

Easter Day

Long Lives the King of Kings!

Psalm 146

Hymn: *LSB* 797

Sermon Outline

1. “Long live the king!” is a subjunctive, a wish.
2. It reminds that the end of all kings is still death.
3. But for once, *the* King is dead. Long live the same King!
The King of Kings Lives Forever.
4. That makes him so different from every other king.
5. So we can drop the subjunctive: “Long *lives* the King!”

Sermon

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Old Testament Reading of Psalm 146.

1.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. Have you ever heard the phrase ‘Long live the king!’? Today we can easily say this as our Lord and King Jesus has risen from the dead. He is no longer dead! This acclamation has been made when a new king takes the throne. All the way from King Saul to King Charles of our day. It’s an awkward sentence, though—“Long live the king.” The verb “live” is in what is called the subjunctive mood. This mood expresses wishes, desires, and conditionals.

A nation wishes its king will live long. A long life gives Stability to the nation. There's very little worse than a quick succession of governments and the uncertainty that follows. As the king goes, so goes the nation. When the king dies young, the nation is left in turmoil. We've seen all of these realities played out in our Lenten and Holy Week series on the good kings of Judah. Today, we will see that our King Jesus lives forever. How does this fact make Jesus different from every other king? Ponder this question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

2.

The first chapter of Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus. In the middle of the genealogy are the generations of the kings of Judah. For example: "Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram," and so on (Mt 1:8). One king follows another as life and death take their turns. Reading this might bring to mind the salutation we opened with, "The king is dead. Long live the king!"

In a similar way this salutation is shown in the structure of the Books of Chronicles in the Old Testament. Whenever a king dies, there is a burial story and then the beginning of the next reign. The key facts are noted how old the king was when he took the throne and how many years he lived. Whether the reign was long or short, you could be sure that one king would die and another take his place. "The king is dead. Long live the king!"

The other thing written at the beginning of each king's reign concerns the faithfulness of the monarch. Usually he either followed or abandoned the ways of his father David. The point is that the king had a large influence over the direction of the nation. A good king like David or Josiah led the nation in righteousness, but a bad king like Manasseh led the nation into evil. The blessings or punishments visited on the king inevitably fell on the people also.

This is a lesson we continually learn from history, ancient or modern. It is written clearly in Psalm 146: “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish” (vv 3–4).

Although we often look to political rulers for deliverance, there is no salvation in them. They live and die as ordinary people do. Even the best leaders of men see their plans perish when their breath departs. Even if the king is wonderful, the one who comes after him might undo everything he did. As King Solomon states, a king cannot control how his children will rule. Solomon’s own son would split the kingdom in two by his tyranny! In the end, the only difference between one of the great kings of Judah and any peasant in the land is the size and place of the tomb.

3.

There is one king in history who breaks this pattern. Jesus came from a line of kings, but was not born in a king’s house. Instead, the angel Gabriel announced his birth to his mother, saying, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David” (Lk 1:32). An angel also visited Joseph, the son of David, proclaiming that “he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). This one was hailed as King by Magi from the east. He was christened as King with the Holy Spirit at his Baptism in the wilderness. As Jesus went through the land conquering the kingdom of darkness, preaching the coming kingdom of God, and restoring creation, the crowds desired to make him king. Indeed, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds cried out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (Jn 12:13). But the crowd’s reaction, especially after the feeding of the five thousand, was based only on

his power. They thought anyone who could feed them for free would be a great king. Free food and no taxes sounded great, even still today.

Instead, the only crown Jesus ever wore was made of thorns, not gold. The only purple robe he wore was stripped off after he was mocked. The inscription of his kingdom was posted on a cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” So the day of his coronation was the day of his death. That was not a long life for the king, certainly the shortest reign of any king of Judah. The King is dead.

Long live the King! This morning we celebrate the only King to succeed himself after death. Today we celebrate the only King to rise from the dead.

The King of Kings Lives Forever.

4.

Jesus, who lived without so much as a pillow to call his own, was buried in a rich man’s tomb. He had a reservation at a brand new tomb with a garden view. The owner no doubt expected that to be a long-term stay, but Jesus left after just three days and two nights.

So Jesus proved He is a different King from all the kings before him. He kept his word. He said he would suffer and die and rise on the third day; that’s exactly what he did. You can put your trust in this Son of Man, because there is salvation in him!

Further, even as He dies, his plans were accomplished. For our salvation, He left nothing undone. Everything has been finished. His saving work complete. His life’s work of saving his people through the forgiveness of sins culminated in his death for the sin of the world. His plans didn’t perish in the tomb but were completed in his resurrection on the third day. As the King above all kings, He ascended to the heavenly throne as Lord of all. As it is written, “The [Father of glory] seated him 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. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:20–23).

The Son of David is surely an unusual king. He didn’t wage war against neighboring kingdoms. He didn’t build a temple, palace, or city walls. He didn’t preside over a booming economy. Instead, his mission was healing and justice. The mission of the Lord Jesus is summarized in Psalm 146: “The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (vv 7–9; cf Lk 4:18–19).

His victory was greater than all the kings of Judah because it was won over the last and greatest enemy—death. By dying, Jesus destroys the power of death and robs death of its sting. His life changes the way his people live, and his death changed the way his people die. In his kingdom is freedom and life. In his kingdom there is fullness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

He who died for our forgiveness now lives and lives forevermore! Our Lord’s wonderous work urges us into praise for all of the wonderous things that He has done that He gives us the forgiveness of our sins, His own perfect righteousness, and, eternal life with Him forever. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords; he is here, and he isn’t going anywhere. As the beginning of Psalm 146 reads, “Praise the Lord! [*NB*: Hebrew הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה, Hallelujah]. Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being” (vv 1–2).

We have a long time to sing those praises because, like our King, we also live forever. Hallelujah!

5.

Today, we can drop the subjunctive. Not “Long live the king” but “Long *lives* the King!” No more wishing, desiring, hoping. Put it in the indicative mood. Declare it; say it’s true! “Long lives the King!” “The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! [Hebrew *halelu-Yah*, Hallelujah]” (v 10).

This is news of inexpressible joy. As he rules, so goes his kingdom. The fortune of his kingdom is completely dependent on her King. And so we have a kingdom with peace and stability under our Lord Jesus Christ. For the Son of David was pierced for our transgressions and has ascended to the throne, that we “may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity” (SC, Second Article).

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory” (Rev 19:6–7).

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen*