

# *Ascension Lutheran Church*

*Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of December 21, 2008*

## The Kingdom of Christ Lasts Forever (Luke 1:26-38)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Our text is from the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke:

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

This is the text.

Dear friends in Christ, nothing lasts forever. The computers we buy, for instance, might be state of the art one year but within a couple of years they are antiquated dinosaurs. The cars we have will eventually be traded in or thrown away. Things break down. Our bodies: as we get older they begin to fall apart. Every time we get a cold or the flu or any kind of ailment it's a reminder that the things of this world are passing away and death is on the way.

Today, we are reminded that we have been given something that will never get old, something that will never wear out. This morning, we focus on Christ. He is the King who was born on Christmas and His reign lasts forever and ever.

That's what the angel who appeared to the Virgin Mary spoke about. He told her that she was going to give birth to a son. The angel said, “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.” This is the same prophecy given in the Old Testament reading for this morning. God told King David about the Christ: “He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

The first thing you notice about this eternal kingdom is that it's hidden. It's not a political kingdom. It is spiritual. Sometimes, during Jesus' life, you could see that He was the Divine King. He would heal people, He would raise the dead; He would calm the storm and walk on the water. But our God is a God who hides His glory. He hid His glory in the Virgin Mary – no one would have ever guessed that she was carrying the King of Kings who would reign forever. On the holy night of Jesus' birth, God hid His glory in a feeding trough. There Christ lay; the Commander in chief of the company of heaven. And years later, God hid His glory on a cross. No one would have ever guessed that the man hanging on the middle cross was the Son of the Most High, the One who would reign over the house of Jacob forever. God hid His glory there, as He took on the sins of the world and took the penalty of death in order to set you free and save you for eternal life.

God still hides His glory today, as He comes in ways we can see and relate to in earthly terms. We would like to see grandstand performances from God. We would like Him to

wow us with something out of this world. We would like to see a grand spectacle of some kind, something that impresses us and excites us. But our God is a God who hides His glory today. And yet, He does tell us where we can find Him.

He tells you that you can find Him in only one place, and that is the humble place of the Gospel. Although it is spoken by sinners in this world, although it is shared by sinners, although it is shared by stumbling preachers and teachers, the Gospel is where you find the glory of God. Here in the story of the son of David and the Son of God you find God's glory, you find the eternal kingdom of the Christ.

Friends, what is the mark of a successful prime minister or a successful ruler for a king? The mark of success for any ruler is peace. Political peace, economical peace, international peace...

But no matter how good a leader may be, the peace they set up never lasts. Suddenly there is war. Suddenly there is a recession and uncertain economic times. Suddenly things aren't going well in the country that they are ruling. David and Solomon enjoyed a time of peace in Israel, but shortly after their reign, everything went down the drain.

Isn't that how it is in our lives? Peace never lasts there either. For awhile, everything is peaceful with your health, but then suddenly, that's not the case. Everything is peaceful financially, but then suddenly, you may struggle to make ends meet. Personal peace, national peace – all of it is temporary. All of it is fleeting.

That's what makes Christ such an unusual king. He sets up a kind of peace that never ends; a kind of peace that goes on and on forever. It's not a political type of peace, or a financial type of peace, or an emotional type of peace. The peace that Jesus sets up is peace between you and God. God is no longer angry because of your sin. And you no longer have to be afraid of God because of your sin. Jesus takes your sin away, and sets up peace between you and your Heavenly Father. That is the kingdom that Jesus sets up, the kingdom that the angel spoke about to Mary – a kingdom of eternal peace between you and God.

But how do you become a part of this kingdom? That's what makes this kingdom very strange. You're not born into it being in the right family line, as people are normally born into the kingdoms of this earth. Ever since Adam and Eve, no one has ever been naturally born into the Kingdom of God. And you can't earn your way into Christ's kingdom by being a good person. You can't buy your way into it either.

A person becomes a member of Christ's kingdom by being born a second time through baptism and believing something that sounds incredibly ridiculous to natural man. We must believe that although we think we are a pretty good person, we are actually terribly sinful. We must believe that this child born in a stable, lying in a manger, is God. We must repent of our gossip, our lustful thoughts, our hurtful words and look to Christ who gives His righteousness who has paid for our sins.

Even though we can't see the glory of God now, it is here hidden in the bread and wine in Holy Communion, hidden in water in Baptism, hidden in the stable at Christ's birth,

hidden in His death on the cross. The Holy Spirit works on your heart through the Word that you hear in church, in Bible study, and that you receive in Baptism. He leads you to believe these things. This is how you become a member of Christ's eternal Kingdom. And this is how you continue in the Kingdom. As Christians we must be brought continually to the cross, back to our Baptism in repentance and faith.

Do you realize that if you were the only sinner in the entire world, God still would have done all this for you? He still would have been born on Christmas. He still would have died on Good Friday. He still would have risen from the dead on Easter Sunday. If you had been the only sinner in the entire world, Jesus would still have done all this for you.

This is something you have, that will never grow old and that will never fade away. The Devil will try to take it away from you, but remember, the Devil is powerless against the Word of Christ and the Word is near you. Christ has said, "I am with you always to the very end of the age." And so we cling to Him. Christ's kingdom is God's eternal gift to you, a gift that will never fall apart. There is eternal peace between you and God, and Jesus, your king, will someday take you home, and there you will reign with him forever.

Friends, it is true that life is becoming more uncertain in this world. Morality continues to decay. The body continues to get older. World peace, personal peace – it comes and goes. Nothing lasts forever. Except what you have hidden here, in the Word. In Christ your sins are forgiven. You are a child of God through the eternal Word and Baptism. Jesus is on the throne and in these uncertain times you have security that your King reigns forever, that you are His child, and that He will bring you through any and all trials.

Friends, because of Christ we have a reason to be excited! We have the wonderful and glorious mission to share this peace of Christ with those who don't know Him, to lead others to salvation from the darkness of this perishing world to the Heavenly Kingdom that stands forever. Jesus reigns so you may have the peace that passes all understanding even in the midst of turbulent times in this world. For you have the hope of true life in Christ, the life that will never spoil or fade.

May God's Kingdom come to many in Montreal, in Quebec, and everywhere this Advent and Christmas season. May the people of Montreal come to know Jesus as their Prince of Peace. Amen. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.