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Upper Thames Missionary Church
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The Unexpected

This is Christ the King Sunday - its the Sunday before Advent begins every year,
Christ is the King!
Caesar is not!
No earthly tyrant is king.

This is a summary statement of the gospel- you may have heard it as “Jesus is Lord” or “Christ is king”. This good news changes everything – and today I’m asking you (and myself) “Is Jesus the King of Your life?”

Let’s look at verse

You'd be thinking of Daniel Chapter 7 verses 9 to 14 –

let's have a look at it and I think you'll see why this is the primary place our minds should go in the Old Testament:

⁹ “As I looked,

thrones were placed,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
its wheels were burning fire.

¹⁰ A stream of fire issued
and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgement,
and the books were opened.

Skipping to 13....

“I saw in the night visions,

and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

-This means Jesus is explicitly claiming to be the fulfillment of the prophecies in Daniel 7.

This ruffles some feathers in Jesus' day – how can this ragged wanderer from the sticks of Galilee be the Messiah – the King?

Yet that's what Jesus claimed, and what I Proclaim to you on Christ the King Sunday –

Why should we believe it? **Because his claims were confirmed when God the Father raised him up from the dead and seated him at his right hand above all rule and authority power and dominion an every name that is given in heaven and on earth. (Ephessians 1:20-23)**

If Jesus can do the impossible (defeating death) then we can trust everything else he said.

- faith or another word for it is allegiance is so central to the scriptures – because there are ultimately only two powers in this Kingdom, either our allegiance (faith) lies with the good and just King Jesus Christ - or else our allegiance stays with the enemy the devil who has claimed us as his rightful possession since the sin of Adam and Eve.

-if the temple in Jerusalem itself isn't safe from judgment in chapter 24, then of course the Jewish people the temple represents are also going to be judged.

This judgement as “sorting” between good and evil is common in the Bible.

This is the 7th passage in the Gospel of Matthew where he talks about sorting and separating the saved from the lost. (7:13-27; 8:11-12; 10:32-33; 13:40-43, 49-50, 16:25-26, 24:36-25:30)

Am I saved by what I do?

Let's not be guilty of chopping up the gospels and treating verses as stand-alone principles – we need to see this passage in light of everything else.

Jesus is not describing “how you get saved” here - but he is describing “part” of it.

- criteria laid out - Jesus lists these as the reasons why some are separated and sent out as sheep (good) and others as goats (bad).

I was hungry you fed me thirsty you gave me something to drink stranger you welcomed me naked you clothed me sick you took care of me in prison you visited me....

-these are not the expected criteria of eternal life and eternal punishment.

-Jesus never mentioned confessing your sins or trust in his name or repenting....”

– the criteria here COMPLIMENT other statements about faith and repentance that Jesus says.

"Do you live in the basic way God intends?"

The prophet Micah says in the OT, is just one of the most quotable verses in the entire Bible for good reason - it is one of the simplest answers to the question we just asked-

Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God? (6:8)

- do all the criteria Jesus listed just their match up with the passage in Micah 6:8 – absolutely!

But here's the most important thing to remember about our passage today – its all about THE UNEXPECTED.

Because it is precisely when you **don't realize** you are walking with God that Jesus is testing your heart.

-The point of these verses isn't to divide the obviously good from the obviously bad. That would be too easy and not worth the story.

The point of the story is that both the good and the bad are surprised –
You see the point here isn't the works that were done.

Likely, the people who are separated out as goats and evil fed the hungry, visited the sick and the imprisoned gave water to the thirsty... but they did it when they thought they were meeting Jesus - they did it when other people were looking,

but they weren't doing it because they were walking **humbly with their God** but because they were walking proudly in front of their God and probably proudly in front of people.

Your allegiance can't be tested when you're in the spotlight – its tested in the shadows, when no one is watching.

Someone once said either Jesus is Lord of all or he's not Lord at all.

God's not a zero tolerance God - which is good because we all screw up genuinely in the way that I'm describing - the difference between the sheep and the goats here is whether your good works are an act, or whether they're overflowing from a new heart.

IN our passage today Jesus is saying there is only two outcomes at judgement before his throne - and you shouldn't kid yourself that Jesus only sees "nice" you and doesn't notice what you're like at home with your spouse or kids, or on the job talking to your subordinate co-worker.

He knows where your heart really is.

And the only way that you can keep a true and open account with God about this is to come before the throne – today, and every day - and confess to that king of all kings that you sin, that I sin.

The passage ends in v 46 with two states – Life or punishment.

Eternal punishment is for those who carry on believing they can trick God with their show, for those who refuse to live as true image-bearing humans who act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

If we never declare our allegiance this this surprising Jesus who is found among the last and the least – then our faith remains with the devil and his power over us.

Jesus' words here are about **the end of the age** – **But** we're not at the end of the age.

Jesus is on his throne today and calls us, but not to receive judgment, he calls us to humble ourselves and receive forgiveness.

The good news is that we live in the age where the door to the throne room is open day and night.

We can come before the throne of the king of kings and stop trying to do good works, stop living selfishly, and let him transform our hearts by his saving power.