

## The King

Matthew 21:1-11

The First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

I don't think we realize just how powerful Jesus is.

Perhaps it is His humility. Perhaps it is the donkey that fools us. Perhaps it is His birth in Bethlehem and his rest in the manger that fools us. Perhaps it is the way that He lived that fools us. All of this walking around seems so mundane to people who drive cars and fly in airplanes. Perhaps it is His geographical limitation that fools us. He never left the Holy Land except for one brief excursion near Caesarea Philippi. We travel the world. Many of us have been to Europe and other places in North and Central America. Perhaps it is the miracles that He chose to perform. In a country with Marvel and DC Comic characters lighting up the silver screen with their powers and abilities, the miracles of Jesus seem to be mundane. Even when the miracles of Jesus are portrayed on film you can tell that the actor is pretending to be blind and then pretends to see again. The actor is pretending to be paralyzed and then pretends to walk again. This is not like Superman flying around in a cape and lifting up large heavy objects. This is not Spiderman with his sixth sense sleuthing out the bad guy and fighting him with spider strength. Perhaps it is His poverty that fools us. Perhaps it is His death.

I don't know what it is and maybe this isn't a problem for you, but it certain is one for me. I don't think we realize just how powerful Jesus is.

Maybe it is because He is not a king of this earth. We are so accustomed to dealing with kings of the earth. We recognize power in a king of the earth. We recognize the power of the majority in the United States. We recognize the power of a president who issues executive orders that affect our lives. We recognize the power of a congress who can make and repeal laws at their will that will affect the economic futures of all Americans for generations. We are accustomed to judges who legislate from the bench. We are used to the kings of earth exercising power and we can see that their power affects all of us.

It is hard to understand and grapple with the power of Jesus. He acts as if we can take Him or leave Him. When His disciples ask that fire be called down on those who rejected Him, Jesus rebukes them and He goes somewhere else. If they had called down fire on that Samaritan village, that would have been power that we could have understood. But Jesus does not use it. While He says that it is damnable to reject Him, He surely does not act like it. While He pronounces woes on those who reject His messengers those woes are not visible to those who currently reject His messengers.

When Peter pulls a sword out of His scabbard in defense of His Lord when the soldiers came to arrest His Lord, Jesus tells Peter to put his sword away. Peter was going to exercise power in defense of His Lord and Jesus tells him not too. If Peter had killed a couple of soldiers in defense of his Lord, we would not have condemned him. We would not have said that he was wrong. But Jesus does. Jesus tells him to put the sword away. Jesus tells him that He could call on His Father in heaven and the Father in heaven would send twelve legions of angels to defend Jesus. But Jesus does not call on His Father. No legions of angels materialized that night. They arrested Jesus, found him guilty of blasphemy, turned Him over to Pontius Pilate who had Him crucified. People offered that they would believe in Him if only He came down from the cross. But Jesus did not come down from the cross. He hung there and died.

I don't think we realize just how powerful a king Jesus is.

But the kings of the earth do.

Maybe the reason that we do not realize how powerful our Lord is is because we are not a kings of the earth ourselves. The other kings of the earth know how powerful Jesus is. If you want to know how powerful your Lord is just consider how the other kings of the earth react to Him and you will realize how powerful your Lord is.

Herod tried to kill Jesus when Jesus was an infant. The Wise Men came to Jerusalem seeking the One who had been born King of the Jews. Herod was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him. He asked the Wise Men to report on the child's whereabouts and when they did not Herod had all of the male children in Bethlehem of two years of age or younger put to death. Do you know what that means? It does not merely mean that the Herod was a monster. That is easy to see. It means that Herod was scared. He was scared of a baby. Before our Lord is old enough to do anything royal whatsoever He already has a fellow king trying to take His life. Herod is threatened by Jesus and well Herod should be threatened by Jesus for what this King of the Jews is going to accomplish. Herod is afraid of Jesus because Herod is a king of the earth and the kings of the earth understand what power is and they fear it when power is the hands of someone else. They recognize the power of Jesus and you should too.

Jesus flees to Egypt. And we might think that He lacks power by fleeing to Egypt, but when He flees to Egypt, He is alive and Herod dies. God puts Herod to death like He puts all sinners to death. He dies.

When Jesus returns Herod's son Antipas considers Jesus a threat. He lets the Pharisees know that he is out to kill Jesus and when the Pharisees tell Jesus, Jesus ignores them and continues on His vocation. Our Lord ignores the kings of the earth at will. Their authority does not threaten Him. If their authority goes against what His Father has called Him to do, Jesus does what His Father has called Him to do and ignores the kings of the earth.

The Kings of the earth fear Jesus because of His power. You should too.

Pontius Pilate may not have admitted it, but he feared Jesus. He had found Him innocent and yet the rulers of the Jews at the time put political pressure on him to put Jesus to death. He feared putting a righteous man to death and well he should. But he also feared the threat that Jesus posed. Jesus had crowds of people following Him and hanging on His every word. Such power threatened the Jewish rulers who would prefer that the crowds follow them around and hang on their every word. But being unwilling to improve their game and unwilling to submit to Jesus themselves they had Him killed. They had Jesus killed because they were afraid of Him. And Pontius Pilate fearing the power that Jesus had to terrify the local authorities in the end had Him put to death.

The Kings of the fear Jesus because of His power.

Even today the kings of the earth fear Jesus.

When Governor Bush was running for President of the United States during an interview someone asked him who the most influential philosopher in his life was. He responded by saying, "Jesus Christ." And the kings of the earth were terrified at his answer. The electorate and those in charge of certain parts of the government and the media were terrified that a man running for president would say that. The kings of the earth fear Jesus yet to this day.

Isis fears Jesus. They are terrified of Him and of His power. They recognize His power. Since they cannot put Jesus to death at the right hand of the Father, they put the followers of Jesus to death instead. They are so terrified of Jesus that it recently took armed guards at an Armenian Divine Service to protect the worshippers from Isis. Isis would not be putting the followers of Jesus to death unless they feared Jesus. They would not fear Jesus unless He is powerful.

The Kings of the earth fear Jesus. They fear Jesus because of His influence over the crowds. They fear Jesus because He commands loyalty that they cannot command. They fear Jesus because even though Jesus commands His followers to obey and submit to the government, the kings of the earth know that the Christians are submitting to the government only because their Lord told them to do so and not because they fear the state. They know how the followers of Jesus have disobeyed the government in the past and even when the government threatened their lives, the followers of Jesus would give their lives rather than submit to the government against what their Lord had commanded. If the Kings of the earth would simply leave the followers of Jesus alone the followers of Jesus would gladly obey the kings of the earth for our King has commanded us to do so, but the kings of the earth are not content with having their power secured for them by Jesus. They want to secure power for themselves on their own. And so they fear Jesus.

It terrifies the electorate when a federal judge is up for confirmation and he confesses that he believes in Natural Law. It terrifies the electorate when the governor of a state says that he will govern according to what is right and not necessarily according to what the people want.

And if there were no power in Jesus from Nazareth then the kings of the earth would not be terrified of Him. The kings of the earth are not terrified of the powerless. But the fact that they are terrified of Jesus indicates that He has power. By their own opposition to Him, they confess that He has power over them. He can make them do His will. They are that afraid of Him.

Look to the kings of the earth and see the power that your Lord has.

Some kings of the earth do not oppose Jesus. Some submit to Him.

There were at least three of them, if not more who came to see Him when He was a child. Their royal state may be in question because Matthew does not call them kings, rather he calls them Magi, which we render as "Wise Men." But whether or not they were royal they were of great influence in their home countries. These kings see the power of Jesus and welcome it. They do not fight against He who will become King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They acknowledge that Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In fact they waste no time doing so. Even when the Lord is a child, they show up and bow down to Him and offer Him gifts.

While Matthew does not record the Magi saying it, these Wise Men by their actions were saying, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord."

Sometimes our English translations fail us. The Lord in that statement is God. That is God the Father. The One who comes in the Name of the Lord is Jesus. Jesus is blessed because He comes in the Name of His Father. He comes in the Name of God. No one will see the face of Jesus unless they say, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord."

So here is Jesus in all of His humility even riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Acknowledge His power. Sing His praises. He is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. He is blessed.

He has power that the kings of the earth do not have. He has power that Marvel and DC comic book characters do not possess. For the kings of the earth have the power to kill and to destroy. And honestly when you think about it most of the superheroes of fiction have powers that destroy. That is how we human beings think about power.

The king on the donkey has the power. His power is constructive. He does not destroy. There is only one miracle of all of His miracles that Jesus does that is destructive. The rest of them are constructive. Jesus heals the sick. Jesus gives sight to the blind. Jesus makes the lame walk. Jesus forgives sinners. Jesus raises the dead.

And it is the last one that frightens the kings of the earth the most. They are mortal. Jesus is immortal. The kings of the earth put Jesus to death and He came back. They could not get rid of Him and there has not been a king of the earth since then who has been able to get rid of Him.

That is the magnitude of His power. But do not fear, little flock. Shout, "Hosanna!" to the Son of David. For you are not the kings of the earth. You, rather, are those who say, "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.!"

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.