**4th Sunday in End Times: Christ the King – Year B – November 25, 2012 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Revelation 1:4b-8 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“What Kind of King are You?”**

*John,*

*To the seven churches in the province of Asia:*

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits[a] before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

*7 Look, he is coming with the clouds,*

*and every eye will see him,*

*even those who pierced him;*

*and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.*

*So shall it be! Amen.*

*8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

A couple of weeks ago the President invited historians to the White House for dinner. He wanted to listen to them talk about past presidents and the issues they faced and how they dealt with those problems and how history viewed their decisions. The President wants to leave a legacy behind, as all presidents do. He wonders, “How will people view me? What kind of president will I be painted as?” I suppose it depends on who writes the history of the president. How will history view our leaders?

People do the same with Jesus of Nazareth. People have many different opinions about who Jesus was and what he did. Some say he was a good man who did many good things for people. He offered many wise sayings which we use today. He was a great prophet, and that’s about it. But he was not God. Some today water down the Almighty God perception and see Jesus more as a friend, their buddy. Someone once said, “I like to picture Jesus in a tuxedo t-shirt because it says, I want to be formal but I’m here to party.” What would you like Jesus to be for you? He may not be exactly what you want him to be, but he is the king you have and the king that need him to be.

This morning, John the Apostle shares with us who Jesus is and what kind of king he is. Our lesson is from the book of Revelation. That’s exactly what Revelation is - a book of visions that John saw of Jesus, of heaven, of the end times and the last day. John was instructed to record these visions and send them to the Christian churches in Asia. These congregations of believers were being persecuted for their faith. Their property was confiscated, they were arrested, thrown in jail, tortured and executed because they pledged allegiance to another king, the Lord Jesus, the King of kings. These revelations were meant to comfort them and remind that Jesus was still their King.

John writes, **“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.” (vs4)** This is the kind of king you have - a king who brings grace. *Grace* is a word that describes the love that our King has for us: *grace* is love that we do not deserve. Imagine that the group of us here today are the worst citizens in the county. We steal from the local grocery store, we cheat on our taxes, we exceed the speed limit every chance we get, we don’t wear our seatbelts, we never apply for building permits, from time to time we raise a ruckus in the neighborhood. The local magistrate would not be happy with us and most likely would not have much love for us because we are lawbreakers.

This is also true with our heavenly King. We do break his law – how many of us have been guilty of the infractions I just listed – and we deserve to be thrown in jail for eternity because of it. For breaking the laws of this government we are really breaking the laws of our heavenly kingdom. And yes, the King shows us grace – love we do not deserve – and because of his grace, the King pardons us of all wrongdoing.

And grace brings peace. That is why John listed them in this order. Grace must come first, then we have peace with the Father. Peace is the result of grace. We now have peace with our King, peace for our troubled consciences, peace for our hearts and souls, the peace knowing that my king cares about me, enough to love me even when I do not deserve it. That is the kind of King you have – a King who brings grace and peace to you.

This is the kind of King you have, **“…who is, who was, and who is to come.” (vs4)** This is the kind of King you have – the King of perpetual existence. Jesus even said in his revelation to John, **“I am** **the Alpha and the Omega.**” Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, which we see every Sunday on our altar. A reminder that our king is the beginning and end - he has always been, and always will be King.

Unlike earthly kings, politicians, and presidents who have term limits. Even dictators who seem to serve a lifetime, but that’s just it - their term ends when their life ends. But not your King! He has always ruled, he rules now, and will rule for eternity with grace and peace.

You have a King who “**is the faithful witness.” (vs5)** Why is this the kind of King we need? When someone asks you what church you attend, the most you’ll get from a stranger off the street is a quizzical look if they’ve never heard of “Lutheran”. But in the days of the Apostle John, if the word “Christian” fell from your lips, it could mean imprisonment, torture and possibly death. There was a great temptation to deny Christ, to deny Christianity, and among the churches there were many unfaithful witnesses with guilty consciences, like the Apostle Peter, who denied his Lord.

There is not much difference today. We know we won’t lose our jobs or our life for claiming to be a Christian, but sometimes we fear we may lose a friend, family member, a good relationship with a coworker, for claiming to be “Christian” or for not walking in the ways of the sinful world. And like Peter, our hearts weep with guilt, with embarrassment, that because of our sinful pride or fear or whatever reason we give for being unfaithful witnesses, we have denied Christ is the simplest of ways. What kind of king would want citizens in his kingdom who do not acknowledge him or pledge allegiance to him?

That’s exactly why we need a King who is the faithful witness. Jesus stood before a Roman governor names Pontius Pilate who asked him a simple question, “Are you a king?” If Jesus answered in the affirmative he knew it would seal his execution. In the Roman Empire, there was no king but Caesar. To claim otherwise was treason. But Jesus was king. He was the one who gave Pilate his authority and power. But there he stood on trial for making that claim. Even though the Romans and the Jews never understood that his kingdom was never earthly, but spiritual, Jesus remained faithful to the truth. He was, and is, and will be forever the King. He is the faithful witness.

As we stand before him now, heads hung in shame because of the times we have failed to witness. But the King steps down from his throne, lifts up our heads, and holds us by our hands looks us in the eyes and says, “By my grace, my love you do not deserve, I forgive you, because I was faithful for you. Let my faithful life cover over your unfaithful life. Let my faithful life bring peace to your troubled conscience. Let my faithful witness empower you to go and be bold witnesses for me.”

And not only does your King spend his life to be faithful for you, but John also wrote, “**To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”** Your King loves you so much, and desperately wants you to be part of his kingdom, that he goes a step farther. If you read history, you know that some kings sent their Soldiers into battle and stayed home in the castle. Others did march out to the battlefield but sat back in the rear defense, and watched the battle away from the violence and killing.

But your King went out before the troops, and he engaged the enemy head on. And he showed his power… by laying down his weapons, and allowed the enemy to cut him down. But by his blood that stained the battle ground on Calvary he defeated the enemy. Jesus’ blood has washed away all of your sins. They are gone. Your sins are no more. Your enemies cannot touch you. Satan can no longer accuse us of sin, sin can no longer torment the conscience, hell can no more threaten us – for the blood of the King has cleansed you of sin. That’s the kind of King you have – one who was willing to lay down his life for you. But not only that, this King’s tomb is empty.

You have a king who is the **“firstborn from among the dead.”** Being the firstborn has its privileges, doesn’t it? Typically, the firstborn child is the one the parents take most pictures of, and more home videos of the firstborn are shot than the other children. But other than that… as the firstborn and the oldest, you have the right and privilege to beat up on your younger brothers or sisters. In Jesus’ day being firstborn meant so much more. As the firstborn you received the inheritance, all the land and property, the family business, all of the wealth your father accumulated. As firstborn your parents took you to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate you to God and offer a special thank offering to the LORD. Jesus was the firstborn son of Mary, but also the firstborn son of the dead. He is the first one to raise his own dead body from his own grave. Because your King is the firstborn from the dead, he has done much more than simply beat up death and grave like an older brother, he has completely made death and grave submit to his power.

What earthly king can do this for you? They can promise better health care, but they cannot promise a resurrection from the dead. This is the kind of King you have – one who promises you, that when you die, death will not win, but you will cheat death, for when your King comes again on the clouds with his angels, he will command death to give you up, to spit you out of your grave, and you will live again. You will be the first to rise on the Last Day, because your King rose and lives today! You have hope and confidence in death. You have hope and confidence on the Last Day.

John the Apostle describes that Last Day. Jesus will come with the clouds and **“every eye will see him.”** That means you and me! “**And all nations will mourn because of him**.” John is talking about Jesus’ enemies, which are our enemies. They will lose on the Last Day, and they will know it, that is why they will mourn when he comes again. Because it’s nice being on the winning team, isn’t it? Wouldn’t it be nice to be on the winning team every time? Not even UK basketball fans can claim complete and total domination on the court. They lose from time to time. But not your King. He wins. Which means you win. When he comes again you win. You win over sin, over death, over grave, over all the people who fought against Jesus and against you. You win. Because he won.

This is the kind of King you have, this is the kingdom you live in. So what kind of citizen will you be in your King’s kingdom? John tells us, “**To him be glory and power forever and ever**.” We will be citizens who do everything, say everything, in order to glorify our King. He deserves all of our glory – because he has demonstrated all power – and for us! His legacy lasts forever and ever, not matter what the historians say. Amen.