

# HEAR MINISTRIES

**Sermon for Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

Text: Malachi 3:13-18, Colossians 1:13-20, Luke 39-43

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***Let us Pray:** Lord God, all truth comes from You. As we hear Your truth today, open our hearts and minds to receive it. Clear our minds of anything that is distracting and help us to focus on Your Word. Renew, refresh and restore us through Your Word, and we will give You all the glory and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

This morning, in the tradition of the Lutheran Church, we celebrate Christ the King Sunday. In this day and age, most people scoff at the idea of celebrating a King! Look at all the press Trump got recently, being called a King! People today do not want to be “ruled” by a King!

And yet, all of our Scriptures today point to **Christ Jesus as the King!** Just like today, though, people in Biblical times were not willing to submit to Him or respect Him as a King. The Jews thought He would lead them to defeat the Romans, the Romans were threatened by Him, and even the thief on the cross with Jesus in the New Testament scoffed at the idea that Jesus was a King!

It is interesting to dig into the history of Kings in Israel. Initially, God **Himself** led the Israelites as a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night. He was their King. He displayed responsibility, leadership and a covenant relationship with His people as their King. He demanded obedience, loyalty and justice.

Well, eventually the people got tired of the way God provided food for them (manna and quail) and they saw how pagan countries around them had human kings on thrones in palaces and they began to clamor to God to give them an earthly king. I mean, after all, why would you want a King that was a PERFECT, loving, righteous God that would always have your back and have your best at heart??!! No! Give us a human king!! God knew His people well and He knew this would not be good for them but eventually He gave them what they wanted: King Saul. Now, **the earthly Kings were still accountable to God as the ultimate authority.** If you know the story of King Saul, he did not turn out to be a good king for Israel. In fact, Israel had far more kings that were ungodly and NOT GOOD than

they did good, godly ones! Why? Because they did not want to be accountable to God as the Most High King!

A king in Biblical times (that is, a King of Israel) was expected to uphold God's laws and display qualities such as justice, servanthood and courage. David and Solomon were seen as examples of godly kings who established Jerusalem as the political and spiritual center of Israel. They displayed faithfulness to God, humility in repentance and a commitment to serving the people. But, as you know, they both had their weak areas of sin and rebellion against God. The evolution of kingship in ancient Israel shows how the transition from divine rule by God to human leadership was affected by moral integrity and governance.

Let's look at Malachi 3 on the back of your bulletin. **Who is Malachi, you ask? Malachi was a prophet chosen by God to speak truth to the people of Israel.** Some of the ladies know from our Ezra Bible study that the Israelites were released from captivity in Babylon and allowed to journey back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the city. They had recommitted themselves to the Lord and they wanted to serve Him as their ultimate King.

However, after years of living free from captivity, rebuilding their Temple and city, the Israelites again drifted in their devotion and commitment to God. They started grumbling and complaining just like their forefathers in the desert. God **commissioned Malachi to confront the people of Israel about the importance of remaining faithful and obedient to God, even in the face of trials and hardships.** The people had become discouraged in obeying God because they saw others around them who sinned and rebelled against God and yet prospered materially and socially quite nicely!! **They were wrestling with doubts and complaints about their relationship with God.**

The people were asking, *"What do we gain if we keep God's commandments?"* (Malachi 3:14) **I'm sure many people today ask the same question!**

I would like to read from THE MESSAGE what God said to the Israelites through Malachi earlier in this chapter:

*"I am GOD....yes, I AM. I haven't changed. And because I haven't changed, you, the descendants of Jacob, haven't been destroyed. You have a long history of ignoring My commands. You haven't done a thing I've told you. Return to Me so I can return to you," says God.*

*"You ask, 'But how do we return?'" "Begin by being honest. Do honest people rob God? But you rob me day after day."*

*"You ask, 'How have we robbed you?' "The tithe and the offering – that's how! And now you're under a curse – the whole lot of you - because you're robbing me. Bring*

*your full tithe to the Temple treasury so there will be ample provisions in My Temple. Test me in this and see if I don't open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams.*" ( A great translation of this text! **These words apply to us today as well!**)

Apparently, the Israelites were not tithing the 10% of their best resources as God had told them. There were also other things they weren't doing that God had commanded them, according to the Laws of Moses. **They were basically complaining that God didn't treat them any better than anyone else for obeying Him so why should they?**

Malachi doesn't stop there! In verse 13 (THE MESSAGE):

*"The Lord says, "You have said spoken hard, rude words to Me."*

*"But you ask, 'When did we ever do that?'*

*"When you said, 'It doesn't pay to serve God. What do we ever get out of it? When we did what He said and went around with long faces, serious about [Him], what difference did it make? Those who take life into their own hands are the lucky ones. They break all the rules and get ahead anyway. They push God to the limit and get by with it.'"*

**Malachi has exposed two types of people: the arrogant who grumble and complain against God and the faithful who revere His name.** The **first group** sees obedience as a waste of time and accuse God of injustice. The **second group** speaks with reverence, fear of the Lord, and honors His name even when blessings aren't immediate.

God told them earlier in verse 10-12 that **He would bless their socks off if they would only turn back to Him and obey Him.** He promised to pour out all the blessings they would need, stop the insects from eating their crops and give them, basically, a pleasant country. So, in verse 16, we see those who honored the Lord talked it over. **God was listening and, in His presence, a book was opened and minutes of that meeting were recorded! All the names of the God-fearers were written down.** God declared, in verse 17, that those people belonged to Him. He said He would show them mercy. He said, *"I will spare them as a man spares His own son who serves Him."* **This shows God's mercy and the close relationship He offers to those who remain faithful and loyal to Him.**

**Today, many individuals wrestle with similar feelings of disillusionment and uncertainty regarding the significance of their faithfulness. It is easy to get into the habit of comparing ourselves to others and say, "God doesn't seem to be blessing me so why should I fear Him and be loyal to Him?"**

This part of Scripture reminds us that **God acknowledges and remembers the faithfulness of His people, even when it appears unnoticed.** It encourages us to persevere in our faith, trusting that God sees our devotion and will reward it in His perfect timing.

According to Malachi 3:13-18, **the distinction between the righteous and the wicked lies in their words and actions.** The **righteous** are described as those who fear God and speak with one another about Him. They show their commitment through their deeds and live in a manner pleasing to God. The **wicked** are those who speak harsh words against God and doubt His justice. Their behavior reflects their lack of faith and obedience.

Look at Colossians 1. **We see here the author's testimony to God as the ultimate creator, authority and King.** He recognizes that all things were created through Him and for Him. (Col. 1:16) **He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the church. He is the beginning and the end.** (Col. 1:18-19)

**That sounds like a King to me – does it to you?!** In Luke 23, even one of the criminals on the cross recognized that Christ was to be revered and respected. He said, *“Do you not fear God?.....this man has done nothing wrong.”* But the other criminal on the cross just jeered, *“If you’re really the Christ, save yourself and us!”*

**Do you see the difference between good and evil, as Malachi was pointing out? The righteous fear God and obey Him; the wicked speak harsh words against God and doubt His justice. The distinction between righteous and wicked is, ultimately, based on our relationship with God.**

*I recently saw something that illustrated this truth perfectly. It was a drawing of a fork in the road. To the left were droves of people walking down a path that said, “I believe in God.” To the right, were just a handful of people walking down a path that said, “I obey God.”*

This actually made me sad. Even satan believes in God..... It made me think of our world today, in which many people will say they believe in God and think they have a place in heaven. But the Bible tells us salvation comes ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

You see, Christ is, indeed, King!! Even though our present day culture discounts the position of King as simply a figurehead, God was before all things and in all things and He is still ruling all things until Christ comes to rule on earth!! Yes, **Christ is the real thing! He is the ultimate King, embodying perfect kingship and serving as a model for modern leaders.**

And, as our King, **Christ asks us to obey Him**. How will we know what to do? Well, God gave Moses the 10 commandments a LONG TIME AGO....and they are meant to stand the test of time. Jesus said in John 14:15, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”* They have not gone out of style or by the wayside. The world may think so, but not God. And Jesus capsulized them in Matthew 5:48-49 His words, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind....and love your neighbor as yourself.”* This is inclusive of all ten commandments.

**Our words and actions testify to our commitment to Christ.** Like that drawing of the fork in the road, we, too, must choose: **do we simply believe in God or do we OBEY Him?** James says in James 2:26, *“Faith without works is dead.”* **If we say we believe in God but our actions say something different, what kind of testimony is that?**

**On this Christ the King Sunday, let’s honor Christ our King with our words and actions. Let’s show the world our commitment to living right, obeying His commands, and displaying His light and love through us.**

In this present day, **let’s be glad to say we serve the highest King and we cheerfully obey Him. Our reward will be in eternity.** If we honor Christ as our Lord and King, we will hear Him say to us as He did to the thief on the cross, *“...today you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Amen.