

The King Takes His Throne

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church. Ephesians 1:22

On Saturday, May 6, the world witnessed something it hadn't seen in a very long time, the coronation of a King of England. Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, last September, eight months later King Charles III was formally crowned. Perhaps some of you are already aware of this, but this was the first coronation in 70 years for England. This ceremonial event is steeped in history and tradition that goes back hundreds of years with a long line of English royalty being officially crowned in a religious service at Westminster Abbey.

For this special service, around a couple thousand people were invited. Members of the royal family, prominent people in the British government, foreign dignitaries, prominent religious leaders, popular musicians and performers all made the guest list. Even the general public was given the opportunity to get a ticket for this unique event. However, for the general public, there was a specific process to undergo to be eligible for an invite. This was the process for the general public. An individual or organization could apply by a certain date attempting to prove that they had a connection to an ancestor who had participated in a previous coronation. Each application was then reviewed by a committee who determined whether or not the proof given earned an invite to the coronation ceremony.¹

While it might not entirely seem like it, this week the Church also observed a coronation, known better as Ascension Day. Paul in our reading from Ephesians (1:20-21), describes Jesus' ascension in a way that sounds very similar to a coronation. Listen again to those words, **“he (that is God the Father) ... seated him (Jesus) at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”** From these words, we hear that Jesus has taken His rightful place on the heavenly throne. He has all authority, power and might. This should be a big deal for God's people and yet it so often feels like an afterthought in the life of the Church.

Truth be told, even though Paul's words are clear about the magnitude of this ascension moment, it's often hard to understand what they mean for God's people in their daily lives because we're so locked in on temporal things. Hearing that Jesus is ruler over all creates a lot of discord with what we see going on around us. As we witness the chaos and sin happening inside and outside of our lives, it's tempting to believe that Jesus' enthronement isn't a big deal at all. As sinful people, instead of trusting what God's Word says, we give greater weight to our earthly situations and circumstances, especially the troubling and challenging ones, to define the importance or lack of importance for King Jesus' reign.

Our temporal focus really leads us to live like Jesus has to prove the significance of His coronation to us. We're fine letting Jesus apply and create a case that His ascension is important for our lives instead of us seeking and desiring to be a part this tremendous moment. And based on our expectations for the situations happening in our own lives, I'd imagine what Jesus shares isn't as convenient, timely or immediately satisfying enough as other things that can rule our lives. Which is why I think we'd even admit that the coronation of an earthly king of England felt more important to us than this coronation and ascension moment of Jesus our eternal King.

This limited focus, however, is nothing new. In the moments leading up to Jesus' ascension, the disciples also were concerned with their own temporal circumstances. In our first reading from Acts (1:6), we hear them ask Jesus this question, **“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”** For the disciples, there was no time like the present for Jesus to assert His authority. For them, in that moment, Jesus bringing in a new order of things certainly would have been convenient, timely and immediately satisfying. But their temporal plans weren't in line with God's perfect and eternal plan and Jesus tells them as much, saying, **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”** (Acts 1:7) Instead, Jesus refocuses them on pointing to His life-giving and eternal work ongoing in their temporal situations.

¹ Information shared, was pulled from this article: [King Charles' Coronation Invites: How To Get A Ticket \(elle.com\)](https://elle.com).

These disciples were witnesses of Jesus' entire ministry. Most importantly, they were witnesses of His death and resurrection. And Jesus' death and resurrection are what make His ascension so important because they reveal that Jesus desires to reign as King to serve not to destroy. This is what the disciples would be sent out to proclaim. God is building His kingdom not with top-down, sweeping changes, but from the bottom up with each individual He brings to faith in Him.

Jesus' reign is focused on the Church. And through people like the disciples, He guides and governs, His Church, to focus on what He has already accomplished for the Church and delivers to Her. Ascending into heaven didn't change Jesus' involvement, care and compassion for His people. He continues to care for His people with His Word and Sacraments. As the one who fills all things, Jesus rules His Church personally and closely. The Church isn't just a beloved entity or organization for King Jesus, no, as Paul writes, the Church is His Body. And upon this intimate connection is the assurance that every believer will also ascend like Jesus to be in the Lord's presence forever.

Still today, this ascension reality is critical, for people like you and me. Our King still comes to serve with His eternal plan and purpose. Through His Word and Sacraments, He chooses to enter into our lives so that He might forgive us and welcome us back into His kingdom. By His Means of Grace, Jesus has made forgiveness and life eternal convenient for us delivering these saving gifts through familiar things like words, water, bread and wine. By our King's mercy, He keeps these gifts timely and eternally satisfying day after day as we look forward our own ascension at His return.

Marked by these gifts of God's Word, baptism and communion, our King has made us members of His Body, the Church. And as members of Christ's Body, we continue to grow up into Jesus our head building each other up in love. This growing and building up in love happens right here in this place as we regularly gather to be fed and nourished with the love, mercy and grace of our King. And it also happens as our King sends us out of this place and into the other places He puts us. Certainly, at home, at work and at school, but even at the store, at the restaurant, at the doctor's office, etc. our King who rules all and fills all can and will use us to be His witness wherever He sends us.

With Jesus as our ascended King, our temporal situations and circumstances are transformed. They no longer need to be used as a lens through which we judge the current quality of Jesus' reign and lament about a lack of answers. Instead, they serve as an opportunity for us to build each other up in love as we cling to our King who reminds, encourages and fills us with the hope of His ongoing presence and the promise of His return when the fullness of His resurrection victory will be clearly made known!

If you had a chance to watch King Charles' coronation, you saw that once the crown was placed on the king's head, the congregation all shouted, "God save the king!" Here in this moment as we remember and recognize Jesus' Kingship, I think it is also fitting that we say something as well. Since God is our king we aren't going to use the same words but instead, I want you to open the hymnals in your pew to Psalm 47. It'll be in the front portion of the hymnal.

As you turn to Psalm 47, the words you're about to see and read are words of praise for our King's faithful rule and work for the Old Testament people of Israel. I invite you join with me as we read these words now recognizing and rejoicing in King Jesus' ascension and faithful rule over all, the very same God and King who was faithful to His people of old who remains faithful to His people today.

Let's read just a portion of this psalm back and forth. Beginning at verse 5, we'll read verse by verse. I'll read the odd verses and then you can read the even verses. Then we'll all close, together, with the bolded words of the doxology:

⁵*God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.* ⁶Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! ⁷*For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!* ⁸God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. ⁹*The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!* **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

In Christ,

Pastor Dan