

The Everlasting Kingdom

Matthew 21:1-9

The First Sunday in Advent, December 2, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The kingdoms of this world are powerful. The kingdoms of this world have always been powerful. The ancient Egyptians were powerful. The ancient Assyrians and Babylonians were powerful. They had huge armies and amassed great wealth and had huge bureaucracies to administer the empires that they had conquered. The ancient Greeks conquered everything from Greece to India in the ancient world. In fact when Alexander wanted to march his armies into India to conquer it his men refused to go in figuring that they had come to the end of the world. And then the Romans come along and conquer so much land that their empire surrounded the Mediterranean Sea such that the Romans called it, "Our lake." And as vast as these empires that appear in the pages of the Bible are they do not compare to the vast empire that the Mongols conquered that stretched across Asia. Each of these kingdoms had an army and a bureaucracy to manage things and a king who was good at everything and the resources to fund and operate such a huge empire.

And all of them are gone. They are museum pieces for children going on a field trip.

The kingdoms of this world that exist today are no different. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on earth at present. We have a military bar none in the world. Our military operates in all parts of the world. After World War II we became the "dad" or the "mom" of the world and whether we think it is a good idea or not we have wound up policing the world. We take out dictators that we think are dangerous. We finance regimes that we think need financing. We make and break certain countries. We have a technology that supports our military that is unlike any in the world. We have nuclear capability and were the first to achieve it. It gave us the victory in World War II and enabled us to hold Communist advancement in check during the Cold War. We have technologies that monitor the world for enemy attacks. We have intelligence everywhere in the world that allowed us to take out Osama bin Laden. We are wealthier than any of the other nations of the earth. There are other industrialized countries who have a standard of living close to ours, but much of the standard of living that they have come from us. We are generous to other countries in need.

And if the Lord allows history to continue for long enough eventually the United States of America will be a museum piece for grade school kids to look at on their field

trips. There is every indication that we face a similar moral and social decline that the empires of the past faced in their demise. Check the Old Testament and read the prophets for a simple small example.

So the kingdoms of the world are powerful and mighty and they come to an end and their place remembers them no more.

Jesus is the Son of David.

God had promised David that David would have an everlasting kingdom. God promised David that David would always have a descendent sitting on his throne forever. God had promised David and Solomon that when their line produced an heir that would keep God's statutes and laws and ordinances and instruction that would be the time would God would establish an everlasting kingdom.

Jesus is the Son of David. He is the legitimate heir of David. He is anointed as David was anointed. As David executed the judgment and justice of God over Israel so also Jesus from Nazareth executes the judgment and justice of God over Israel, but Jesus does it without failure.

Jesus forgave the penitent and the meek. Jesus told off and condemned the self-righteous and the arrogant. Jesus lifted up and healed the sick and the helpless. Jesus dressed down the wealthy and self-sufficient. In doing so He administered God's righteous judgment in its entirety. He left nothing out.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Solomon had ridden on a mule in the Old Testament when Solomon became king over Israel. The heir of Solomon does the same. Jesus cleanses the temple by driving out the money changers even as Hezekiah and Josiah before him had repaired the temple. Jesus then engages in a two day debate with the temple leadership over whether or not He has the authority to do any of this. In the end Jesus finally has to fulfill His vocation as king of Israel and tell them that the Kingdom of heaven has been taken from them and it will be given to a people who produce its fruits.

Jesus is betrayed by Judas Iscariot. Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate and refuses to engage the conversation about whether or not He is the king of the Jews except to say that Pilate has declared Jesus to be king of the Jews.

Then Pilate sentences Jesus to crucifixion. And the king of the Jews, the King of Israel, the Son of David dies. And when He dies He fulfills His calling to execute God's judgment on Israel and indeed on the whole world. It is the crucifixion of Jesus that God's wrath against sin is satisfied. It is the death of Jesus that atones for Israel's sins and indeed for the sins of the whole world. God's judgment of forgiveness and mercy

on the world is executed perfectly through the Son of David whose vocation it is to execute God's judgments.

Now, there is no power here that can be seen. When Jesus was preaching and teaching, He owned no land. He had no house of His own. He lived on the generosity of others. Even foxes and birds were better off financially than He was.

He called disciples. He raised no army. He taught in synagogues and from boats and in the open country. He developed no new technologies. He taught repentance and the Kingdom of heaven. He did not engineer social or political change as we understand those terms.

When He arrives in Jerusalem, He rides no horse in conquest or victory. He rides a beast of burden. No other king would have had the humility to ride such an animal. When He enters Jerusalem, He does not take it by force like David His forefather had from the Jebusites. When He tells the temple leadership that the Kingdom has been taken from them, He does not organize a coup against them and take the high priesthood from Caiaphas. And when He is on trial even though the trial is unjust, He makes no defense.

In the end this King of Israel is crucified. He is crucified because that is the way that God wanted His judgments on humankind executed.

He is weak. He is poor. He is without any glamour and in the end He is without even a defender. All of His disciples flee when He dies and the chief disciple denies publicly three times that he even knows Jesus.

This is the everlasting kingdom. Jesus has established it. For when Jesus does all that the Father commanded Him to do, the Father raises Jesus from the dead. No other king, no Caesar, no dictator, no president, no other chief executive officer, no other governor, no other board president of a fortune 500 company is risen from the dead. Only the king from Nazareth rose from the dead. It is only over Him that death has no authority. A king may conquer and kill well enough, but none of them can restore. This one restores. Not only did He rise from the dead He raised others from the dead. He gave sight to the blind, hearing the deaf, cleansing to the lepers and healing to the sick. And unlike so many kings of this earth who could not cast out their demons, but rather were possessed by them, this king casts out demons. He lives and reigns even now and to all eternity. He reigns over all of the kingdoms of the earth. He sits at the right hand of the Father.

The meek have inherited the earth, just as He said that He would.

And so why do you obsess over the kingdoms of the earth? Why so much pain and suffering over a midterm election that did not go the way that you thought it would? Why do you agonize more over an election and the rising and falling of the political party with which you are affiliated than you agonize over making a proper confession of faith? Why do you read the news more than you read the Bible? Why do you listen to politicians more than you listen to sound preaching? And how much money do you give to political causes as opposed to ones that advance the kingdom of the Son of David?

If the Lord of history permits history to go on long enough the State of Illinois will end. It will not last forever even as the United States will not last forever. Neither of these organizations were established by someone who rose from the dead. This is why the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Kingdom of Jesus. The gates of hell shall not prevail because the gates of hell cannot prevail. The king cannot die again.

It is an odd irony of a sinful existence that those who look so powerful are those who are so weak and the One who looks so weak is in reality the one who is so powerful.

We will be celebrating the beginning of His reign here in a few short weeks. It won't be long now. The children are already preparing their Christmas Eve program. And it is fitting that the children of the congregation should prepare the Christmas Eve program. Because right now among us they are the meek. They are the kind of people that our Lord said that His kingdom was for. We are to become like them, not them like us. And so they will tell us of this king who reigns forever. They will tell us of this king who conquers death for us. They will tell us that by being members of His kingdom our death is conquered and everlasting life is ours. And they will tell us how it all got started.

It all got started in a feeding trough in Bethlehem.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.