

Daniel 7:13,14

November 26, 2006 – CHRIST THE KING

Worship Christ in His Royal Rule!

- ✦ **absolute power**
- ✦ **universal service**
- ✦ **everlasting dominion**

In the name of Jesus, the LORD's Christ, dear fellow subjects of the King:

Ever since the American colonists threw off the shackles of King George, monarchy in America has been little more than a curiosity about British Royals. That's why it was a surprise to discover a few years ago that almost a third of the colonists did not want American independence. Tories were willing subjects of the Crown. It might also come as a surprise to many Americans that not everyone today cherishes the idea of freedom the way we do. Walking with a Chinese religious leader down a bustling street one morning last November, I got a little lesson in perspective. She pointed out that only a few years ago the entire street had turned into Karaoke bars for drugs and prostitutes. "You couldn't do anything about it with your American freedom," she remarked. Our government said, 'That's not good for the people,' and put a stop to it. Now it's peaceful here again." For her that was worth the price.

Believe it or not, before Jesus was crowned "*King of kings and Lord of lords*" (Revelation 19:16), as He suffered through His service on earth, He actually told people to count the cost of following Him. This is not an arms-length relationship nor a call for armchair quarterbacks critiquing God. He demands our hearts and souls to **Worship Christ in His Royal Rule!** Are you willing to bow to His...?

✦ **absolute power**

"Checks and balances" in Washington are some of the most cherished features of our Republic. When one branch begins to get too much power, the other two are legally empowered to keep the third from enslaving the people. For instance, as activist judges have begun to sanction homosexual unions as if they were marriages, the current President and members of Congress have taken steps to prevent a few individuals from forcing their immorality on the majority. Even pagan societies have been built on marriage as the union between one man and one woman, not multiples of genders or animals – whatever individuals want. Our rulers really need our prayers as we **Worship Christ** the King.

Few of us have ever experienced someone or something holding **absolute power** over our lives. Hurricane Katrina was one of those rarities. So was that earthquake in California that collapsed the upper freeway deck onto the lower and trapped hundreds of people in their cars. Under tons of concrete and steel, there was absolutely nothing they could do but wait and hope and pray that rescue would come before the lower deck collapsed into a watery grave.

Daniel exiled in Babylon did experience the almost **absolute power** of a king named Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps unmatched by any other through the ages. If Nebuchadnezzar said your friends would die in a fiery furnace, his most powerful soldiers were obligated to give their lives to carry out his orders. But the proud King of Babylon had to learn the hard way that someone else had **absolute power** over him. It wasn't just that the Preincarnate Christ rescued Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, from the king's super hot furnace without a whiff of smoke. When the cruel king failed to heed Daniel's warning from God through a dream, Nebuchadnezzar suffered the loss of his sanity. He ate grass like an animal and grew long claws until he acknowledged the Most High over him: "*His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"*" (Daniel 4:34f NIV)

✦ universal service

But words alone are not enough to **Worship Christ in His Royal Rule!** The true test is whether we willingly render **universal service**. Nebuchadnezzar was not the only ruler to face Jesus Christ at life's end. Long before Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler met their Maker, the Empire of the Medes and Persians crashed and burned. Alexander's greatness blew off in four directions before his generals went to their graves. The fierce beast of a Roman Empire finally crumbled under its own depravity and the despised barbarian hordes up north. We've nearly reached the Day when the failure of human governments will be replaced by the unfailing **Royal Rule of the LORD's Christ**. Daniel saw Jesus in a night vision: *"There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."*

Come the Judgment Day, no one can opt out of **universal service**. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ: *"The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?'"* (Revelation 6:15-17 NIV)

The troubling question is now are you willing to **Worship Christ in His Royal Rule** by rendering **universal service**? Is your spirit willing but your flesh weak? After our 20th wedding anniversary in Sonoma, California, I flew to Synod Convention in Saginaw, Michigan. I thought I was willing until that first steamy night in the MLS dorm. After air conditioned motels with my bride, it burned me inside and out to sweat on the top bunk hoping for a breeze while a transformer screamed right outside the window. While praying I realized that if this was my worst suffering for the Gospel, my life had gone soft. If you agree, maybe you should ask yourself what you are willing to endure for the sake of spreading God's Word. Or is even one worship service a week too much to ask in the **universal service** of faith?

✦ everlasting dominion

Our gracious God has given us another day of grace to **Worship Christ in His Royal Rule!** Through Daniel and all the prophets, evangelists and apostles of old, the Lord still cries out: *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."* (Hebrews 3:15 NIV) Some may think that a God of love would not allow suffering to continue. But they miss the mercy of Christ the King in holding off the eternal torment of hell scheduled from Judgment Day throughout eternity for all who reject **His Royal Rule** in unbelief. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9 NIV) His **everlasting dominion** plans forever bliss and glory for faithful subjects.

Meanwhile, Christ rules in our hearts by His Word and invites us to rule with Him by our prayers. One recent example WELS Chaplain Phil Merten described as "Traveling Mercies." Inmates at Racine Correctional Institution always request at the end of Bible class, "traveling mercies for Brother Phil." One day he could no longer take those prayers for granted. As he mounted his motorcycle for home, the rain came down in blinding buckets that finally forced him off the freeway. Waiting at a gas station someone hollered, "Hey, are you heading for Milwaukee?" Phil turned to see an empty motorcycle trailer behind the caller's car. He took Phil and his bike to the front door of Phil's house. "That's the kind of thing that happens when you pray to a God who loves answering his people's prayers."¹ "Traveling Mercies" here plus blissful glory in heaven – who would want anything else? May our gracious God make our hearts sincere to **Worship Christ in His Royal Rule!** Amen.

¹ Chaplain Phil Merten. "The Prayers of God's People," *Compassion*, the newsletter of Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries, Fall 2006, p. 6. Subscribe at wlim@wlim.net or www.wlim.net. For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net. You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife.