

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12

November 25, 2007 – LAST SUNDAY OF END TIMES, CHRIST THE KING Pastor Mark A. Cordes

A Message from the King

‡ “I’m proud of you!” (vv.1-5)

‡ “I glorify Jesus in you!” (vv.11,12)

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and King, dearly redeemed subjects:

It warmed me like a candle. You know how someone says, “Tell them we send our love”? Image reading your Bible late when your heavy heart sees this: *“God sends his love and his faithfulness.”* (Psalm 57:3 NIV) I was born in 1957, child 3. And this is in my favorite book of Psalms, 57:3. All my life I’ve enjoyed special moments when God cut through my fretting to make His love especially clear. That night was one when He said, *“God sends his love and his faithfulness.”* This LAST SUNDAY OF END TIMES honors CHRIST THE KING. The eternal God of all creation sends **A Message from the King:**

‡ “I’m proud of you!” (vv.1-5)

Most parents look back and wish they had given their children more praise. But conscientious parents also know that our main job as God’s representatives in the home is not to be our children’s buddy, but to correct them. Fathers are specifically commanded by God to *“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”* (Ephesians 6:4 NIV) Today’s **Message from the King** tells us this properly includes praise. I can remember my Dad saying after some struggle of mine, “Now you’re cookin’!” But he also taught me to do things right the first time. Another father told his children, “If you don’t have time to do it right the first time, how will you have time to go back and fix it a second time?”

Wise sayings for earthly things, but none of us can praise or criticize our children into God’s kingdom. That’s what makes the greeting of our King’s messenger so priceless. *“Paul, Silas and Timothy,”* coworkers and servants of **the King**, *“To the church of the Thessalonians,”* where they had suffered persecution but were now comforted *“in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ....”* That’s enough to see why God is proud of us. The God of the Bible reveals Himself as our loving **Father** who created and cares for us each day. Not content to watch from a distance, He sent His one and only begotten Son to be our **Lord**, to watch over our life, to guide and protect us for good night and day. He is the Savior-God, whose name **Jesus** means “Savior,” and **Christ**, the One anointed as our Prophet, Priest and King. We rebellious and belligerent subjects argue with our spouse. We’re too self absorbed to care for our children and too disobedient to honor our parents. We love things more than people and ourselves more than God or our neighbor. Unworthy we are, yet we hear this **Message from the King:** *“Grace,”* that’s God’s undeserved favor, *“and peace,”* which is what His work produces in us, *“to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Yes, *“God sends his love and faithfulness.”* (Psalm 57:3 NIV)

Can you imagine how awesome our congregation would be if we honored our debt of love? We pay our electric bills. We owe for water and mortgage. But do we recognize the debt of love we owe to God? More literally the King’s men say, *“We always owe this debt to thank God for you, brothers.”* What is it that drags us down and makes us too tired to serve God and each other? What accounts for “burnout” in active Christians? Isn’t it because we forget we are not serving ourselves but **the King**? We are slaves bought and paid for with His most holy blood. The Christians in Thessalonica rejoiced to hear this **Message from the King:** *“I’m proud of you!”* You’re not throwing in the towel and quitting. You’re not saying someone else should do the work. *“Your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.”* Like Pastor Paul, I’m proud of what God keeps doing in our congregation. *“Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.”*

Are we in trouble as we face “*God’s judgment*”? A self-righteous Pharisee shows his ugly face and heart in every one of us from time to time. We deserve to be punished by **the King** for giving up too easily when people don’t seem to appreciate us, when our best efforts seem to go unnoticed by practically everybody. Sometimes we wake up and realize how little persecution we suffer since none of us have shed any blood for the cross of Christ. Yet we drag our feet instead of running to friends and neighbors to share this **Message from the King**. We find ourselves so unworthy when we look honestly at how sin turns us in on ourselves. Even when we care, it so often comes out in criticism, so that some members cannot remember when we ever said something good or encouraging. “*God’s judgment is right*,” but does that leave us out in the cold to face the wrath of God alone?

✠ **“I glorify Jesus in you!” (vv.11,12)**

Wrath, yes, but it won’t be cold. The LORD is the God of justice who punishes every sin. And “*The Lord Jesus [will be] revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*” (1:7 NIV) On that Day you and I will fully realize what Good News the Gospel really was. For in the Gospel God tells us how His mercy triumphs over His judgment, how He punished every sin on Himself in the Person of His one and only begotten Son. It was His idea, not ours! And it was His idea to make sure we heard this Good News in time to be delivered for all eternity. That “*blazing fire*” and those “*powerful angels*” will be our friends who pick us up and carry us home to God in heaven and melt down this sick, suffering, sin-polluted planet as God makes a new heaven and a new earth according to His promise. Yes, “*God’s judgment is right*,” but He is the One who counts us “*worthy*” for Jesus’ sake to enjoy eternal bliss in God’s kingdom of glory. In Christ, God’s justice is on our side. “*God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well.*” (1:6f NIV)

And that’s why it’s such an awesome wonder to hear this **Message from the King**: “**I glorify Jesus in you!**” God has plans for us – good, great and glorious plans – to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. You can see it pictured in the round window above our altar that was installed on the day God called its donor-designer home to heaven. Steve Williams’ doorbell rang at the end of my finger in 1987. Footloose and fancy free, he had no use for God, but was friendly enough to let me keep coming to see him at home or work. Your mission dollars supported God’s purpose when Steve called to say he had inoperable lung cancer and needed help with his soul. We welcomed him with open arms because that’s how God welcomes all of us. And all through the Spring of 1991, Steve’s body was failing, but he wore a bright purple athletic suit to glorify **the King** for saving his soul from hell. On the day the angels carried Steve home to heaven, his expression of thanks, our mission statement was set in place above the altar.

Most of you don’t know that years later my wife Cindy was talking to a receptionist on the phone who asked, “Do you know who this is? I’m Sue Norton [now married]. I took care of Steve that last year. I sat with him through all those Lenten services and didn’t really get it until Steve died. Then it clicked that Jesus is my Savior too. Now I’ve joined a conservative, Bible-believing church to learn how I can tell my friends and family that Jesus is also their Savior. I want to thank you and the members of New Life!”

Apparently, God is just getting started with us. Someday soon I’ll show you how far this **Message from the King** has glorified Jesus to the far reaches of China. But today we are blessed with the privilege of serving **the King** closer to home. What Paul prayed then, the Holy Spirit keeps asking for the King’s return: “*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” God’s glory is to love guilty sinners like us, to sanctify us pure and holy in His sight, and set us on His trophy shelf in heaven’s glory. Great day in the morning! **A Message from the King!** Amen.