

**St. Peter Lutheran Church - Modesto, CA**  
**Last Sunday of the Church Year: Christ the King**  
**November 20, 2005**

*Sermon by Pastor Johann Caauwe*

**“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail. “Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”” (Isaiah 51:4-8, NIV)**

**Thy Kingdom Come**

Jesus told Pontius Pilate that he was a king, but Pontius Pilate didn't understand Christ's Kingdom. Jesus had told the Jews that he was a king, but they didn't understand Christ's kingdom. Ever since the time of Christ, men have grossly misunderstood how Christ our King reigns. Some say that Christ reigns on earth through his representative on earth, the pope of Rome. They say that Jesus reigns when the pope uses political power over the kings of the earth. Some say that Jesus reigns when church leaders lobby politicians to cast their votes in the right way. Others may say that Jesus doesn't reign at all. He was a nice guy who may or may not have lived long ago, but he is certainly not a king.

But Jesus Christ is king, and he does reign. He sits at the right hand of God the Father and reigns over all things for the benefit of his people. He does that without our prayers and petitions, and yet we regularly come to his throne and pray **“thy kingdom come.”** But what does that mean? What are we really asking for? The Old Testament lesson for today reminds us how Jesus reigns and it prompts to come to him again and again with the prayer, 1) **Come, Lord Jesus, reign in our hearts.** and 2) **Come, Lord Jesus, reign forever.**

This section of Isaiah is addressed to believers who would be living many years later in exile in Babylon. They were people who *also* wondered how God would reign. Their nation and their kings were no more. They wondered if God would someday exercise his kingly power by delivering them and bringing them home. Or would they remain in a foreign land forever?

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God says, I will reign; my arm, my power will come for you. I will deliver you. But here is how I'm going to do it. I'm going to have my law (my teaching, my word) go out from me. And I'm going to use my Word to enlighten people. I'm going to use my Word to bring righteousness and save people—from their sins. And when my Word is proclaimed, those people will look to me and believe. They'll trust in me and wait for me. This is how I will reign. I will reign in the hearts of mankind by faith. I'll give them promises and they will believe those promises.

But the world has always mocked God in this and said, “That'll never work. It can't work. You can't reign over heaven and earth just by making promises. People won't buy that. You have to do something bigger than that. You 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 and they'll only buy it if it works. You'll have to have some physical proof that Jesus reigns before he he'll ever be our king.

If you want to wait for physical proof, here it is: **Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies.** Jesus says he reigns in our hearts with his Word. If you doubt that, and think 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 falls, 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 shall pass away, but my Word will never pass away.”** If we trust in the things of the world, eventually we'll realize the truth but it will be too late and we will perish.

Just as God sent out his Word to his Old Testament people, he sends out his Word to us. He tells how he planned our salvation from the beginning of the world. He tells us how Jesus Christ lived and died to remove the guilt and sin of all people in the whole world. He tells us that when we hear this Word he creates faith in our hearts to believe that Word. And that is how he reigns in our hearts. That's the answer Martin Luther gives in his Small Catechism to the question, “How does God's kingdom come? *God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.*”

So when we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we pray that God would reign in our hearts with his Word. We pray that God would use the words of Scripture that we have heard with our ears and seen with our eyes and spoken on our lips. It stands to reason, then, that in addition to simply praying “thy kingdom come,” we would also see to it that we hear and read and speak God's Word on a regular basis so that we may boldly pray, Come, Lord Jesus, reign in our hearts.

Jesus answers our prayer and says, “**My salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.**” He will reign in our hearts by faith, and he will reign forever. He says to those who believe in him: “**Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts**” (He speaks to people who understand that God has justified us by grace through faith and people who carry that truth with them deep in their hearts—these are strong believers) And he says to them: **Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults.**

Even strong believers can be tempted to think that Jesus is not the king. Even life-long Christians can be tempted to wonder if 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 that happen in it and deep inside you wonder how all this stuff could go on if God is really God. Or perhaps you are more convinced by the garbage of life, not the stuff that’s going on out in the world, but the stuff that has been dumped at your front door. Perhaps you can make your list of all the trials and disasters that have come into your life. Some may be minor; others may be major. They may have come steadily over the years or perhaps they all came in the past week. And you try to cope with your losses and bear your sufferings, but sometimes you just have to wonder, “Where in the world is God?”

And on top of it all you hear “**the reproach of men**” and their “**insults,**” basically saying that you are a fool for believing in and devoting yourself to a God who lets all these things happen. And occasionally you are tempted to agree with them and that terrifies you.

But here we read, Do not be afraid, ‘**For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool.** They won’t last. They are going to fall apart like a wool sweater. 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 stings now, but it won’t last. Financial and economic woes might be very difficult right now but they won’t last. Truth be told, there is only one thing that lasts forever:

**But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.**” God will reign forever. He reigns forever to give his righteousness and salvation, and that is so much more valuable than physical, emotional, or financial health—because it lasts. And even though knowing this doesn’t take away the very real pain of life, it does prompt us to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, and reign forever.” And when we do that, we ask that God would watch over us throughout our earthly lives and the trials that come to us in our lives. We ask that God would protect us and guard us from the lies of Satan, the lies of the world, and the lies of our own sinful nature. We pray that God would safely lead us through the valley of the shadow of death and lead us to paradise, to his heavenly kingdom forever.

But there’s one more thing that these words prompt us to pray for. Listen again: **But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.**” Jesus will

continue to reign long after we are gone. He will reign throughout the lives of our children and every generation to come. He will continue to reign in the hearts of those who hear his Word in every generation. It is our obligation to speak God's Word to the next generation, and while we take that responsibility very seriously, we don't have to worry that God will give up on our children and stop reigning forever.

I pray that you will think of these words of the prophet Isaiah every time you speak the words of the Lords Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." But I hope that you'll think of them with almost every prayer we pray here in public worship. Most of our prayers we pray here in church end with these words: through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and *reigns* with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now (right now Jesus reigns in your hearts by faith through his Word) and forever (Jesus will reign forever, through every storm of your life and every step of children's lives)—now and forever. When you hear those words, then will all the confidence and joy you can muster, join with your brothers and sisters and say, yes, it is so, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, reign in our hearts forever. Amen.