

“The Deed is Done”

Sermon for June 11, 2017

Texts: Ephesians 1:4b-8; Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 8:1-9

“The King of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never,  
I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever.” #89

So begins this wonderful hymn about the identity of Christ, and the sufficiency that we have in Him. There is no part of **The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want** that Henry Baker didn't get! Mr. Baker penned a hymn that fused together the truth of Psalm 23 with John 10:14,15 (ESV):

**14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.**

So, Jesus is King . . . **the King of love**. He is the Shepherd King, He is our sufficiency, His infinite supply meets all our needs. *He meets all our need for love. He knows us . . . and He demonstrates both His goodness and His love by laying down His life for the sheep.* In Act 2, sc. 1 of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don Pedro boasts:

—And

I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer; his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love gods.

What actually transpires, in the following action, has more to do with the magic of reconciliation and the healing power of forgiveness than clever deceptions to trick Beatrice and Benedict back into their former affections! What is necessary is for the two of them to get into recovery. They need to recall the astonishment of their first meeting, that rapturous moment when they first met each other. It was then that they first apprehended the other, were deeply moved, when their souls called out each to each! *And that moment, that glimpse of each other's worth changed everything.* It is my belief that this, or something very like this is what must transpire between each believer and his Shepherd King! I mean that through reconciliation effected by Him and by the forgiveness granted through Him, we are to enter the recovery phase of our relationship to God. Always remembering that **We love Him because He first loved us.** (1 John 4:19)

Jesus is King indeed. Jesus is the King of love as well as the King of the universe. When we absorb this, we “hear” the exclamation of the condemning Jews **We have no king but Caesar** with awakened ears. What do I mean by *awakened* ears? I mean ears that hear behind the words, ears that hear the significance of what's being asserted. Well, what is being said? *Under the Jewish leadership, the crowd is demanding another king, a human one!* It is not just repudiation, and it is not just a declaration of fidelity—we are Caesar's people which is to say, “we are children of this world order, we are participants in the empire.” **We have no king but Caesar** has a secular ring to it—never mind that Caesar presented himself as “a divine being” which

he was not!—this declaration is an admission of how earth-bound and un-Jewish the “Jewish” leadership had become. Those who affirmed **We have no king but Caesar**, whether intentionally or not, have aligned themselves with the people of Samuel’s generation:

**8 And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. 2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. 3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.**

**4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” 6 But the thing was [a]displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 The Lord said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly [b]warn them and tell them of the [c]procedure of the king who will reign over them.”**

Footnotes: a. 1 Samuel 8:6 Or evil; b. 1 Samuel 8:9 Lit testify to; c. 1 Samuel 8:9 Lit custom

This arrangement, the provision of a human king, is a temporary thing. For we know we know that the day will come when God will gather all the people, and they shall worship **the Lamb seated on the throne** (Rev. 5:13) as Lord and King:

**9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)**

But for now, the people will get their wish *and live out their folly* until they grow sick and tired of it (Are we there yet?). . . or until I have sent My Son to claim His throne, whichever comes first!

We won’t linger here long, but here’s the scoop. Samuel, a good judge, had worthless sons whose evil ways produced a deep discontent among the leaders and people of Israel. The necessity of regime change had been impressed on everyone. **Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways.** (v. 5) That was the main complaint. **His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.** (v.3)

It is stunning how contemporary this predicament is! Think Venezuela, South Korea, or even the Congress of the United States! We resonate with these charges of corruption—there is no other fitting word for it really—and for want of discipline, a want of parental discipline. Samuel had not parented his sons any better than Eli had parented his wayward boys. And there was a want of corporate discipline—what we would recognize in another setting as *church discipline* (i.e. confronting the unrepentant perpetrators with their sin, demanding repentance and reform *or else*). Or else what? Excommunication. In Samuel's day *civil action* would entail being put outside the camp, or even execution for capital offenses! Or, short of those sanctions, some form of trial and impeachment which would result in removal from office of *those unfit for office*.

***These godly alternatives to coping with the abuse of power and office are not what the people resorted to.*** No, they resorted to a more worldly, political expedient: ***Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.*** This is to say, we want to desert our uniqueness, scuttle our mission, abandon our calling as a people who exist for the praise of our God (***who would make His Name great***). We want to accommodate, we aspire to assimilate to the world's culture—***we will have ourselves a king like other nations . . . like Caesar.*** We are willing to settle for that instead of having so much more. Anything *to be in charge!*

So they rejected God as their king. They did this in their hearts first (by wanting to be like every other nation, by jettisoning their spiritual heritage, and by choosing to be ruled by another human being). We see that people have persisted in preferring human mediation. We also see that when the Jews rejected Jesus *as their king* they were acting in accordance with the same faithlessness as their ancestors. ***This thing displeased Samuel . . . Samuel prayed to the Lord.*** And then came judgment! Indeed, the Lord God, seeing the apostasy and rebellion in the hearts of the people, said to Samuel: ***Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.*** They have not only rejected me as ***king over them*** but they have also rejected me as their Shepherd *and, sad as this is, it is nothing new.* ***Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.*** (v.8) In just such a vein, did Jesus mourn over Jerusalem: ***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if only you had know the hour of your visitation.*** (Luke 13:34)

This last point speaks to the *knowledge* that God has of His people. ***I know my own and my own know me***, just as Jesus, our Lord and rightful King said, (John 10:14) Then God charged Samuel with: ***solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who will reign over them.*** (v. 9) ***There will be consequences . . . count them, pay attention.*** And not the least of those consequences will be political turmoil, civic unrest and perennial discontent! Sound familiar?! Out of love for us, God warns us that we forsake Him as our King at our own risk—and that we serve other gods at our own peril! Gods like fame, power, status and glamor.

Lord have mercy! We must not think that we being Americans, who deliberately *have no king*, having rejected King George III as king over us—the object of our war of independence—*have in any way eluded the substantial matters raised here.* Those whom we elect to rule over us have the same limitations, temptations as kings. ***We***

**have no king but Caesar** is very similar to *we have **no king at all**—in that both entail a rejection of either Jesus as king, or God as king.* And the upshot of this is plain: unless we submit to Christ as King, we shall suffer injustice, corruption and oppression—just as we are. We are therefore obliged to exercise discipline, oversight with all due diligence, over all our leaders—or we shall suffer as a consequence. Human rulers, celebrities, politicians, governors and presidents are only civil sinners *and they require constant vigilance*. God had it right. We need to be warned repeatedly. Mr. Trump may be president, but Jesus is King! If we remember that, we will do well, even if our president does not.

Those concerns to one side, we should focus on Jesus as the King of love, our great and good Shepherd. Jesus who proved his goodness and his love by laying down his life for us, his sheep. Jesus is the only One fit to be king, King of the universe. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is written, “The king shall have healing hands. That is how you will know he is the true king.” In the kingdoms of northern Africa, there is a saying, “The king reigns but he does not rule.” Healing hands, a reigning without micromanagement? Where do these ideas come from except from the Servant King passages of Scripture! The King is more a Shepherd than a ruler, a dictator, or despot. When David was a Servant King he did well—but when he served himself, he fell and the whole kingdom trembled. There repercussions of a self-serving king were drastic and very costly to set right.

It is no wonder that Paul puts before us, extols **the riches of His (Christ’s) grace . . . the inexhaustible treasury of His spiritual blessings . . . the *infinity of His love***. These claims fall like rain upon a parched earth. Here is the grace we need, the blessings we hope for and the love that we have been looking for—a love that cannot come from any other source: not from a man, or a woman, not from a child, a toy, or a pet. ***What a tragedy it is that we look for the love in all the wrong places. How sad*** that the blessings we seek are ***so transient and temporary***. Behold, eternal and heavenly blessings are offered to us to freely) by Christ! That instead of trusting in the grace of God, we look elsewhere. (***The Lord is my Shepherd therefore I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures . . . He leads me . . . He restores my soul . . . He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake . . .***) Listen.

“Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus, Just to take Him at His word; Just to rest upon His promise, Just to know “Thus saith the Lord.” . . . “to trust in His cleansing blood . . . in simple faith . . . just from sin and self to cease . . . finding Life and rest, and joy and peace.” #358

Have you noticed the human tendency to diss divine provision? Whether in Eden, or during the forty years of wilderness wandering, both places where God’s constant, consistent and sufficient provision was available! And yet we did not trust Him, or lean into His caring provision. Every time we take over from God, we suffer substantial loss.

How do we get back there? How do we get to where “The King of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never, I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever?”

We get there by preaching the gospel to our hearts. Daily, several times a day!

The problem in our lives is never what's wrong with the world, and it is never personal affliction and suffering—the problem is sin. It's *always* sin. How easy it is to delineate the sins of God's people in former times. Samuel's generation: the leaders sinned in failing to confront either Eli, or Samuel and their sons over their failings, their sinful, corrupt and wicked ways. Their blatant perversion of things, which contributed to the peoples' sin of rejecting God as their king. The people sinned by going after other gods (worshipping worthless things, valuing the wrong stuff). And they sinned by asserting that they would decide exactly how to live their lives—oh, dear, we do some of that, don't we?! They even sinned in wanting to be just like everyone else, to be liked affirmed and approved of by our fellows, or to escape the unwanted attention which comes from being righteous, and by desiring to be ruled by mere men ***when a better option stood before them with arms outstretched!*** Oops, guilty as charged, again!

It is too easy to the point the finger and cluck with disapproval—until the penny drops as we see our own faces in their mirror! His problem, her issue, their sin . . . . Until we self-identify with their sinning, there's no break-through, no repentance. I mean, until we admit that we are sinners, too. We do as they did. I reject my Shepherd King over and over again . . . and I haven't even gotten to lunch break! Repeatedly I have to humble my heart and admit with Thomas Crammer's words, Lord, "there is no health in me."

Or, stepping forward in time somewhat from Samuel's hour, to when the Jews of Jesus' day replicated the same rebellion, and rejected their rightful King, Jesus! The Jewish leadership was no less corrupt, no less fawning, no less worldly—they were quite happy to subvert justice, quite happy to reduce religion to ritualistic moralism . . . to living without reference to God, without deference to God, without submission to God. They were happy with business as usual, they were stable and steady. They walked in fear. Don't upset the apple cart! Or, less kindly perhaps, just leave it all to us—we can manage things fine ourselves. So the corruption, and lies and bribes were sanctioned to serve the status quo. Those in power wanted to stay in power and only some of them were subject to re-election (such as the high priest, a position to be sought and bought—the highest bidder won). It is so self-serving to reduce religion to morality, to treat it as good advice—there it is, my piece of advice, take it or leave it, your choice! When we make that move, when we *reduce our religion to morality*, we have taken out God and made ourselves king! Religion as morality is humanized. Again, it is too easy to accuse and to indict them—we are so much wiser! We are better now, aren't we? There was so much wrong back then. Right? Nuts and granola! The problem is sin. And we, if we're honest, have to admit: in so many unhappy ways, we are right there, sinning with them.

So, friends, we have to make an end of this! We have to preach the gospel. *The gospel of Jesus which deals death to sin.* And, before we can do that, we have to be prepared to hear it ourselves, *so as to die to ourselves*, which means getting to the place of "helpless repentance." Or, to the place of spiritual desperation where, driving us to our knees, we run to Jesus crying, "You are all I need, you are my everything . . . you are my King and I submit myself to you. "Command me." We have to find our knees!

Our knees in worship . . . our knees in supplication . . . our knees in adoration. I have read of desert fathers with callouses on their knees, signifying good use and wear!

The essence of our faith, our Christianity, is its news. Every other religion (and philosophy and no religion) is about advice, about how to earn your way to God; they are about works, about what you have to do to find your way to God, or heaven, to be saved—to become a better person, or to prosper in this life.

However, what we have to proclaim is about **what has already been done** by Jesus that we might be saved! ***Already accomplished for us!*** We have news about that, an announcement to make: ***the King has come!*** The King was slain for our transgressions and our sin. He paid the price and, on the third day, he rose vindicated and then, ascended to the right hand of God from whence He shall come again and make all things right. *That changes everything! That alters our status, those of us who believe, forever!* We who were formerly slaves in the household of sin and death are now adopted as sons and daughters in God's family, heirs with Christ, co-regents with our one and only true King. We announce: our days of self-centeredness are over, our spiritual paralysis has been healed. We are in relationship with God again by virtue of our King, by virtue of what he stooped to do. He stepped down from heaven, with all its glory, out of love for lost sinners and we are here to proclaim: we have been redeemed by the blood, on the cross! Our debts were paid there. Our forgiveness obtained for us! The deed is done! Announce it.

The King of love my Shepherd is, Whose goodness faileth never,  
I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever.”

**Amen**