

Pastor Shaun Arndt
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Devotional Introduction

Have you heard the latest news from Persepolis? No? How about Babylon? Or Carthago? No nothing new there.

Those were all once mighty cities that ruled empires and made people tremble. Today they're filled with ruins and usually remembered only by history lovers.

So it goes with the kings and kingdoms of this world. They finally all wear out and fade away, leaving behind ruins and hard to pronounce names and places.

There's an important lesson here for each of us. If the mighty Caesars and the great kings and queens of this world have all died and disappeared, so will each of us. If those who could build golden palaces and forge empires fell to old age, sickness and death, so will we.

For we all belong to fallen sinful race, whose imperfect, sinful state brings death. And what further evidence do we need of this truth than, you know, all of human history! --that even mighty kings and empires eventually all crumble to dust and **pass away**.

But not so Christ the King! The prophet writes: **His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.** Christ and His Kingdom lasts forever, for He is the King who comes **in the clouds of heaven**, who is true God, sharing all **dominion** and **honor** with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

And yet Christ our King is not just some other-worldly, unapproachable King dwelling far away on a golden throne somewhere remote and distant—no—for He is **one like a son of man**.

Son of Man is the name Jesus most often used to describe Himself as the promised Savior. **Son of Man** reminds us that the eternal Son of God became a human being. After all, that's what a **Son of Man** is, one born of woman, born into this world just like you and me.

Just think, this everlasting King who rules upon **the clouds of heaven** with all **honor** and power has skin and bones, body and soul, a clothing and shoe size, truly human, just like you and me. He who has all power and authority was born and had to learn to walk and talk.

And why? So that He would take our place as our true human brother and pay for our sin, die our death and remove the curse of our fallen human race. As our flesh and blood brother, the **Son of Man**, Jesus died on a cross to save us. As our true brother, Jesus, the Son of Man rose from death. Remember what Jesus said to his disciples on Easter Night? **Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.**”

Rejoice to know that it is not only your God who rules all things, but it is your dear brother, Jesus Christ, **The Son of Man** who died and rose to save you. This Jesus, your dear **brother** now rules all things to raise you from the dust of death and bring you safely to the never ending joys of His kingdom **that will not be destroyed.**

A lesson from Daniel 7: ¹³**I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him. ¹⁴To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages will worship him. His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.**

The word of the Lord.

We sing the hymn verses.

We are accustomed to thinking of a king wearing a crown, sitting on a throne in fancy clothes, likely being waited on. If there's a battle, the king might be behind the army where he would be safe.

That was not the picture and the ideal for ancient Israelite kings. One of the key jobs God gave His to Old Testament kings was to fight for His people and lead them in battle, like David going out to fight Goliath. The King was to be a warrior King to defend His people.

And so our Psalm for today pictures Jesus as a warrior King, who **girds** (puts on) his **sword** and **rides forth victoriously.**

Now on the one hand it's a little uncomfortable to picture Jesus armed with a sword, riding forth on the attack, isn't it? Especially when we remember how often with our sins we have treated Him like an enemy, disobeying him in countless ways? Do we really want to hear about a **Warrior King**?

Yes we do, when we also hear these words about our King: **your lips have been anointed with grace. Grace** is God's undeserved love. And the Bible tells us **By grace you have been saved** (Ephesians 2:9).

Instead of turning the sword of His judgment upon on us, Jesus turns to speak words of forgiveness to us in the Gospel. Rather than crushing us, He converts us through His Word, with law and gospel calling us to repentance that we confess our sins and cling to His life and death that save us.

Yes He has shown us **Grace** that saved us and changed us from natural enemies to God to believing children of God.

Grace that means we can be glad to know Christ our King goes to fight for His people and has won for us the eternal victory over sin, devil, death and hell. Grace that says with St. Paul: **The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.**

We sing of our Gracious Warrior King using Psalm 45 on page 5 of the worship folder.

Our next reading takes us to that day when this world will come crashing to a halt and Christ will fill the sky as King of kings and Lord of Lords. The dead will be raised and every eye will see Jesus coming upon the clouds of heaven, even the soldiers who nailed him to the cross.

Many will weep and **mourn** on that day because He is the Jesus they had no time for, the Jesus they rejected in unbelief, the Jesus they tossed aside for the pleasures of this world or gave back seat to their own works they wanted to offer to God.

On that day only one thing will make a difference between you and me and the people who have no other hope than the things of this earth. What will make the difference is **the blood** of Jesus **that has freed us from our sins.** Jesus' saving **blood** and the miracle of Holy Spirit worked faith in His **blood** means we are no longer people of this world, mere citizens of the **nations of the earth**, but now we belong to Christ's eternal kingdom, are citizens of heaven with a reason to rejoice when our King returns.

Yes, **Jesus'** saving blood will make all the difference on that last day. Remember it also makes a difference on this day and every day.

The blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all guilt and sin also equips us to live as His people, as royal priests who get to approach our Lord and bring him thank offerings of our lips and lives. We will serve Jesus our King perfectly in heaven, but already now Jesus cleansing blood gives us the ability to serve our Lord and those around us.

Forgiven and renewed by His saving blood, let us every day serve Christ our Coming King who makes all the difference now and forever. We read from Revelation 1:

Grace to you and peace from him who is, who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his own blood ⁶and made us a kingdom and priests to God his Father—to him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.

⁷Look, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will mourn because of him. Yes. Amen.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, the one who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.”

We sing the hymn verses -

Ever play the game where you try to guess which one of these doesn't belong? At first glance, the appointed lessons for Christ the King Sunday could appear like that.

We see Christ upon the clouds of heaven with an everlasting Kingdom, we see him as a warrior riding forth to victory, we see Him coming again in glory as the **Alpha and the Omega**.

But then we come to the Gospel lesson. How does this belong? We see Christ the King with hands tied, face bruised from the night before, standing on trial before the Roman Governor who interrogates Him. Surely Pilate asks His question with incredulous mocking: **Are you the King of the Jews?** Soon He will wear a crown of thorns and have a cross for a throne.

But of course this lesson does belong. For this Christ is indeed the King, the King of the most amazing and kingly love, that He would willingly endure all the mocking, pain and suffering to save us. All this He endures to share with you His heavenly kingdom that is indeed from another, glorious, heavenly, everlasting place. This lesson is the reason we will rejoice to see our King come again in glory, the King who loved us and freed us from our sins by His sacrifice!

Listen to the glorious **Truth** from the King of Kings – your God loves you. Jesus suffers all this to save you. You can be certain He loves you, no matter what else you feel or fear. See Jesus take our guilty verdict and listen to the **truth**: you are forgiven by Christ, the **Savior King**.

Please stand for the Words of Christ our King, the Holy Gospel:

³³**Pilate went back into the Praetorium and summoned Jesus. He asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”**

³⁴**Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about me?”**

³⁵**Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”**

³⁶**Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.”**

³⁷**“You are a king then?” Pilate asked.**

Jesus answered, “I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

We sing the hymn verses: