

Ephesians 1:15-23

“Is Christ Your King?”

Let’s have a show of hands. With Advent right around the corner and Christmas barely a month away, who likes receiving presents? **(Pause)** Yeah? Me too. Who likes giving presents? **(Pause)** Me too. Me too. Have y’all ever searched and searched, and saved up to buy what you hope is the perfect gift for that special someone? **(Pause)** Have you ever had that special someone, right away, ask for the gift receipt? **(Pause)** Have you ever asked for the gift receipt? **(Pause)** Yeah. I have too. The reason I ask is because there are people who do this with God. But before we go too far down that road let’s start off on the right foot. The greatest gift we can ever receive is the gift of salvation. Amen? **Amen!** The greatest gift we can ever receive is the gift of salvation. Amen?! **Amen!!**

Fantastic! I am so glad we are all on the same page. The gift of salvation is wonderful. God seeks us out through **Prevenient Grace**. The result of Jesus Christ’s arrest, torture, crucifixion and resurrection is we are able to receive God’s gift of salvation. Salvation was never a cheap or free gift. Salvation has always come with a cost. However, I think one of the problems the Church faces today is there are some Christians; maybe even many Christians who think of the gift of salvation as that unwanted, or at the very least unasked for Christmas present. The moment God – our King – asks us to do something we start looking for the gift receipt. After all, “I wanted to be saved. I just didn’t know I would have to do something in return.” To protect ourselves from have to do something for God we start becoming really busy. We start acting like we really stink at dating. Instead of talking to God about why, “we don’t want God asks,” we suddenly become really busy, and don’t have the time. “I’m sorry God. I can’t help today because I’m too busy at work, or I’ve got too much going on with my kids, or because I am washing my hair.” Then when we are asked about it we lie to ourselves and say, “I really wanted to help, but nobody asked me, so I figured I wasn’t needed.”

Into this mindset I would like to offer this morning’s passage from Ephesians. The church at Ephesus was filled with people who were faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul does not tell us how the Ephesians were faithful, or what their faithfulness looked like. Paul does tell us Paul prays that God will give the Ephesians a revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul explains his hope for the Ephesians by praying God would further open their eyes and reveal the truth of Jesus Christ. I interpret this to mean Justifying grace has been at work in the church at Ephesus. The result of receiving Justifying grace was the Ephesians looked for ways to be more faithful to God – to make Jesus Christ the King of their lives.

John Wesley explained this point of view in his **1794** article *The Principles of a Methodist*;

“I believe three things must go together in our justification:  
upon God’s part, his great mercy and grace;  
upon Christ’s part, the sanctification of God’s justice by the offering of his  
body and shedding his blood, ‘and fulfilling the law of God perfectly’:  
and upon our part, true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

I love this quote from John Wesley for two reasons. First, this quote reminds me God is the initiator of salvation. We didn’t wake up one day and realize on our own, “Hey. I’m pretty messed up. I am stingy with my

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<sup>1</sup> Randy. L Maddox, “Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology” (Abingdon Press: Nashville 1994) 103.

tithe. I am stingy with my tip when we go out to eat, or when I get a haircut. I am stingy with my time and energy. Wow! I am a jerk. I need God.” (Pause) We don’t come up with that stuff on our own. It just doesn’t work that way. God has been reaching out to us all along. God makes it possible for us to see our sins laid out before us. God does not do this to rub it in our faces just how broken we are. God helps us to see our faults and flaws so we can see for ourselves which paths do not lead to God. God offers us the strength through grace to stop behaving that way anymore. God makes it possible for us to make better choices through Christ. For that purpose God reaches out to us with Prevenient Grace, and then through the blood of Christ we are justified. Then God’s Sanctifying grace makes it possible for us to fulfill, “the law of God perfectly,” through, “true and living faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.”

The second reason I love this quote is because it reminds us we have a role to play. Our butts are in this too. We are to respond to God’s love and grace by growing in love for God. By growing in our love for God I am not talking about being smiley Christians in worship and humbugs when we walk out the door. **I am** talking about clearing space in our lives so we are better able to hear God’s voice. I am strongly urging all of us to ask God for new ways, small ways, and big ways to do no harm, do good, and most importantly to grow in our love for God. This is the very definition of asking God for a revival in our hearts, in our families, in our church, and in our community.

Paul says our response should come from God continuing to reveal just who Jesus Christ really is. Through God’s Sanctifying grace we can finally understand true hope comes through Jesus Christ. This hope is a part of our glorious inheritance as the Children of God. Sisters and brothers, **God loves you.** (x2) God loves you right where you are. God may not love where you are, but God absolutely loves you. God calls to God’s self all who love God; and all of those who are wondering about who God is because that to is a response to God’s grace. God is also reaching out to those who have already begun the great adventure. The journey does not stop once we say, “Yes,” to Jesus. We say, “Yes,” to accept salvation in Christ. Jesus is our savior, but Jesus is also our Lord, our God, and our King.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, and yes, through God’s grace the King does expect us to serve. God has put all things under Jesus Christ’s feet and made Jesus Christ the head of the Church (Eph 1:22,23). Jesus Christ’s last command before ascending into heaven was to, “**God therefore and make disciples of all nations**” (Matt 29:19). This is confusing for some people. Jesus said make disciples. Jesus did not say anything about making members who fill pews and pay a tithe. There are three ways a church can grow; more money, more members, and deeper discipleship. Jesus said make disciples, and making disciples requires work. There is no room to sit in our pews and wait to be asked to serve. God is calling all of us to serve right here, and right now.

Out of the commands to love God and neighbor has come an ancient idea that we are to, “preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words.”<sup>2</sup> If we are to preach the Gospel at all times it means we must put Jesus Christ as our King first and foremost at all times. Is Jesus Christ the king of our money? Is Jesus Christ the King of our marriage; our child rearing, our relationships with friends? Is Jesus Christ the King of the way we do our school work, and the way we do our jobs? Will we allow Jesus Christ to be the King of our Christmas celebrations? Just who is our King? Where and how has the King called us to serve? Where is the King calling us to serve right now?

Sisters and brothers there is work to be done for the King. God is reaching out to each and every person in this room. God is calling us to reach out to every person outside those doors who is alive, breathing and has a pulse. The King expects us to respond to grace by ordering our lives so everyone we meet knows God is our King. If a stranger saw you at a gas station would they know God is your King? Would we recognize what it looks like for Christ to be the King of someone else’s life? Brothers and sisters, do we know what it means for Christ to be the King of our lives and then live it out? Perhaps as we are preparing for the birth of Jesus Christ we should consider what it means to bow down before our king.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen

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<sup>2</sup> Often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi; however, not confirmed.