

A Sermon  
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Grace Baptist Church  
Bryans Road, Maryland  
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## **King of Kings**

Matthew 28:16-20

Earlier this week, I was driving to the Bryans Road Food Lion when suddenly, on my radio, a choir broke forth singing "God Save the King." It was actually part of a commercial advertising some upcoming programming, picking up on yesterday's coronation of King Charles III. Some of you may have watched it, or at least saw highlights of it. Others of you may have had no interest in it, or perhaps didn't even know it was going on. But as you can imagine, the ceremony was a major event to millions of people in England, and others watching it around the world.

One of the notable things about the coronation is that it's a deeply religious ceremony. This is reflected in the music, the prayers, and the Scripture readings. There was even a portion of the service where the Archbishop of Canterbury anointed the king with holy oil symbolizing the pouring out of God's grace in the Holy Spirit. In fact, the moment was viewed as so sacred that it took place behind a screen. Then King Charles was presented with emblems of royalty, culminating in the crown. Following that, those gathered paid homage to the new monarch before Holy Communion was taken.

Some people have highlighted the seeming disconnect between the religious feel of the ceremony and the predominantly secular tone of the country. In view of how few people in England actually go to church, one person even pointed out that watching the coronation on television will likely be the first church service that many people have observed in years. And even then, questions have been raised about how much God's sovereignty gets overshadowed by human sovereignty. One scholar even recommended applying the "Martian test" to the ceremony. He said, "If a martian was watching the coronation service, you'd ask them what [they would] learn about English religion. And they'd say, 'Well, it looks like they worship the king.' And I'd say, 'Yeah, you're right.'"<sup>1</sup>

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v. 18). That's what Jesus declares in today's text from Matthew. Matthew's Gospel ends with the risen Jesus on a mountain, worshiped by his awestruck but still faltering disciples. Remember that these are the followers who had fled at his arrest. It's not as if they had been rock solid in their faith, just waiting for Jesus to summon them to their first church service following the resurrection. They had denied and abandoned him. They had deserted him. And yet, give them credit, they believed the women's testimony that Jesus had been raised and heeded their instructions to go to Galilee to meet him.

But even now, there's more work to be done to strengthen the disciples' trust in Jesus. They're still a fragile band of followers. Matthew doesn't hesitate to note that when they saw Jesus "they worshiped him; but some doubted" (v. 17). So to some extent, they're still a mixture of belief and unbelief. But the good news is that what lies ahead, and what Jesus expects them to be and to do, don't hinge on their faith being completely perfect. They hinge on the sovereignty of Jesus. And there's absolutely nothing uncertain about that. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Jesus is speaking about his ruling authority. After his resurrection, Jesus hasn't retreated to heaven, waiting there until he returns to exercise his governance of the world. No, he's already revealing and exercising his dominion. That's what "Christ" means. It's the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah," which means "anointed King," "Lord," "Ruler." Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. He lays claim to all humankind and all the cosmos. The whole universe is under his sovereignty. As theologian Abraham Kuyper put it, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry 'Mine!'"<sup>2</sup>

In one of his sermons, pastor Tim Keller says that when Jesus comes into a person's life,

Everything is reordered. If he was a guru, if he was a great man, if he was a great teacher, even if he was the genie of the lamp, there would be some limits on his rights over you. If he's God, you cannot relate to him at all and retain anything in your life that's a non-negotiable. Anything ... any view, any conviction, any idea, any behavior, any relationship. He may change it, he may not change it, but at the beginning of the relationship you have to say, "In everything he must have the supremacy."<sup>3</sup>

The supremacy of Christ. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." By raising Jesus from the dead, God has vindicated Jesus' life and mission. God has demonstrated and displayed his power over evil, sin, and death. Jesus Christ is Lord. That's the foundation of the Christian life. That's the foundation of this church's life. It's the foundation of our mission as a congregation. Our commission to spread the gospel isn't based on our vision, as human beings, of what our community and the world can become. It isn't based on our ideas and plans for transmitting the good news through our worship, our programs, and our local, national, and international ministries. Rather, our mission is based on the reality of who Jesus is, and what has happened through him. Jesus' future reign has begun here in the midst of the present. "Therefore, go..." (v. 19).

In this case, "go" or "going" had to do primarily with preaching and practicing the gospel beyond just God's people Israel, which had been the focus of Jesus' earthly ministry. Now the proclamation of Jesus' Lordship needs to extend to "all nations," which essentially means Gentiles, the non-Jewish population. If Jesus is Lord of all, that means good news for all, not just some.

But making this move from some to all isn't an easy or automatic transition. It requires recognizing and addressing barriers. It requires crossing cultural boundaries that divide and separate. It requires overcoming lines that get drawn on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, and custom. All these things can present challenges to the spread of the gospel. But the good news about the good news is that in Christ these boundaries have already been overcome. It's not as if the risen Jesus is only sovereign in certain territories, over certain people groups, who speak certain languages. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." All means all. That's part of why we call it the Great Commission. There's nothing small about it, just as there's nothing small about Jesus' Lordship.

Yet even though our assignment isn't small, it is local. Now granted, we spend a lot of time in our church focusing on the significance of international missions and our participation in the global church, especially through our Missions Moment videos, our mission offerings, and our prayers for those who serve in various parts of the world. But we also live in a day and time when the nations have come to us. Society here in the United States has become more and more diverse, racially, ethnically, and culturally. We now share the cultural landscape with people of different nationalities, coming from different backgrounds, speaking different languages. More and more, your daily life, in your neighborhood, at the

store, at school, in the office, at the factory, and hopefully at church too, bring you into engagement and interaction with a wide range of individuals and people groups.

Global missions expert Paul Borthwick shares a story about a young man named Peter who was working at a McDonald's in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Paul knew Peter from the young adult ministry at church, and knew he had just graduated with a master's degree from Harvard University. During a break, they had coffee together:

"What are you doing here?" I asked, knowing that Harvard master's degree students don't usually aspire to work the counter at McDonald's. "Well," he explained, "I graduated in May but I went four months without finding a job, so I said to myself, 'I need some income to pay bills.' So this is where I've ended up—at least for now."

"Sorry to hear that. It must be hard," I replied, but Peter cut me off.

"No. Don't be sorry. *God has me here.* This place is giving me awesome opportunities to share my faith. I'm on a shift that includes a Buddhist guy from Sri Lanka, a Muslim fellow from Lebanon, a Hindu lady from India, and a fellow Christian from El Salvador. It's awesome. I get to be a global missionary to my coworkers while asking 'Would you like fries with that?'"<sup>4</sup>

As you go into the relationships, events, activities, assignments, experiences, and interactions of your daily life, remember that you're in territory where the risen Lord is present. He has promised to be with us. So stay open to the ways that he is on mission, implementing his reign, and how you can participate in that, so that others may see and hear the good news of the kingdom. You're sent to exemplify and bear witness to his reign on earth as it is in heaven, in anticipation of when he comes again and his sovereignty is fully revealed.

Until then, his objective is to gather in and form a people of the kingdom, a people of the world to come. This kingdom community is made up of people called "disciples." Not disciples of you or me. Not disciples of Grace Baptist Church. Disciples of Jesus. Fully devoted followers of his teachings and his way. People whose profession of faith and baptism are demonstrated in loving obedience. People who are practicing what Jesus preaches. "Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," says our Lord (v. 20). Discipleship, in all its depth and all its demands.

In Matthew's Gospel, the best summary of what that looks like comes from Jesus himself in his Sermon on the Mount, where he describes the faithful life and defines true blessedness. A sense of brokenness and poverty of spirit. A deep sense of need for God's mercy and forgiveness. A solidarity with those who suffer and mourn. A humility that resists arrogance and self-righteousness. A yearning for God's righteousness and the setting right of this world's wrongs. A commitment to the cause of the oppressed. A purity of heart and a passion for God. A resistance to violence and coercive force. A lifestyle of reconciliation and peacemaking. This is life under the sovereignty of the crucified Messiah, the one who has been crowned King of kings. Therefore, go....

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Davies, "UK Coronation Remains Religious, Even if the Country Isn't." Christianity Today. May 2, 2023. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2023/may-web-only/uk-king-charles-coronation-church-of-england-religious-mona.html> (May 3, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Richard J. Mouw, "Abraham Kuyper: A Man for This Season." Christianity Today. October 26, 1998. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/october26/8tc086.html> (May 3, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Borthwick, *Great Commission, Great Compassion* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015) 46.