

October 18, 2020

Isaiah 45:1-7

“The Lord is King of All!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In our Old Testament lesson the prophet Isaiah records the name of a king who was yet to be born. He will be named Cyrus and the Lord calls him his anointed. To be anointed means to be set apart from all the rest for a particular work, and the Lord indeed set apart Cyrus to be born and become king. He would become known as Cyrus the Great, king of the world, and he would defeat the Babylonians and send the Jewish exiles back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple so that the real Savior of the world - the King of kings - might finally appear. It would be over a century before what Isaiah wrote came to pass. It is as the prophet Daniel writes in his book (2:21-22): "He [God] changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him."

Now, before we move on too quickly, please keep in mind that before the coming of Cyrus the Great, it was also God who raised up a Babylonian king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, as well as the temple, and to lead Judah into exile, in the first place. So consider, God raises up one king to destroy the holy city and temple and then he anoints another to rebuild. These are the strange ways of the Lord, but they must be strange, for the Lord must work in the midst of a rebellious and estranged humanity. You see, the people of Judah were about to lose everything when they strayed away from the Lord their God. The Lord God had to make calamity in order to bring them to their senses and preserve a remnant who might be saved. The strange work of God, that oftentimes leaves us perplexed, always has in mind one goal and that is repentance and the salvation of his people.

Also consider how the Lord worked in king Nebuchadnezzar's life. He had been raised up king by the Most High God to rule the kingdom of men, but in his arrogance he said: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" And while the words were still in his mouth a voice fell down from heaven and Nebuchadnezzar became like a beast of the field and ate grass like an ox for the purpose that he might be emptied of himself and lift up his eyes to heaven. This was how the Most High worked in his personal life. And he praised and honored him who lives forever and ever, even saying of the Most High (Daniel 4:34-35):

... for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Well, here we are in the heat of the political season and in the midst of what appears to be nothing but a country in chaos. People are sweating and fretting about the next President. As a Christian citizen of the United States, go ahead and vote your conscience on the basis of what you know to be the truth of God's Holy Word. Make the very best Scripturally educated choice you can, but make no mistake about it, when the election is over, **The Lord is King Over All!** Whoever it will be and whatever may come from it has not arrived accidentally. The Lord is still working, and his kingdom endures, and none can stay his hand and say to him, "What have you done?"

Please keep in mind that what God does, he does for the sake of repentance and our salvation from rebellion, death, and the devil. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts he allowed for a great persecution and scattering of his church, and Saul breathed out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord along with the religious and political leaders (the Romans) of the time. But the Word of the Lord increased to the condemnation of many and the salvation of some. Even the man Saul becomes Paul and writes most of the New Testament Bible by the Holy Spirit. You see, we who are Biblical Christians need to keep things in perspective. I know that pastors and churches want to comfortably hold to and speak the gospel of repentance, but that isn't always in the best interest of the spreading of the gospel.

I realize that most people are sweating and fretting over the election because they want what they really believe is in the best interest for themselves and in keeping with their own personal views. And as things become more and more divided there develops an urgent feeling of self-preservation. Government can easily become an idol and politicians become saviors. Earth can become a place where humanity tries to create heaven. We need to be reminded that **The Lord is King of All!** Have we forgotten that word which came to us long ago when nations rage and peoples plot in vain against Jesus our King? He who sits in heaven laughs and will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury. God has set his Son as forever King to the ultimate end of all kings, and no one can stop it. So, we Christians are bid to cut through the sweating and the fretting. This we do whenever we mean it when we say "thy will be done!"

And God's will is that we confess our sins and believe in his one and only Son, loving others as we have been loved by him, standing for truth. He who rules all things did not come to bring peace on the earth but division between good and evil and a final separation between the two. He who formed the government to protect the lawful did not form it to be an idol, nor did he create politicians to be our salvation. He who created the earth does not plan to keep it as it wears out, but to replace it with a new heaven and earth, the dwelling of righteousness, God with us.

There is so much more that we can say in this regard, but it all can be nicely summarized in the crystal clear words of Jesus before Pontius Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world (John 18:36)." Indeed, we are not fighting to own a so-called heaven on earth as this place is wearing out like a garment and to be devoured by the fire of God's Judgment. Like Jesus our King, we his Kingdom do the best we can to speak and vote the truth as much as we can, while the voice of truth can still be heard. Everyone on the side of Truth listens to his voice.

Jesus was crucified for being King, for threatening this world's love for the world. They placed a sign over his head to proclaim the crime that he committed which was in part captured by the word "King." Those who cannot hear the truth are still trying to remove him and his kingdom from the earth because he and his people say that the deeds of this unbelieving world are evil and that there is no salvation to be had except for that which is given by Jesus. But to the nations that rage, and to the peoples who plot in vain, and as kings of the earth exalt themselves and rulers take counsel to unite against him, the Father warns, "O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all

who take refuge in him (Psalm 2:10-12).” Indeed! To all who set themselves up against the Lord and against his Christ, when the Son returns he will break them with a rod of iron and dash them as if they were nothing but a fragile flower pot.

But, “blessed are all who take refuge in him,” it says in Psalm 2. And we are those who take refuge in him, and we will indeed be protected from all the dangers of the down here no matter what they may be and if we die. He is our aid, our relief, our escape. First and foremost, he is the King of our Salvation, that is, he is the one who gave up His own life for us on the cross so that we might have the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and who now lives and reigns to all eternity to supply our every need. Secondly, he is the Lord of Hosts, a King of might, who is the protector of his people and the conqueror over all who are opposed to the gospel of repentance.

While, for the most part, the victorious Christ and his rule over all remains hidden from our physical eyes and is still to be revealed in all its fulness, the death and resurrection of Jesus anticipates the day when all things will be placed under his feet. In that day, Jesus will ask and the Father will give him all things that he may reign eternally in glory. But before then, the kings of the earth and their armies will gather together to make war against him by surrounding his people. He will then return in exaltation. And, as it says in the book of Revelation: “The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” Let us then boldly face whatever the future may hold. The Lord and his King is in control. Even now **The Lord is King Over All!** In him, as we consider whatever happens, may we mean it when we say “Thy Will Be Done!” for his will is a good will unto repentance and for salvation. He knows how to give, he knows what to reveal ... he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott