

## “Our King And Priest”

### Psalm 110

March 25, 2018

Palm Sunday

**SI:** It’s been a Christian tradition for almost 2000 years to spend Palm Sunday reflecting on what it means that Jesus is our King.

We’re going to do that this morning through the lens of Psalm 110.

**INTRO:** Somebody gave me a booklet recently that describes the top 50 countries in the world for Christian persecution starting with North Korea.

Our elders have been using that as a prayer guide. This morning, Sudan.

Those 50 countries make up  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world population.

How do you square the kingship of Jesus Christ with that?

In addition, there are many Western nations that have become post-Christian and some in ways even anti-Christian.

In Great Britain Christians have been banned from being foster parents—their beliefs and morality are considered psychologically damaging to children.

In Sweden recently, a significant religious rights case was decided in highest court against a Christian midwife who lost her license to practice,

There are efforts more and more Western countries to drive Christians out of the public square—keep your beliefs private or else.

How do you square the kingship of Jesus Christ with ?

For you it might even be more personal.

Perhaps you are in a smaller setting—a workplace or school or extended family—where there is an antipathy to Christ and the Christian faith—

and it makes you wonder—If Jesus is King, why don’t these people respect him?

Is Jesus really King then why are there vast portions of the globe and great numbers of people who are more hostile to him than ever before?

This is why the church needs Palm Sunday every year—

Christ’s kingship is something we must remember annually as the people of God.

Just as we also annually remember his incarnation and resurrection.

And the message of Psalm 110 is—

Yes, Jesus is King. He’s the King of kings.

And there’s no better time to be a subject of King Jesus than right now.

So with Palm Sunday in mind, let’s look at this passage of Scripture and Christ’s kingship under three headings—

1. His office 2. His reign 3. His subjects

**MP#1 His office**

Did you know Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted OT passage in the NT.

Depending on how you count, it's referenced 25 to 33 times.

The early Christians were enthralled with this Psalm.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is our favorite, for them this was the one.

The main thing they loved about it is how it says the Messiah would be  
King and Priest.

King, seated at God's right hand, and Priest, forever in the order of Melchizedek.

For Jewish believers, the idea of King Priest was startling.

It was a precept in Israel that kings were not priests and priests not kings.

And it wasn't only that this was the Law of Moses, it was deeper than that.

The mission of kings and the mission of priests were in a sense exactly opposite.

Kings represented God to the people.

Priests represented the people to God.

Kings were figures of strength who ruled in the place of God.

They enforced the law of God. They sat in God's judgment seat.

If you broke the law, it was the king's calling to punish lawbreakers.

David at the end of his life instructs Solomon to put two men to death.

Priests were the opposite. The priesthood was an office of sympathy and service.

Priests offered sacrifices for people, prayed for people, forgiveness and atonement

It was priests who oversaw the cities of refuge,

where a person being pursued for a blood debt could flee and be safe.

Priests cared for poor and sick.

When Jesus healed the lepers he told them, Go and show yourselves to the priests.

They were the health officers, they were the social workers.

That's a good modern example that illustrates why king and priest don't go  
together. Think of social workers and police officers.

They are often working with the same people, but they have different purposes  
that are sometimes in conflict.

Police are like the office of king—they represent the law, they enforce the law.

Social workers are like the office of priest, they are advocates, want to make whole.

Those two callings even appeal to different personality types.

The king was a figure of strength and judgment

The priest was a figure of gentleness and forgiveness

So it was impossible to have the two in one person.

But there is someone who is king and priest.

And there is someone who reveals to the world how God is both just and forgiving.

And that person, of course, is Jesus Christ.  
To fully grasp the significance of triumphal entry, a little historical background.  
About a hundred and fifty years before Jesus there was a Jewish liberator named  
Judas Maccabeus. He had a nickname: The Hammer.  
After he defeated the foreign empire that was occupying Judea he rode into  
Jerusalem on a war horse and all the people waved palm branches and shouted  
Hosannah to the son of David.  
He became king and established a short dynasty.

Jesus copied him. He rode into Jerusalem and accepted the kingly accolades—  
but with one glaring difference.  
He didn't ride a war horse, he rode the colt of a donkey.  
Which looks weak and approachable and non-threatening.  
That was his point. I'm the strong gentle king. I combine opposites.

Look at how Jesus comes to us in the Gospels.  
With the religious and political leaders he was firm and condemning—  
he called them white washed tombs, blind guides, sons of hell,  
he told them on the day of judgment worse for them than Sodom and Gomorrah.  
But with other people he was gentle and affirming—  
He touched lepers even though the law declared touching made unclean.  
In the Garden of Gethsemane. Begged his disciples, stay awake and pray with me.  
When they fell asleep anyway he said: The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.  
Which basically means: I know you meant well.

Jesus didn't ride into Jerusalem like The Hammer to destroy Romans with strength.  
He came as Priest King to destroy death through weakness. Though the cross  
he brought the true liberation of eternal life and a relationship with God.  
He's the King who offered his body as a Priest to satisfy divine justice.  
On the cross all justice is satisfied. And that's perfectly good. Justice is good.  
And through the cross God's love and mercy and grace comes to sinners.  
And that also is very good.

This is Jesus. He beautifully brings together things that don't go together.  
glory and meekness, dominion and submission, he's the lamb and the lion.  
When you see he is both King and Priest, it transforms the way you see his reign  
and the way you see your experience as his subject living in the world.  
In other words, it helps you make sense of things like persecution and hostility  
and antipathy. Not only make sense of them, rejoice in them. How?

## MP#2 His reign

How does Jesus reign? Two ways that don't seem to go together.

First way is in verse 1. Christ is ruling from heaven over all.

The LORD says to my Lord. (God says to his Messiah)

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

There is a theological term for this. It's called Christ's session.

Session is an old word for sitting with authority.

Congress in session when representatives seated, court in session when judge sits.

When church elders meet it's called the Session, because sitting to deliberate.

A king's session is an old term for his sitting on his throne to reign.

What implications does New Testament draw from Christ's session?

I'm going to give you this like a fire hose. Are you ready?

These are all quotations and references to Psalm 110:1 in NT.

His session shows he is greater than David—Acts 2:37.

His session shows he is greater than the angels—Hebrews 1:13

His session affirms the submission of all spiritual beings to him—1 Peter 3:22

His session affirms his enemies will all one day be subdued—1 Co 15:25 Heb 10:13

His session grants him the exalted titles Prince and Savior—Acts 5:31

His session is the basis for his interceding for us—Romans 8:34

His session marks the sending of the Holy Spirit—Acts 2:33

His session is a proof of the Spirit's power within us—Ephesians 1:20

His session is a spiritual focal point for believers—Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 12:2

His session is mystically shared by believers as we rule with him—Ephesians 2:6

His session signals the provision of purification for sins—Hebrews 1:3

His session signals the completeness of our salvation—Hebrews 10:12

His session is a model of the reward for those who overcome—Revelation 3:21.

All that from Psalm 110 verse one!

Do you see what I mean that this theme resonated with the early believers?

They loved this Psalm.

They thought deeply about the implications of the Son of David, who is also

David's Lord, sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, reigning.

OK, but why don't we see more evidence of this?

It's hard to understand Christ's rule from heaven when it doesn't appear in the ways we would expect it to on earth. Advancing in every place.

But remember I said the Psalm shows us two ways he reigns.

Look again at the very next verse, at verse 2.

The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in midst of your enemies.

Christ is seated in heaven at God's right hand,

but how does he reign on earth? In the midst of his enemies.

That's not how earthly kings reign. They rule in the midst of their kingdom.

They defend their borders. They never let territory be taken.

Christ is different. He rules in the midst of his enemies.

In other words, when you see the church surrounded by people hostile to Christ, that's not his failure to reign, that is his reign. That is his strategic plan.

I've mentioned this before, my perplexity at what God is doing in North Korea.

I started praying for that country several years ago, and the more I read,

the more perplexing it became. Pyongyang was once Jerusalem of Asia.

It had more churches and Christian institutions than any other city.

Ruth Bell Graham, Billy Graham's wife, went to a Christian high school in Pyongyang when her parents were missionaries in China.

But now there are no churches or Christian presence of any kind in that city.

And Christians are imprisoned generationally in camps where they are brutalized and regarded as the lowest of the low.

What is the Lord doing there?

We could ask the same question about many other places in the world.

Here's what he's doing. He's ruling in the midst of his enemies.

I don't entirely understand it, but somehow the enemies that are won to faith in those hostile settings bring more glory to Jesus.

And those enemies who do not come to faith but who witness the amazing lives of the believers they are persecuting, somehow their judgment brings glory to Jesus.

And the believers whose faith is sustained and whose lives prove their love for God and the transforming grace of God bring glory to Jesus.

One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord.

One day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

But until that time remember Jesus is reigning now. From heaven, sovereignly.

And on earth in his deliberate decision to reign in the midst of his enemies.

All this comes into sharper focus when we consider one more aspect of his kingship

### **MP#3 His subjects**

How does King Jesus actually rule in the midst of his enemies?

Through us. His subjects. His followers.

Look at how Christ's followers are described in verse 3.

Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments . . .

Throughout history kings usually had to conscripted soldiers to fight in their wars.

We've even had the draft a few times in American history.

But the subjects of Jesus offer themselves freely on the day of his power.

We're willing volunteers because he's both or priest and king.

If you see Jesus mostly as a king and kind of as a priest you'll think:

God is kind of merciful, but I better obey or I'll go to hell.

If you see Jesus as mostly priest and kind of a king, you'll think:

I need to obey, but if I don't it doesn't really matter, God will accept me anyway.

In other words, your relationship to God and your service will either

be half-hearted or motivated by fear.

But those who see the beauty of Christ as both Priest and King gladly serve

because they know they're accepted and forgiven.

And notice what we're wearing as his volunteer army—holy garments.

Holy garments are a reference to the clothes of the priests, their robes, sashes.

Which seems to be saying that as we fight for Jesus our King, we do so as priests.

Praying for people, ministering to them, living holy lives before them.

This is pushed home in a dramatic way in the end of the Psalm.

In the last three verses David describes God's King Priest

shattering hostile kings, chiefs, and nations who oppose him

and filling the earth with corpses.

After he's done he drinks from a brook and lifts his head.

What David is doing poetically is going back in Israel's history to the time

of the judges when God raised up delivers, people like Gideon and Deborah.

They would appear and strike down the enemies of Israel.

They would fill the land with bodies.

The reference to drinking from a brook is a reference to Samson.

After he killed 1000 Philistines by himself, he was dying of thirst

and the Lord provided a brook that he drank from and was refreshed.

All those judges of old foreshadowed Jesus Christ.

But here's what's interesting.

In Ephesians 1, Paul references Psalm 110.

He talks about Jesus ascended and seated at God's right hand.

But the next verse, where the Psalm talks about heaps of bodies—

Paul speaks of Jesus filling the world with his body.

What's his body? It's us!

How is Jesus reigning and delivering? How is he defeating evil?

Through us. He's using us to converting people by his Spirit.

He's making his enemies his friends through us.

That puts persecution and hostility in a whole new light.

We're an army of priests who take after our Priest King Jesus.

We fight for his cause but do so with gentleness.

We go into the battle robed in priestly garments, our bodies as sacrifices.

This is spiritual warfare from another perspective.

When you trust Jesus and follow him, you start to become like him.

His Spirit turns you into little kings and priests.

When you know you're a sinner but completely forgiven—

that humbles you and gentles you, like a priest.

That helps you serve people and pray for them.

And when you know that God fully accepts you and calls you his son and heir—

that makes you bold as a king.

That helps you tell people the Good News and call them to repent and believe.

Do you remember that famous speech in Shakespeare's play Henry V?

The little English army is facing a massive French force.

Things look bad, morale is low. And then good king Henry says:

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother . . .

And gentlemen in England now-a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here

And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks

That fought with us upon St Crispin's day.

Whenever you read discouraging news about persecution and hatred of Christ and the church, whenever you see darkness encroaching where there was once light—

Remember Christ is both king and priest, he exercises judgment and forgiveness,

Remember he is reigning—both in heaven, and strategically in midst of enemies.

And remember we are his willing volunteers in his priestly army.

And what an honor to serve the one who died for us.