

Sermon for Christ the King

Text: Isaiah 51:4-8

Preached on 11-25-2007

Introduction:

Which would you choose: Going to work tomorrow or leaving tonight for an all expense paid trip to tropical Hawaii? Which would you choose: A rusted out 1992 Geo Metro or a shiny new Corvette free of charge? Which would you choose: Going to Heaven this very minute or living on this earth for 30 more years with everything going right for you? Think about that for a moment. If Jesus were to pull up in a flaming chariot of fire right now and offer us a one-way, all expense paid trip to a real Paradise, would you go? Would you go if it meant not being able to say good buy to your family? Would you be okay with not being able to kiss your wife one last time? Could you leave without first holding your children or grandchildren to reassure them of your love and to give them some parting words of wisdom? Perhaps you wouldn't be ready to leave. At least not yet!

How many of us truly want Jesus to come back quickly? Perhaps we have some things to do first. We want to find love, get married, have a family, and travel the world. We want to finish our education and start the career that we envision for ourselves. We want to enjoy our retirement years and time with the grandkids. The truth be told, there are a lot of people who would turn Jesus' offer to go to Heaven "right now" down in order to stay here a little while longer. That is why Isaiah encourages us to yearn for Jesus' coming. Don't just hope that it will come one day. Beg for it to come today. Want nothing more in your heart. Wait for it like you wait for a much needed vacation, with eager anticipation and great excitement. We do this every time we pray...

Theme: Thy Kingdom Come!

Part I: Reign in our hearts now

Part II: Reign in our hearts forever

Part I: Reign in our hearts now

This section of Isaiah is addressed to Jewish believers who would be living in exile for many years to come. As a result, they wondered if God would someday exercise His kingly authority to deliver them from their bondage and bring them back home. Or would they remain in a foreign land forever? That is when Isaiah came along with a message of hope. He talked about how God would deliver them, "**Speedily**" (v. 5), using His arm to, "**Bring justice to the nations**" (v. 5). God Himself

would be their King. He would reign over them. But here is how He was going to do it. He said, **“The law (that is My Word) will go out from Me” (v. 4)**. God said that by the proclamation of His Word people would look to Him for help. They would trust in Him and wait for His reign to come.

But the world mocks this. It says, “That’ll never happen. No king can rule by his word alone. They have to do something bigger. They have to bring about world peace and put an end to all crime and fighting and poverty. Jews will demand miraculous signs and Greeks will look for wisdom. Americans will want to see the bottom line and they’ll only buy it if it makes sense.” BUT Christ’s kingdom is not of this world. His priorities as King are not the same as the kings who once ruled in countries around the world. Rather, Jesus reigns in a much different way. He reigns in our hearts through His Word. When God speaks to us through His Word, we are convinced of His unconditional love for us. That love enables our hearts to trust in His reign as King now.

Application:

Jesus says He reigns in our hearts by His Word now. If you doubt that and think that God needs something more, just wait and watch as everything else disappears. Wait and watch as world powers rise and fall. Watch as the stock market crashes, as skyscrapers collapse, and everything else in our world falls apart. Just wait and watch your own body wear out and weaken and die. If we look to the things and powers of this world and put our trust in them, we will ultimately see that Jesus was right when He said, **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35)**. If we trust in the things of the world, eventually we will realize the truth but it will be too late and we will all perish.

Just as God sent a comforting message to His Old Testament people, so also He sends a comforting message to us. It too comes through His Holy Word. In this book (the Bible) God tells how He planned our salvation before the creation of the world. He tells how Jesus Christ carried out that plan by living and dying to remove the guilt and sin of all people. He tells us that when we hear this Good News, He works faith in us. That is how God reigns in our hearts now.

Transition:

So when we pray *Thy Kingdom Come*, we are asking God to reign in our hearts through His Word. But in addition to asking God to reign in

our hearts now, we are also asking God to...

Part II: Reign in our hearts forever

The believing Jews, who would have read these words while captive in Babylon, may have thought that any hope of a return to Jerusalem remained an impossible dream. Their once glorious city lay in ruins. All the beauty that once belonged to Zion and Judah had disappeared. During their captivity, the Promised Land remained nothing but a wasteland. They may have questioned whether God had deserted them all together. Perhaps they asked, "If we become extinct in this foreign land, how will all nations of the earth be blessed through us like the LORD promised" (**Genesis 12:1-3**)?

And yet, when things seemed utterly bleak and hopeless, Isaiah came along to uplift their spirits. God promised to have compassion on His people. He promised to bring joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and the sound of singing back to them. Although they were prisoners in a foreign land now, they were not to despair. Their captivity would not last. When they heard that God's deliverance was, "**On the way**" (v. 5) and that their captors would disappear, "**Like wool**" (v. 8) eaten by moths, they must have been overjoyed. Now they knew that God's number one desire was to rescue them and to bring them home. That knowledge gave the believing Jews a firmer faith in the LORD. That strengthened faith enabled their hearts to trust in His reign as King forever.

Application:

Even strong believers can be tempted to think that Jesus is not a King. Even life-long Christians can be tempted to doubt that God is really in control. Does that ever happen to you? Maybe you have been observing the way the world works and you see all the terrible things happening. Deep inside you wonder how all this bad stuff could be going on if God is really in control. Or perhaps you are convinced that God is not in control at times because of all the baggage He allows to come into your life, all the trials and frustrations that pile up. Some may be relatively minor. Others may be pretty major. All in all they have come steadily enough that you are left wondering, "Where in the world is God? Does He care? Is He in control?"

On top of our own personal doubts and struggles, comes, "**The reproach of men**" (v. 7). The world is filled with people who say we are foolish for believing what we believe and devoting ourselves to a

God who doesn't seem to be in control. Occasionally we are tempted to agree with them. And that terrifies us! But then Isaiah comes along and tells us not to be afraid. We don't need to be afraid because all the ridicule and mockery in the world simply won't last. Not only that! While the fears and troubles and struggles of this life are very real right now, they won't last. Physical pain really hurts now, but it won't last. Emotional grief really brings us down now, but it won't last. Financial and economic woes might be very difficult right now, but they won't last either. The only things that will last are God's, "**Righteousness and salvation**" (v. 8). Believing this is how God reigns in our hearts forever.

Conclusion:

Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He was a King, but Pilate didn't understand His kingdom. Jesus also told the Jews that He was a King, but they didn't understand His kingdom. Ever since the time of Christ, people have grossly misunderstood how Christ our King reigns. Some say that Christ reigns through His representatives on earth, like the popes in Rome. Some say that Jesus reigns when church leaders lobby politicians to cast their votes in the right way. Others say that Jesus doesn't reign at all. He was a great man who lived long ago, but He was certainly no King.

BUT Jesus Christ is King! He does reign! This is a truth we confess every time we close our prayers with the words: "Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and *reigns* with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever." Not only is Christ reigning in our hearts now by faith, but He has promised to also reign in the hearts of those who hear His Word in, "**Every generation**" (v. 8). That means it is up to us to go and share and teach God's Word with our children and grandchildren. We gladly and willingly do this: Because (1) we want Christ to reign in their hearts now. But (2) we also want Christ to reign in their hearts forever. This is what we mean when we pray: *Thy Kingdom Come! Amen!*