

He is the King!

Daniel 7:9-14

Intro

Every now and again, you listen to a prophesy that was made in the days of the Old Testament and you think, 'wow, they were so right.'

As this prophesy starts out, you may be thinking, 'um, is Ryan seeing a different world then I'm seeing?' The short answer is, 'no, I do not see fiery flames and wheels that are burning fire'.

However, this vision that was placed into Daniel's mind does an amazing job of describing someone whom he has never met. The description that he gives is such that we, from our place of faith, know exactly who he is talking about, and each of us are able to say, 'wow, Daniel did get it right'. It might not be yet, but it is right. The scripture reads this way.

Daniel 7:9-14

⁹ As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousand served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

¹¹ I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. ¹³ As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. ¹⁴ To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

John 18:33-37

Intro

Our second passage takes the person whom Daniel introduced us to and allows us to hear his voice declare that the sort of kingdom that he has authority over is not like the kingdoms of this world, where we are compelled to follow out of fear, expectation, or just not knowing any better.

Instead, this is a King who leads in love: leading in love, those who are of his kingdom follow, and follow wherever he leads because they know his voice and knowing his voice, they trust in his guidance.

Do you?

The scripture reads this way.

John 18:33-37

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' 34 Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' 35 Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' 36 Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' 37 Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'

"He Is the King!"

I've got a few questions for you.

Question 1! What is a lord? My hunch is that many people lean into an old history class that speaks to the time in and around the Middle Ages where the concepts of lord and servant (or serf) have been talked about. Boiling that particular example down further, it's someone that you listen to, someone who is in charge, someone that provides you protection, someone that rules the land and therefore you follow them.

How would you answer it? What is a lord?

The next question that I ask (you know, as we sit here in a Christian sanctuary) is this: is Jesus your Lord? Most times, especially in this setting, the answer is 'yes'. Other times, it is 'no'. In either case, there is the, seemingly necessary, follow up: why?

So those are my questions for you: what is a lord? Is Jesus your Lord? And then regardless of your answer to the second query, why?

Here's is why I start off in that direction: the last Sunday of the church calendar is called Christ the King Sunday. The passages that go along with it, as we have already heard this morning, reference the fact that Jesus is the King, is the ruler, is the Lord.

Well, all of that is very nice to hear, but it is true for us in our lives?

Said another ways, who leads you?

Because it would be real easy to assume that because you are here on a Sunday morning, let alone the Sunday of a holiday weekend, that we are all able to answer the question in such a way that declares in no uncertain terms: I follow Jesus! Jesus is my Lord!

But I realize that the reason that people come to church, participate in religious services, is for a variety of reason. Some come out of habit and obligation (my grandparents went, my parents went, and I go too).

Some come out of guilt, feeling like if they are in the presence of God that maybe something bad will be washed away or something good will be put on.

Some come because the family drags them and if they didn't come, then there would be some sort of punishment inflicted.

And yes, many come because they are led by their faith that calls them to gather and lift praise to their King.

We gather into this place for a variety of reasons.

And in that reality exists the fact that many of us are led and guided by influences that are anything but God. I mean, let's speak plainly: there are a whole lot of folks out in the world whose lord, looks anything but like Jesus.

Now I'm very grateful that this year, unlike so many years past, there was not video splashed over every Friday morning newscast by 8 AM of mobs of people storming stores and running each other over to get this, that, and the other thing...but at this point that actually hits us as surprising which reminds us just how commonplace the mentality of 'me, me, me' really is.

But the crowds were still out there. There were young and old who were throwing themselves into the scrum, folks of all different colors, and I am sure all different creeds, all of them exhibiting tendencies that were showing that they were being led by something other than God. Because while there wasn't much video, there was a quick clip that showed up Saturday night that showed an employee on her knees, up on a table tossing out leopard print...something. There was no asking of what size would you like. No, it was like the feeding of ravenous hands.

Now Black Friday is rife with obvious examples of folks who have been 'led astray' showing through their actions that they feel like they can find happiness in items.

But our lords can be all over the place. On Thursday, there were plenty of options available to us.

You have the food: who of us just kept going back long after it was wise of us to do so? Who were you following?

You have the family: who of us do (or don't do) certain things in order to make sure that that certain someone is appeased (or at least not offended)? Who were you following?

You have all the sporting distractions: who of us just couldn't be pulled away from this, that, or the other game because it was just that important? Showing to those whom you love just where they rank in importance? Who were you following?

Then you have the folks who are unwilling to pull themselves away from work. I am not talking about the folks who are told by their bosses that certain work needs to be done, but more those folks who, regardless of the time or season, allow work to be the driving influence of their time, to the point that they disappear into their cell phones, tablets, or laptops even when their family is right in front of them.

Now, as I have said before, I'm not saying that any of these things, in and of themselves are innately bad.

They aren't.

But when needing things, food, calm, distraction, or fulfillment becomes the goal, then we allow them to lord over us.

Who are we following?

Are we following the things of the world?

Are we following our own personal wants and desires?

Or are we following Jesus Christ?

Again, asking the questions I put before you earlier: what does it mean to say that someone or something is your lord? Is Jesus your Lord? If so, what does that mean to you? What does that really mean to you?

Because here's the thing: whatever has control and sway over you, dictates how you live in the world. We have already mentioned some of the negative ways, but people following God, following Jesus, are also on display all over the place. Think about all of the ways that multitudes of people are giving of themselves so that others might be benefited. People donating, serving in food pantries, helping in mission service, just showing kindness and consideration: it does exist.

But again, the question is, will we? With so much pulling at us to go this way or that, will we follow Jesus as our Lord?

We have gathered into this place for a variety of reasons, some of those reasons are more God focused than others. But what our scripture tells us in a multitude of ways is that no matter how far we meander away that the true Lord, the Lord of all, the Lord we know as Jesus Christ, still stands close to us, longing and imploring us to follow him.

No matter where we may have gone askew in the past, we always have the opportunity to turn, turn toward the Lord of all and follow, follow where he leads, be comforted in times of distress, be admonished when we go afield (again), be healed in times of brokenness.

This is yet another one of those opportunities to take whatever religiosity you may have and allow it to be transformed into a full blown intentional faithfulness. We all know that there are a whole lot of religious people who follow all sorts of things and people that look anything like Jesus. We need to be more than just religious. We need to be intentionally faithful, faithful to the point that we are able to declare beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is our Lord and we will follow him, no matter what.

As we approach these days before Christmas, who is your Lord? I pray that as we move through these days that the answer becomes one that is declared in uniformity: Jesus in our Lord!

After Sermon Prayer

O Holy God, in Your son, Jesus, You have supplied us the Lord that we need in our lives to lead us back to who we were created to be. God, help us to follow Jesus in such a way that he truly becomes our Lord. God, let it be so. Amen.