shall we apply this last point of Christ as our conquering king?

[31 : 27] Simply this. let's stop being pessimistic. Let's stop being eeyores about the prospect of the church he loves and for which he's given his blood.

It betrays a heart which doubts Christ's absolute sovereignty. Rather, engaging with the teaching of scripture, the faith once delivered to the saints, and the example of those first early Christians, let's have confidence that Jesus Christ is not only our prophet and priest, but he is also our king, and the church, being the apple of his eye, is safe in his hands.

My dear brothers and sisters, we're on the winning side because Christ is the ultimate winner. We leave the last words to Psalm 97, verse 1.

The Lord reigns. Let the earth be glad. Let us pray. We thank you, Lord, for the kingship of Jesus.

Had we a million years and a million words, we couldn't do any justice to it at all. But we do long to see your Son, Jesus, face to face, to bow before him and call him our king.

[32 : 57] Even so, O Lord, may what one day we wish to be true, be true for us today, that every one of us here this evening would be bowing our knees and calling him our king.

In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.