

Christ the King
Ezekiel 34
Pastor Kolander

What makes someone a king? I don't watch game of thrones, but I would assume that is a question that they attempt to answer. The Bible gives us some different examples of how one can become king. You can be the heir to the throne, and then when your father passes away, you become King as King Solomon did after his father David died. Just a peaceful succession. Or you can be chosen to be the king of people like David, and his predecessor Saul. Sometimes that goes peacefully sometimes it doesn't. You can have a stage a coup and try to overthrow the current king and take it by force like Absalom David's son decided to do. Sometimes the power to be a king is given, sometimes it is taken. But like any leader, what makes you good or bad, is not just how you became a leader or a king, it is what you do with that position.

It is Christ the King Sunday. A Sunday that we get to praise Jesus for who he is our King. He is the one who rules over this world. He is in control. He is above all governments and earthly kings. When we look at Jesus, I don't know that this picture always pops into our head. We walk into a church, and we see this skinny guy on a cross, and we say well that isn't very powerful. Or we read about him in our gospel lessons, and Jesus is being called a king by a group of soldiers who aren't praising him but are mocking him and beating him, and we think to ourselves what kind of king is this.

When I think of a king, I think about having all power consolidated down into the hands of one person. I think about absolute authority. And that's not always how we picture Jesus. If you close your eyes and think about Jesus what image comes to your mind? Is it a mighty king. Or is it a suffering servant. Is Jesus ruling at the right hand of God with all the angels surrounding him, or do you see him, sweating over a rock as he contemplates his death? Do you think of the crucifix? Jesus lifted up on a cross to suffer, or do you think of him raised above every authority and power.

This picture of the suffering Jesus is not the norm for him. That was the exception. For the entirety of eternity, Jesus has been all-powerful, except

for this 33 year period where he lived as a man like you and me on this earth. Today is a day not thinking about Jesus as his weakest moments. I know there are nativities popping up all over town and possibly in your front yard or your house, but don't think about Jesus as a helpless baby, or a dying man. But think of him as he is an all-powerful God who rules over all!

The text that we are studying today is from Ezekiel 34. And I am going to read it for you again. And as I do listen to the promises that God makes to you. Everyone loves a good campaign promise, but these are promises made to you by God who never breaks a promise. He will never say to you an unforeseen obstacle got in my way because there isn't anything strong enough to stop him. He will never say "I tried my best but..." Because his will is done. Every time you hear "I will" that is God making a promise to his people. You are part of those people. This is what your king promises to do for you.

'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will search for my sheep and look after them. 12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and all the settlements in the land. 14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. 16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

When Ezekiel wrote this message from God, Israel was in a tough place as a country. The nation is falling apart. A foreign invader had come in. Throughout this book, Ezekiel is warning the people about all of the destruction that is going to or is already taking place. Ezekiel is explaining to the people why this is happening. It is easy to put your faith in a leader when everything is going well. When things keep getting better for

everyone popularity rises. But Ezekiel is reminding the children of Israel and us, to trust in our King even when everything doesn't look perfect.

Maybe at first when you think of a shepherd and a king they are very different. You have a king living in a palace; a shepherd is sleeping outside. The king is dressed in beautiful clothes; the shepherd is covered in grass stains. The king is eating choice foods; the shepherd is eating whatever he can find. But when you think of their jobs. What does a shepherd do? He protects his flock, and he leads them to food and water. He uses his life to make the life of the sheep better by governing them. Isn't that what a good king does? Doesn't a good king protect his flock? Doesn't a king lead his people to better lives? Who cares where they live? Who cares what they wear? Who cares what they eat? A shepherd is a king to his flock. Jesus is our shepherd and our king.

Jesus is that shepherd he is the king.

God says I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. **24** I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the Lord have spoken.

David had been dead for a couple hundred years when Ezekiel wrote this. It was Jesus, part of the earthly royal family who would rule among the people as the shepherd king. He would be king of all. He would rule forever. He is your king and he cares for you.

Your king knows you. Even though he is the king, he isn't removed from you, or any of his people like some kings are. He isn't too busy for you. He isn't concerned with more important things. He isn't limited by time, or resources, or energy, or strength. He knows you. Personally, he knows me personally, and he will look after us. Our text says: He will search for his sheep. He will look after them. He will rescue them. He will bring them out from all the nations, and he will gather them together. He will use his time to care for you. Even if you have wandered away. Even if you ran away yelling I am never coming back. Even if you have gotten yourself into some trouble, Jesus will come to your rescue. He will come to save you. He will

come to gather you back to him. He is not going to let his kingdom be stolen from him. Time and time again he will call you back to him.

While we are with him, he will tend us. He will take care of us. Just as a shepherd makes sure that his sheep have water and pasture, your king is going to make sure that you have what is necessary. That's not just physical things. God will give us what we need. Even though sometimes we think that we need more. My daughter learned recently the word need. She says "I need to watch a movie." "I need a snack." She has a tough time deciphering between want and need. That doesn't always change, even as our vocabulary grows. But just as parents know many times better what we need, so does our king.

He knows sometimes there are things we truly need. And he will give them to us. He knows sometimes we are going to need protection or comfort, or strength, or insight, and we have a king who will always give us what we need. He promises that when he says He will tend us. He will pasture us.

Maybe it is easier for us to think about Jesus as suffering, or weak. That way we get to be the ones who take care of him. To feel like we are the ones who are helping God out makes us feel strong. But that's not true. The strong and the sleek he says he will destroy. He is the one that is in control of all. He is not weak. He is in control of all. And we as his subjects should honor him and praise him with not just our songs but our lives.

How many times in a job setting do you think you could get away with deliberate insubordination of your boss without being fired? How many times do you think you could tell a supervisor, Nah I don't think I am going to do that when you are given a job? How many times do you think you could go not showing up to work before you get a call saying, don't even bother coming back in? How many times do you think you could commit blatant treason before you would be thrown in jail? For all of those, the answer is probably, not too many times. Because when we act out against our leaders, many times they refuse to lead us any longer. They have a limited patience dealing with insubordination. They aren't strong enough to cover for your weaknesses. But Jesus, the king of kings, and Lord of lords, he doesn't give up on you. When you don't do what he tells you to do. He forgives you. Because he is strong enough When you question him, he

answers you with his word that never changes. When you wander, he calls you back. When you lash out at him, he disciplines with love.

He is a king that is unlike any other. He is more powerful than any other. And he uses his power selflessly. He uses it to uphold justice and to help you. That is the love that your King has for you. We need to recognize that.

When we recognize how awesome our king is, then we can start to praise him. The more amazing someone is, the more we truly want to praise them. The more you know about your God, the more you will want to praise him. Because he is like never-ending well. You can always go deeper. The more we realize how wonderful our king is, the more we will want to praise him. He is without equal. He is strong. He is mighty. He is king of Kings; he is Lord of Lords. He is above all powers and rulers and authority forever and ever. He will rule forever. And he uses that power for you. To lead you and guide you to protect and prosper you. He will never fail. He will never be dethroned. He is too strong for that. To him be the praise forever and ever. Amen.