

Jesus: King Over the World – John 5:1 – 30

Over the last 3 Sundays we have seen different aspects of Jesus' Kingship. We began by looking the work of John the Baptist pointing to the fact that Jesus was the long awaited King. The following week Dan pointed us to the fact that Jesus is the King of the feast. The kingdom of Jesus is the glorious, perfect kingdom of joy and peace, and the good news is we are all invited to share the feast he has provided for us. And last week Philip reminded us that Jesus is the King over the church. We can collectively only claim to be servants of the king Jesus if we are a church that obeys his words and reflects his character. We were bought with a price so we are not our own and therefore our ambitions and our methods need to be in line with our King. If you missed any of those talks they are all available on the website and I do recommend you go and catch up or even listen again if you get the chance.

But today our vision is wider because today we see that Jesus is King over the world. As I have said on numerous occasions, that's a claim which upsets many people today. You see if it's true it not only means that all other religions are false it means that Jesus not only has authority over his church as a religious institution, but over everything else in this world. That means he has authority over us, over our families, over our working lives, our leisure time, our money, our talents and ultimately over our eternal destiny. That's a big claim isn't it and one with huge implications. And I hope that over the next few minutes you'll see that this claim of Jesus is not only backed up by Jesus' life and works, but by his identity.

But let me start with illustration...

I want you to imagine that you are one of a number of tenants living in an apartment building. When you took on your lease you met the landlord in passing but most of your contact was through intermediaries, letting agents, solicitors that kind of thing. There were some rules laid down in the lease about how you needed to behave within the apartment block and how you needed to treat your apartment, as well as advice about how things would work best and where to go if there were ever any problems.

As time went by you forgot about the landlord. Things were okay, the other tenants were a little annoying from time to time but there were no real difficulties. And if one or two things had stopped working well, that was life, and you got on with it.

But one afternoon you arrived home and there was a new guy walking around the apartment block. You chatted for a while but thought little of it. Over the next few weeks you heard others talking about this chap as well. Apparently he was saying some outrageous things and behaving as if he owned the place, even though he didn't live there.

And then one afternoon he stopped you in the foyer. You were struggling upstairs with your shopping bags and he asked about the lift. You told him that it had been out of action for a number of years and he asked a strange question: did you want him to fix it? You said of course! It would make life so much easier. And almost before you had finished your sentence he was on the phone calling a contractor, and 15 minutes later they were on site and had fixed the lift. It was astonishing!

The next day you saw him again. There was a residents' committee meeting and this guy turned up and started explaining how the tenancy rules had been misinterpreted. Apparently you were not doing things you were allowed to do, and were doing some things that you shouldn't have been doing. Some of it made sense, but some people started to get pretty angry with him.

And this got a lot worse when it turned out that he had extended the lease of some tenants indefinitely, whilst giving others their marching orders and throwing them out into the street.

Well, as you might expect, everyone wanted to know who this guy thought he was. On whose authority was he doing all these things? After all, things had been going pretty well before this guy showed up. Some people weren't sure whether they needed him or even wanted him around.

And it was then he dropped the bombshell: he was your landlord's son and heir. In fact, the landlord, his father, had given him absolute authority over the apartment block. He had authority to fix things, to interpret the rules, to extend leases or to end them instantly. He was, he said, not just a representative of your landlord; because he was so close to his father, a son who only ever did the things that would please his father, he was your landlord.

That would change things wouldn't it? All of a sudden this is a man not just an annoying interloper he is your landlord, your king, if I can put it that way, and a king with both the authority to change things and the power to make them happen. And that's what is going on in our Bible reading. In these 30 verses we see Jesus at work in the world fixing things that are broken, reinterpreting God's laws, and giving life and bringing judgement because he has both the authority and the power to do so.

And that should change the way we see him. I want us to look briefly at those four things and my aim in all of them is to magnify Jesus before your eyes, to remind you of his might and power and authority because often we can perceive Jesus as far less than he is – and that's a greater danger at this time of year. One commentator I read this week said this: *"If we have ever thought it was possible to make too much of Christ in our religion, let us cast off this thought forever. He that is one with the Father, the giver of life, the King of Kings, the coming Judge, can never be too much exalted."* So open your Bibles again to John chapter 5 and let's exalt Jesus together.

Firstly– Jesus fixes things that were broken.

What we see in verses 1 to 15 is the creative power of God at work through Jesus. In Genesis 1 and 2 we read that God made a world that was perfect in every way, and yet from Genesis 3 onwards we see the effects of sin, sickness and suffering and death infect and taint that perfect creation. We experience that in our own lives and this poor man lying by the pool is a victim of that too, and he has no way of getting better.

Now what was going on around that pool all sounds rather strange and if I'm honest I'm not quite sure I understand it fully. Certainly many Bible commentators have difficulty with this passage. But what is clear, is that this man had been an invalid for 38 years and had no hope of a cure. And yet Jesus came along and with just a word this man's disability disappeared. Verse 9, *"at once, the man was cured! He picked up his mat and walked."*

Now I know that throughout the Scriptures there have occasionally been men anointed by God who have had a dramatic healing ministry. We might think of Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament, but the apostles always pointed to Jesus when their prayers were heard, and Elijah and Elisha had a mighty anointing from God to teach and rebuke his people, of which these miracles were a part. But Jesus has a different answer. When Jesus is questioned about what he has done how does he answer his critics? He says this, verses 19 and 20: *"the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

The claim of Jesus here is that he behaves in this way because of who he is. God the Father is a God of creation and re-creation and so, like Father like Son, Jesus brings healing and re-creation to this man. Jesus not only has the power to heal and restore this man to health, he has the authority to do it, because this is his world and he is the King.

Two more things here: firstly isn't it great that we have a God who notices when things are broken and wants to fix them? God is not unconcerned with the plight and suffering of many in his world. He does see, and he does care and he promises to put things right. And secondly, we have a God who has the power to do it. Words are cheap, anyone can make great claims, but here Jesus shows the power of God to heal and restore the broken – and that's just a foretaste of what is to come in God's eternal kingdom.

Secondly, Jesus reinterprets God's commands.

Occasionally I have to read bits of law and I have to say they aren't always easy to understand. Lawyers have a way of writing so that, to a trained eye, the meaning is absolutely clear. Sadly, I am not that well trained in matters of law and so sometimes the meaning isn't very clear to me.

And when things aren't clear people read things and come to variety of interpretations. But who is it who has the right to explain what that law really means. Surely it is the one who made the law. And so if I'm doing things I shouldn't, even if I have a clear conscience about them, and the lawmaker comes and says I've got it wrong, then I need to listen.

Now the Jews had God's Law given to them by Moses. Much of it was very clear, but some things it seems were open for debate. The fourth commandment said you shall do no work on the Sabbath but the big question was this: what was work? Did picking up a mat count? Did going for a walk count? And if so, at what length did a walk turn into work? And so the Jewish lawyers had a field day breaking things down, clarifying what they thought God meant, and making a whole lot of little laws to explain the big idea.

And then Jesus turned up and said they'd got it all wrong.

What did Jesus do? Well he healed this man on the Sabbath then he commanded him to carry his mat and go home. To us that sounds like no big deal but to the Jews this was serious stuff and they were angry with Jesus. And when they questioned his actions how does Jesus justify himself? By claiming equality with God! That's what he meant when he said in verse 17 *"my Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working."* He's saying to them "Listen! You've got these laws completely wrong and I should know because I gave you the laws in the first place!"

The big idea here is the equality of Jesus with His Father. Because Jesus is one with his Father in deity – he is fully God and fully man - he knows what his laws really mean. The Sabbath Law was never meant to be a heavy weight that restricted joy but a taste of the perfect rest we find in Christ and will enjoy forever in the new creation. What's more, by healing and restoring this man Jesus is continuing the work God has been doing all along. You see whilst God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, he never rests from all work otherwise the world would cease to exist! Each day, even on Sundays, God does us good and provides for our needs, and makes the sunrise, and brings the rains, and gives life and healing and health. And so when Jesus corrects the Jews' misunderstanding of God's law he has every right to do so. He's the King after all.

Thirdly, Jesus gives life.

In the little parable I told earlier the landlord extended the lease some of his tenants indefinitely, he gave them 'life', if you will. And that's what we see Jesus do in this passage.

To begin with Jesus claims authority to give physical life. Now he has demonstrated his ability in this area by healing this man and restoring him to wholeness, but in verse 21 Jesus makes the claim to be able to raise the dead and give them life again. However good our doctors become they will never be able to do that and yet a little later on in John's gospel we will see Jesus do exactly that as he raises Lazarus from the dead. Bringing life to the dead – that's a God-thing, not a man thing - and Jesus proves he can do just that.

But when Jesus talks about life he's not just talking about extending someone's mortal life, as Jesus did with Lazarus. In verse 28 Jesus makes it clear that on the great and final day of judgement, his voice will be the one that awakens from their slumbers all the dead from across the ages. That's a powerful voice, isn't it? What's more, for all those who have heard his voice and believed his message that will mean eternal life in God's glorious and perfect kingdom. And as verse 24 makes it clear for those who have heard and believed eternal life has begun already; they have already crossed over from death to life by faith in Christ. That's why as Christians we never need to fear death and why the apostle Paul could say that it would be better to die because he would go and see the Lord face-to-face.

And all that life - physical, spiritual and eternal, all flow from Jesus. Can you let that sink in for a minute? This tiny baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger isn't just a sign of new life, he is life, he has the power of

life. In fact, you and I are alive right now because of Jesus powerful life-bringing word. Can you grasp the greatness of all that? Can you see who he is? Jesus gives life because he is the King of the world.

Fourthly, Jesus Judges

Sometimes on a Saturday afternoon I take myself off to Kenilworth Road to watch Luton play, and there many times when, like most football supporters, I think the manager has got it wrong. There are times when I think he should bring people onto the field, and there are certainly times when I think he should take people off. But there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. I am there as a supporter, part of the crowd, I can make my opinion known, and I often do, but I don't have any power or authority to do anything about it.

But Jesus does. In verse 22 Jesus says that the Father has entrusted all judgement to him. That means at the end of time when the voice of Jesus rings out and raises the dead from their sleep and summons those still living to stand before the Father it will be Jesus who judges. It will be the verdict of Jesus that invites many into his eternal feast and the verdict of Jesus that condemns many others to an eternity away from God and everything good, in a place the Bible calls hell. What right does Jesus have to do that? He has every right! God the Father, who, with the Son and the Spirit, created the world has given the Son all authority and placed everything under his feet, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Jesus is the King of the world, that's why he has the right to judge.

But remember, Jesus is not only the judge he is the saviour. Yes we will all have to stand before him and give an account of our lives but for those who have heard the voice of Jesus and believed in him their verdict has already been announced. They have already passed from death to life and been counted as righteous in God's eyes because although their sin was grievous, the death of the perfect, spotless, matchless Son of God has paid the price for their sin and cleansed them from all unrighteousness. Jesus judges – and he has every right to do so - but praise God he also saves and redeems all who call on him.

And I hope you can see that the authority Jesus has to restore things that were broken, to interpret the law, to give life and to pass judgement, flows out of the closeness of the Father and the Son. Although this passage doesn't mention the Holy Spirit if you struggle to get your head round the Trinity this is a wonderful passage to turn to. It tells us that the Father and Son are separate persons, but they are so closely united that the things we see Jesus doing are not only the things that the Father wants him to do, they are the very things the Father does himself. Some people have used this passage to suggest that Jesus is a representative of his Father, as if he were some special and unique prophet, but that is not what this passage points us to. If the Son has life and the Father has life, and if the Son does what the Father does then the Father and Son must be of the same substance – they both must be God. That's why Jesus is the King of the world because this is his world.

So where does that leave us?

I hope this morning you've had your vision of Jesus widened or refocused. He cannot be dismissed as a prophet or great teacher or wonderful example. A man who claims to be God is either a lunatic, a liar or our rightful Lord, and the gospel accounts, not to mention the changed lives of millions of Christians, leave us with no other option except to bow the knee before him in worship and praise.

And make no mistake, we will all bow the knee before King Jesus. When his voice rings out to usher in that great and final day we will either bow the knee before him with tears of joy flowing down our cheeks as we gaze on those nail pierced hands and feet, knowing that the one who is our judge is also our Lord, our Saviour and brother and that our welcome is assured; or we will bow in fear, feeling the full weight of our sin and shame up against his glory and holiness, knowing that when we had the chance we turned away from the one who could save and restore, who gave us good instruction and who offered us life.

So we will all bow before Jesus, one way or another. And so I plead with you to do it today, to willingly, humbly, and gratefully surrender your life, your soul, your all, before Jesus your true and rightful King.