

Devotional 3

We don't live under a monarch, at least not politically. In Canada we have a titular monarch, but that's not the same thing. For many of us the closest we come to understanding the rule of Kings is by reading about it in our history books. What we then learn is that a monarch had a profound impact on the lives of his people. A good king provided for and protected his people – unto blessing for them. A bad king advanced only his own well-being and made life difficult for his people. I would like you to reflect with me briefly on what such kings, good and bad, teach us.

As we think about that, we should recognize that we all serve someone. There is “a king” in the life of each one of us. And that “king” (whoever or whatever that may be) promises us blessing as long as we submit to his leading. Our “king” could be popularity, wealth, power, looks, or even ourselves. And in every instance, we are promised happiness and blessing if we just obey that master. But the sad truth is: every such monarch in our life cannot and will not lead us to the blessing we crave.

There is only One who can protect and preserve us from the enemies we face; especially the enemy called sin. Remember: the kings of our own making cannot save us from sin! Therefore we must surrender our life to the only King who can. Christmas is the time we celebrate the birth of that King. And that means surrendering every part of our lives to him, yes even our desires.

Sometimes we want something that isn't good for us. We can want that extra helping of dessert, even though we know that we shouldn't. We can also want something that in itself is good for us but we want it for the wrong reason. And that is worse, because we then appear to be good, but we're motivated by selfishness. That was the case with Israel's desire for a King. God had promised his people a king and had made provision for this office. But when Israel asked for a king, their motivation was sinful. They wanted a king who would satisfy their desires; they did not look for a king who would lead them in the way of righteousness.

Those Israelites weren't the only ones who thought of the office of king that way. People wanted to make Jesus King too, but for the wrong reason. They wanted Jesus to fill their bellies. This repetition of the same problem reveals that this is a natural, that is, a sinful human inclination. We too face the temptation to approach Jesus that way. The spirit of our world at Christmas can infect us. Do we see Christmas as a day to get what we want, or do we see it as a day to celebrate the birth of our Saviour who is King? Do we rejoice at being led in the way of righteousness or do we expect Jesus to satisfy our demands?

Let's admit that we tend to treat Jesus in a worldly way. You will recognize that sin in your life when you consider how you respond when you don't get what you think you deserve. Are you yielding to or in opposition against the Lord's leading therein? Why do you serve the King, our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ? It's a question that has challenged us from the very beginning of time.

When the Lord chose David to be the king of his people, he wasn't simply fixing an immediate problem in the lives of his people. The office of king was one with a foundation in the very beginning of time. When the Lord commanded man to exercise dominion over the earth, he

assigned to man the responsibility to exercise lordship over all creation. God called mankind to serve him as kings – as people who would lead the world to offer service to the Lord.

Nevertheless, Israel needed a king, a righteous king who would lead them in service to the Lord. The office of king was not an accident, and it was not a temporary fix for a failed leadership (of the Judges). God's choice of David was ordained to be a much more permanent fix to a much bigger problem.

From the first, therefore, it was not David who was the central figure. In making his covenant with David, the Lord was establishing the royal line from which **the King** would come. God knew David could not be that King (1 Chron. 22:8). But God's covenant with David prepared the way for the coming One who would rule upon the throne of David.

On Christmas we celebrate more than the birth of another cute baby; we celebrate the birth of the promised King. God kept his promise to David and now we celebrate a King who by his power secures our life and leads us in fellowship with the Lord. Truly we may now sing: "Hosanna to the Son of David", yes even in the midst of the political challenges of our day.

One of the problems with democracy is the shift in focus it requires for those in positions of leadership. Whatever the early days of democracy looked like, today politicians know that their position is dependent on keeping their constituents happy. Many decisions are made with an eye to polling data, instead of looking for a more substantial foundation. And as long as we're the ones being satisfied, we're happy with our government. But eventually we come to realize that democracy is fickle and we don't always know what's best for us. If our leaders follow our whims, soon enough we find our society crumbling. We need leaders who know what is right and good, and who make the tough decisions.

In the days of Israel, the first duty of the king was to write out a personal copy of the Law of God. That was his governing document, his Magna Carta. It not only limited his power, it focused his reign. The office of king was intended to lead the people in obedience to the Lord. To do that, the kings of Israel needed to be the first in rendering obedience to the Lord.

We serve such a King. When Jesus was born, he came to lead us in the way of righteousness. And he was the first to live in humble obedience to the Lord. That obedience led him to the cross. He knew that the Lord calls us to walk in Godly fear every day of our life; and he leads us in his way. Take up your cross and follow him.

One of the great comforts we have as believers in our day is knowing that our King reigns. The baby born on Christmas morning now sits enthroned in heaven above and rules with all authority. Whatever else may seem to be true about the direction of our world, we can know and rest assured that Jesus reigns – even over those that reject him.

In Psalm 2 we read about the spirit of men and their rebellion against the King. They strive to cast off his bonds. This is a rather fitting description of our society. It seems as though mankind will embrace anything but the reign and rule of Christ. And that causes us great concern. We see and recognize the destructiveness of man's rebellion. But man's refusal does not diminish our

Lord's authority. His authority is given to him by God, not by people. And so our God laughs at the witless rebellion of his creatures. Their rebellion does not remove his Son's sovereign authority; it only ensures their judgment by that authority.

Knowing this, we may take great comfort in the rule of Christ in the midst of a rebellious world. Nothing happens apart from his rule, and all things work together for our good. But in that comfort we must also serve. We have a message to tell our world. We must proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom, telling the world: Our God reigns! So kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.