

## The Last

Psalm 132:1-12

Revelation 1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

Sermon text: 2 Samuel 23:1-7 (Text courtesy of Vanderbilt Divinity Library)

23:1 Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

23:2 The spirit of the LORD speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue.

23:3 The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God,

23:4 is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

23:5 Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?

23:6 But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be picked up with the hand;

23:7 to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear. And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

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These are the last words of King David; the beloved, ruddy, sheep herder who killed Goliath with merely a sling shot. The King who suffered under losses of loved ones - and - losses in his self image - when he realized how *low* he could go as a human being, even as a chosen one of God. These are purported to be his final reflections on what he found to be of value, as he contemplated the whole of his life. And he speaks of God - not of his number of prodigy, or possessions, or exploits, or number of triumphs in battle, but reflections on a life being an instrument of God.

We end this church year with one last look at King David - the Old Testament hero that we have spent the most time with since I started preaching here. For those of you who were grumbling that there was too much David at the time, and relieved that we had finished with him and had gone on to other people, Sorry - you are going to have to suffer through one final look.

For next Sunday is a new beginning. It begins Advent, a new church year. This is the final Sunday in the Church year, so we study the final words of a beloved King. And we begin to transition to another sense of King - Christ the King. We will be looking in this sermon about our inheritance of living as part of God's Kingdom.

It is also Thanksgiving Sunday. In the commentaries online they give choices out of which we are to choose the focus for worship. They offer either Thanksgiving resources or Christ the King resources, or End time's resources . . . so I chose to focus a bit on them all. A Cornucopia of themes!

According to our scriptures David said, "One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land." David has a clear and pure analogy for his life and what God has given him. In looking back he doesn't focus on the times when he was weak and messed up - because he sees the vast majority of his life as being extremely blessed. It is because he received continued motivating, mercy and hope during his life that he could say this. Because of his continued faith in God, he could look back on the whole of his life in gratitude and in thankfulness!

That is the key to living a life in faith - thankfulness, and the knowledge that you have God to thank for the blessings in your life. "For [God] has made with [us] an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure." The texts from today all make reference to God's kingdom being beyond this earth, being a part of a simple truth that is plain to see but difficult for some to realize. What is more, I believe that it is because David was sensing this relationship with God - the fact that he was challenged and he responded to the challenge that he could look back on his life with gratitude and a sense of being in a covenant which brought about prosperity.

Those who rise to the occasions of their life - ignore the human wisdom which focuses on failures and possibilities of failures - but trust in God for prosperity - they are Kings of their lives. And if we consider God as our power and authority to rise to the challenges of our reign here on earth, then it truly will be that we look back on our lives, see what mistakes we thought we had made as lessons we had learned and think, "Wow! What a blessed life I have had."

David speaks of Divine Favor. He sees his rule and those of his descendents as being blessed. When one hopes to have divine favor - it can be a blessing and a terrifying possibility of condemnation. Divine favor can be a tremendous burden. During the preparation of this sermon I looked at the title of the sermon "The Last" suddenly with different eyes. I choose these words because it seemed to be a theme when I was choosing titles a while back. Our scriptures for today feature David's last words, the last times from Revelation, some of Jesus' last words, and the last Sunday in the church year. So 'The Last' seemed to be a good title to focus on.

But as I looked at the title one moment, I saw the German word, "Last" and came to a new awareness. In German, 'Last' means burden. I am sure that there were times when David saw his calling as a burden, yet his last words were full of gratitude and awe to God.

Some may focus on Christ's life and see only his horrible death and wonder if he considered his calling a burden. We hear scripture about "My yoke is easy my burden is light". And yet so often it seems as though being a Christian is a difficult thing.

Perhaps if we saw our faith as more than a list of does and don't - but more as a relationship with a power who loves us - who is bond irretrievably from us - perhaps then we would understand that we share the sentiment with David when he said, " Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?"

That is an interesting turn of a phrase. Like God is in the habit of fulfilling our desires and all we attempt will prosper. We know this is not true. It certainly wasn't true about David. But I believe he meant it when he said that on his deathbed. And I believe I can explain why he felt he could say that. As we grow in understanding, as our knowledge of God matures, our desires transform themselves and our ideas of prosperity are amended.

We "put away childish things" and start to realize that the value of being a part of other's lives is far greater than our own wishes for things or for admiration. Being honored as a just and fair person, being able to changes people's lives in some way, big or small, for the better, that is a prosperity of the being that cannot come close to a rising bank account.

Because we are a part of a human experience where the one we worship was willing to sacrifice, we are willing to sacrifice. Because Jesus washed the feet of his Disciples and served them, we come to realize that our inheritance of living as part of God's Kingdom is that we can serve others in love, too. And our God of love will never fail us in our learning about and doing acts of love.

In following Christ the King, we, too, become Kings and Queens. Because as we accept our responsibility to care for those around us as best we can, as we learn how we can reach beyond ourselves and serve others, that

is when we align ourselves with the majestic covenant with God. And love will never fail us. If we live a life where, as we matured we realized that the greatest wealth was in serving others, our lives will inevitably end as confidently as David's life did.

We celebrate this, Christ the King Sunday in the truth that Christ is greater than King David. Christ is intimately a part of God - and of us. We sense this truth through the Holy Spirit which tingles inside of us - as a mystical part of our awareness. And for this we have much to be thankful for. We spend this day being thankful for the covenant Yahweh made with David, for the elevation of a carpenter from Nazareth to Christ, the merciful powerful King of our souls. Amen