

JESUS IS KING, JESUS IS LORD!

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[0 : 00] Father, as we look into your word this morning, we pray that you would speak to us and encourage us through it. We give you this time now through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Today is the Feast of Christ the King. Churches that follow the church year trace the story of Jesus starting New Year next week, starting with the Advent prophecies that point to his birth, the events of Jesus' birth, his ministry, his suffering and dying on the cross, his resurrection, and his sending the Holy Spirit.

And the year ends very fittingly by celebrating the simple truth that Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord.

And that also sets us up nicely to celebrate Advent all over again, because it reminds us whose birth it is that we're looking forward to as we prepare to celebrate Christmas.

And making the point and acknowledging that Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord, is a way of saying that to say that Jesus was a good teacher, he was a prophet, he was a healer, and nothing more, just doesn't go far enough.

[1 : 31] Jesus was all those things. But because of who he really is, he is so much more.

And John likewise begins his gospel by reminding us who Jesus is. And in the Colossians passage, Paul makes a similar point about the supremacy of Christ.

One of the main Christmas readings, John 1, and it goes back to, all the way back to, in the beginning, to make that point.

Paul says the same. It's not just John saying this, it's John and Paul saying the same sort of thing. But before we look at Colossians 1, which I want to spend most time in today, a wee bit of, sorry about this, English history.

I'm going to read an account about the Black Prince at the Battle of Tressy. And I have a soft spot for the Black Prince because I grew up in Canterbury, and that's where he's ended up, buried.

[2 : 37] If you want to see the tomb of the Black Prince, it's very impressive, and it's in Canterbury Cathedral. He was actually quite an unpleasant character, but that's another story. In 1346, and this was written by somebody who was around more or less at the time.

In 1346, King Edward III and his 16-year-old son Edward the Black Prince, imagine it's only 16, fought the French at the Battle of Tressy.

During the battle, the prince's attendants sent a knight to the king to warn him that they were struggling. We know they won the battle, they weren't so sure at the time.

They were struggling, and the prince was in danger. And would the king please send help? The king made a rather strange reply.

He asked, Is my son dead? Is he wounded? Has he fallen to the ground? No, sir, replied the knight. But he is very hard pressed, and that's why we're asking you for help.

[3 : 42] Well, said the king, go back and tell them not to ask me again. Whatever happens, as long as my son is alive, tell them to let him win his spurs today.

For if it pleases God, I want this day's victory, and the honour of it to be his. I want this day's victory, and the honour of it to be his.

That is what the prince's father wanted for his son. And so any attempt to help out, however well-meaning it was, however uncertain it appeared, wouldn't go down so well.

And, in history, that's exactly what happened. The prince, the black prince, won his spurs, and ever since he's been associated as the one who won the Battle of Cresce.

I want this day's victory, and the honour of it, to be his. A canny king, Edward III, and he saw how the battle was going, and he knew his son was capable of winning it, and he didn't want anyone else to take the credit for it.

[4 : 58] As I say, the black prince was a rather questionable character in other ways. But that sentiment and that principle leads us nicely into what we read in Colossians chapter 1, where God the Father wants the victory and the honour of it to go to his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus.

And we see in Colossians 1, 15-20, four statements about Jesus. All things were created by him, all things are held together in him, all things were created for him, and all things were reconciled through him.

This is such a wonderfully Christ-centered passage, and it brings all the honour to Jesus. John calls Jesus the Word, the expression of God's creative will, the Word who became flesh.

He was there in the beginning, and he was the means by which everything was created. God spoke things into being. And in some wonderful way, this expression of God's will takes on a character of his own, takes human form, and becomes for us, Jesus.

Paul makes a very similar point in verse 15. He calls Jesus the image, the expression of God's invisible nature. We can't see God, we can't fully understand what God is like.

[6 : 38] He's so far beyond us. But, in a wonderful way, we can understand what God is like when we see Jesus.

He is the expression of God's invisible nature. What's God like? Look at Jesus. That will give us, in human terms, a way of understanding what God is like.

Both John and Paul are saying exactly the same thing here. That when and how God the Father created everything there is, it was through the Son, through Jesus.

We can spend years pulling that over. We're not given any more explanation than that, other than this is the way that it was.

But it takes us way, way beyond thinking of Jesus as just this great man, this great moral teacher. To actually say, no, Jesus is a lot more than that.

[7 : 41] He's not just a very good man. He is one through whom the whole universe was created. And that is just such an overwhelming thought.

We, year by year, learn more and more how vast and intricate and incredible the universe is. And the thought that anyone can actually create that just doesn't tie in from looking at this man that was wandering around Israel 2,000 years ago.

That was a riddle and the question the disciples had to come to terms with as well. How could this Jesus, who we've been knocking around with, actually be the creator of the universe?

But, that was a lesson that we had to learn. And it's a lesson that John gladly shares with us and likewise called here. And, as this guy from Foissart, who wrote about the Black Prince 600 years ago, might have heard, this is exactly what the father wanted.

He wanted the victory and the honour to go to his son. And so John and Paul acknowledged the role of Jesus. All things were created by him and through him.

[9 : 03] We go on to verse 17. Paul outlines this by him all things were created. Spell it out, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. It's everything.

And in verse 17 it says, he is before all things and in him all things hold together. And again, dealing with everything that there is, everything that there ever has been, everything that there ever will be, are held together in him.

We tend, perhaps, to think of the creation as the in the beginning account. This is how things started. And that's it. We've now got everything there is set up and operating.

This is even more mind-boggling because it's saying that the Son, Jesus, the Word, is the one who keeps everything going. in a sense, it's like we have figments of God's imagination.

God has thought it into being, but with God, we're not just figments of imagination, we're given reality. That's the difference between our imaginations and God's.

[10 : 15] He can create in a way that we can't. We can think things up, God creates them. But that also means that we keep going, things continue to be, because God continues us to be.

That we exist therefore says that God constantly thinks about us. He sustains us, He keeps us in being.

We're never out of His mind. We're never out of His heart. He never forgets us. He never overlooks us. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said, look, you see the sparrows?

Well, a sparrow falls to the ground without God knowing it. The number of hairs in your head are numbered. God knows every single detail about you, right down to the smallest detail, how many hairs on your head.

None of us can count that, but God knows the answer. And not just for one of us, but all of us, and every creature, and everything. And we're always absolutely awestruck when we think about the enormous creation because of how vast it all is, but then when we look inward at how detailed, how incredibly detailed it all is.

[11 : 37] And not just what we look at through a microscope, but everything everywhere is created with that detail. And it isn't just set up and left to it. It is kept in existence through the Son, through Jesus.

He didn't just create it and leave everything to it. And again, we're reminded that this points us to Jesus. in him, all things hold together.

He is the one that keeps everything going as well. And again, in this passage, Paul is trying to stretch our minds, stretch our understanding, stretch our conception of how great and glorious and wonderful the Lord is.

and the more great, glorious and wonderful we see creation as being, the more that points us to the one who made it and keeps it going. It's fuel for worship, isn't it?

That when this sinks into our hearts and our minds, we are filled with awe and wonder at the greatness of our God. and the love of the Lord Jesus who does all this, not only with power but with love.

[13 : 01] But that's not all of it because Paul continues, all things were created by him and for him. The root of sin is pride, selfishness and basically to say, I belong to me.

I am my own person. Nobody tells me what to do, not even God. The root of sin is to declare independence of God.

It was there when Jesus was put on trial and the crowd turned against him. Something that Jesus anticipated in the parable where a clean sense is done to a people who objected and said, we will not have this man rule over us.

We don't want him. We don't want him in charge of us. We don't want him to be our king. And that's what happened when Jesus was taken and put on trial before Pilate and the crowd.

And Pilate said, shall I crucify your king? And the crowd said, yes, crucify him. We don't want him. We have no king but Caesar. There was that heartfelt rejection of Jesus.

[14 : 15] And behind that, there was that basic, sinful, heartfelt rejection. of God. We don't want God telling us what to do. We don't want religion. We don't want God.

We don't want anybody telling us what to do. And the claim here is, ah, everything was created for him. There's a complete clash of minds here.

John Milton wrote paradise lost about 400 years ago. The story of the devil and the fall to go on the need and Adam and Eve and how everything was lost.

Paradise lost. And there is a line very early in it where the devil says, better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. Satan's fall was because he didn't want to bow the knee to the Lord God.

He would prefer to be in hell and in charge than to be in heaven. It's of course an illusion anyway. Who really is the master of their own destiny?

[15 : 20] We sometimes like to think we are, well I can live my own life or do as I please. But actually there's an awful lot of influences and limitations on that. Who really is the master of their own destiny?

None of us. We all have to pay our taxes. We can't extend our lives any longer than we're going to get. It's just tempting to think we can. But it's an illusion.

And actually we're not in charge of our own lives whenever we think and whenever we try. But we do find fulfillment and love and purpose when we realize that we are part of God's creation made for him.

And this is what we find in John 1.11. It says he came to his own things, his possessions. He came to that which was his own but his own and in the Greek it's his own people did not receive him.

He came to what belonged to him but the people rejected him. And verse 16 says that in Colossians 1 that Jesus' claim wasn't unreasonable.

[16 : 31] He had every right to come to his own creation because he created it and he made it for himself. that was his purpose. That is the reason why we exist to bring glory to God.

We are made for the glory of God. And when we refuse to play ball with that we are lost. And so when Jesus came into the world through whom he was created there was this rejection of its own we don't want it.

But Paul reminds us here it was made for him. And to become a Christian apart from having our sins forgiven and being reconciled to God is coming back into that understanding that Jesus is Lord.

and to turn from I belong to me this is my life to do what I please with it to become a Christian is to say I belong to Jesus.

I want to give my life to Jesus because it is rightfully his and always has been. And I want to welcome that and embrace it. And as we read as we do that in John 1 verse 12 it says to all who did receive it to those who believed in his name he gave them right to become children of God.

[17 : 59] Children born not of natural descent or of human decision or a husband's will but born of God. When we accept that we are his that we were created by him through him and for him we enter into a relationship with God that gives us fulfillment joy and love and we discover who we were always created to be we truly become ourselves when we accept that we too were created for him as well as by him.

And the last thing all things were reconciled through him. Verse 18 He is the head of the body of the church He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy and through him to reconcile to himself all things.

In the light of what we've seen and how creation has rejected its creator we need reconciliation we need salvation as well as creation.

but this too is by the grace of God and we're back to Frassart and his account of the battle of Crescent and those words of King Edward III and we can transfer those words into the mouth of God himself I want this day's victory and the honour of it to be my sons to be his.

In other words just as those well-meaning knights wanted to give the black prince a wee bit extra help it wasn't welcome I want this victory and the honour of it to be his.

[19 : 49] So our attempts to justify ourselves before God aren't welcome either. They perpetuate our pride they don't bring us back to God and they don't bring glory and honour to Jesus because he is the one through whom God the Father chose to repatriate all the things to himself.

It's Jesus who went to the cross it's Jesus who took on death and overcame it not us and it's Jesus that ought to have the credit for it.

To become a Christian is to say thank you Jesus for what you have done for me because I couldn't do it for myself and I'm not even going to pretend that I have.

All the honour goes to you Lord. our attempts to justify ourselves just aren't welcome. And of course they won't work.

Redemption needs to be on the same sort of scale that as we have a fallen world we need a world saving saviour. It was something that only Jesus' dying and rising could achieve.

[20 : 59] It's for us to recognise it, welcome it and receive it and to acknowledge Jesus as saviour and as king. Just a few thoughts on the supremacy of Christ that Jesus is our king.

An invitation to turn to him and give him the due honour and glory for what he alone has done. And to take in a little bit more again, to think again just how great a king and how loving and noble he has.

To him be the glory. Amen.