

eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, November 22, 2009

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas

Idylls of the King

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The Lectionary Readings for the week:

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Psalm 132:1-13, (14-19)

Revelation 1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

In this instance, an "idyll" is a narrative, usually poetic, description of a pastoral interlude. Those who have never lived "under a King" have great difficulty understanding the hierarchy of power. The Sunday school teacher asked her kids, "***The Bible talks a lot about Kings and Queens. Who is greater than a King or a Queen?***" There was silence until little Bert said, "***An ACE.***" His parents were mortified. This week's passages are about "kingship" and ask the same question, "Who is greater than THE King?" This is not a "trick" question. WE have to decide the hierarchy of who is "over" us, upon whom do we rely and in whom is our hope of salvation? The reader has been on a journey toward the Season of Advent in which we explored the meaning of the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. We have talked about our being in submission to our King and our recognizing HIS sovereignty. "Crown him the Lord of Lords..." is a popular hymn we sing. Do we really "want" a King? Do we understand the intricacies of God as our King? Who is over our King? "Come, let us reason together."

2 Samuel 23:1-7

These are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, son of Jesse,

the oracle of the man whom God exalted,

the anointed of the God of Jacob,

the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,

his word is upon my tongue.

The God of Israel has spoken,

the Rock of Israel has said to me:

One who rules over people justly,

ruling in the fear of God,

is like the light of morning,

like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,

gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

Is not my house like this with God?

**For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.**

Will he not cause to prosper

all my help and my desire?

***But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;***

***to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.***

And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

The author of Samuel describes the “denouement” of David’s life. Note that the words are attributed to the “oracle of David” and have no quotation marks. An “oracle” is able to “see the future” and to give words “as if from God”. The Oracle at Delphi spoke in riddles to predict the future for ancient pilgrims. (Modern geology and archaeology tell us that the “oracle at Delphi” was most likely in a drug-induced trance caused by noxious fumes emanating from a crack in the volcanic rocks.) David speaks clearly from experience through the Holy Spirit to tell about the past and to “predict” the future. To fully grasp the continuum of thought, one must back up and read all of Chapter 22 of 2 Samuel. (Compare Psalm 18 to Chapter 22.) Chapter 23 is the “closing scene” of David’s life. The words, written as a poem, were probably composed just after his first great conquest in battle and just before his adultery with Bathsheba? These words are a SONG, so, it could truly be touted as “David’s swan song”, a true denouement. It is a SONG of praise to the God who anointed him, protected him and allowed him to lead the Israelites. It is a strong defense and testimony for the power of the indwelling HOLY SPIRIT that was active in King David. IF the HOLY SPIRIT lives in each of those who have been redeemed by the anointing of the Blood of the Lamb, and it lived in King David, then, despite my sin, God will not forsake me. David was acutely aware of the blessing of God in his life and the covenant that God and he had made and kept. Having been “redeemed” and made a covenant with God through Christ, can I speak with such boldness and certainty? “What’s greater than a King or a Queen?” David tells us that God is greater than even David, the greatest of the earthly kings. Every time David “forgot” this, sin entered his life and misery followed. Can we learn from David?

Psalm 132:1-13 (14-19)

1

**LORD, remember David, *
and all the hardships he endured;**

2

***How he swore an oath to the LORD *
and vowed a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:***

3

2

4 ***"I will not come under the roof of my house, *
nor climb up into my bed;***

5 ***I will not allow my eyes to sleep, *
nor let my eyelids slumber;***

6 ***Until I find a place for the LORD, *
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."***

7 ***"The ark! We heard it was in Ephratah; *
we found it in the fields of Jearim.***

8 ***Let us go to God's dwelling place; *
let us fall upon our knees before his footstool."***

9 ***Arise, O LORD, into your resting-place, *
you and the ark of your strength.***

10 ***Let your priests be clothed with righteousness; *
let your faithful people sing with joy.***

11 ***For your servant David's sake, *
do not turn away the face of your Anointed.***

12 ***The LORD has sworn an oath to David; *
in truth, he will not break it:***

13 ***"A son, the fruit of your body *
will I set upon your throne.***

14 ***If your children keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them, *
their children will sit upon your throne for evermore."***

15 ***[For the LORD has chosen Zion; *
he has desired her for his habitation:***

16 ***"This shall be my resting-place for ever; *
here will I dwell, for I delight in her.***

17 ***I will surely bless her provisions, *
and satisfy her poor with bread.***

17 ***I will clothe her priests with salvation, ****

- and her faithful people will rejoice and sing.*
- 18 *There will I make the horn of David flourish; *
I have prepared a lamp for my Anointed.*
- 19 *As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame; *
but as for him, his crown will shine."]*

Is this the "obituary" of David? No, it is most likely a song that was sung at the time of David's coronation. ("Coronation" is derived from "corona" which means "crown" therefore; coronation is the act of "crowning" a ruler such as a King or Queen.) Coronations, like baptisms, are an "outward act" that seals a covenant that has already been "signed" in private. (Look at the "Baptism of Jesus" as an act of "coronation" and it will make more "sense".) God changes hearts in private as his Spirit enters the person. The coronation and the "baptism" are nothing more than public confirmation of the contract. God became David's Lord and King when he was anointed by Samuel. The presence of the Spirit allowed David to slay Goliath? This psalm is a request for God's presence in the life of the new King David and for the king's success in every public and personal endeavor. Did God hear this "prayer"? The reading from 2 Samuel recounts that God kept his covenant with King David. Will God keep his "covenant" with us even though we are not Kings and Queens? The promise is confirmed in the life of Jesus that God "keeps His promises". If not, Christ's coming as the "newborn King" was a total waste of time and we have all been fooled. These are the only two alternative possibilities for us. Well, which is it? FAITH allows us to have HOPE and believe that God will keep his promises to us as he did to David and Jesus. Advent and Christmas are celebrations of the FAITH we must continually "refresh" that God will be FAITHFUL to us as he was to His Son, our KING.

Revelation 1:4b-8

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Those who have been frequent readers know of my reticence to discuss

anything in Revelation as fact. Revelation was written to give HOPE, PEACE and comfort to those undergoing the persecution of the Roman Empire and its henchmen. It is a reflection of the "Christmas story" in which God "came down" to "live among us" and to demonstrate that God "keeps His promises". Though we may be in the midst of turmoil and war, God is in charge and will win the ultimate "battle" for the hearts and souls of mankind. These passages from Revelation establish and confirm the "Lordship" of Jesus as "God with us". Only a "God" who is, was and will always IS can grant such blessings of hope, grace, peace and salvation. "I am the Alpha and Omega" refers to the Greek alphabet ("Alphabet" itself is composed of the first and second "letters" of the letters of our root language: Alpha and Beta.) It is a metaphor for the beginning of time and the end of time. Alpha and Omega are really too concrete because God was actually "there" BEFORE Alpha and will be "here" AFTER Omega. The important thing is that God exists eternally where "time" as a concept "will be no more". So, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT and trust that God is in charge. OUR JOB is to recognize the "King" and be part of His "KINGDOM". Without a "King" and those who recognize the "King" as sovereign LORD, there is no "Kingdom". God has appointed his "kingdom" as a kingdom, composed of SERVING PRIESTS who bring further glory and honor to the King who is "over us". Unless God is "King" of our lives, we have no HOPE of a relationship. To fully appreciate the "Christian life" and all its opportunity, we MUST recognize God as "King" and his Son as Savior. Who is my "King"? How does that change my life? How does that change my future? Does having God as my "King" give me peace? If not, we need to, as Ron in *Harry Potter* says of Hermione, "*She needs to get her priorities in order.*" Crowning God as King of my life changes everything or it is a false coronation. Who is my "king"? For those who recognize God as KING, the "Kingdom of God is at hand."

John 18:33-37

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For THIS I was born, and for THIS I came into the world, to TESTIFY TO THE TRUTH. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

In a battle of wits against Jesus, Pontius Pilate was "an unarmed man". This passage gives me great HOPE because Jesus is my "advocate" or attorney who will plead my case with the Father as though pleading for his best friend. "What a friend we have in Jesus". Notice that Jesus uses direct logic to confuse and addle Pilate. It also makes Pilate reveal that he is "not a Jew" therefore, he does

not know the Torah or the Promise of Messiah that Jesus is fulfilling for the world. Ignorance is NOT bliss. This brief statement "My kingdom is not from this world" is an encapsulation of the theology of Christianity. We live IN this world but, we are not OF this world any more than Christ is OF this world. Pilate could not grasp why the leaders of the Jews would hand over their "king" to be crucified, a punishment for heinous acts against Rome. The Jewish leaders did not recognize Jesus as "King" but could not legally kill Him. Under Roman occupation, only the Romans could exercise capital punishment. They wanted to "get rid of Jesus" because he was not THE "Messiah" for which they were looking ergo, they handed him over to "their King" for punishment. When I reject Christ as "King" of my life, do I, once again, "crucify Christ" because he does not "fit" my "idea of Messiah"? The "King" came in lowly status, lived among us as one of us and showed us how to live under oppression by earthly problems such as sickness, disease and even death. He gave himself to show the sovereignty of GOD over everyone, even the Son. His sacrifice was "once and for all". He demonstrated that only God, the sovereign King, can save us from spiritual death by being killed and resurrected. Jesus' submission to the will of the Father demonstrated for all who will listen and learn that God KEEPS HIS PROMISES for those who recognize GOD as KING of EVERYTHING, even LIFE. Who is my "King"? If God is not my "King", what HOPE do I have that they can "save" me? "Jesus, name above ALL names." The question is: "Do I desire that Jesus be LORD (KING) of MY life?" I cannot "sell my soul" to the "Devil" because I cannot sell what I do not own. God is KING whether or not I realize it. My recognition of God as KING of my life only heals the relationship that has been made sick and dying by MY hard-headed rejection of the fact that God is God and I'm not. Like David, my PEACE, HOPE, FAITH and SALVATION depends on my recognition of God as sovereign LORD. "How can we reject so great a salvation?" That is the question for all of us. Communion is about healing this relationship. As long as we draw breath, there is HOPE for restoring the relationship we desire and desperately NEED with God as King of our lives. Are we "in the Kingdom"? Only IF we recognize God as King and live like members of God's Kingdom can we attain the blessing of the Promise. Jesus stated that he was born and he came into the world so that HE could "testify to THE truth." What truth? Here is the "truth" of Christ's life among us: The truth of God's sovereignty, God's love and God's desire to have a personal relationship with EACH of us. Have we seen "a great LIGHT"? These are truly the "Idylls of THE King."