

Today we are in the last Sunday after Pentecost and we celebrate this as the festival of 'Christ the Lord'. Our theme for this morning is, 'The good confession made by Jesus Christ.' In John's Gospel Jesus is on trial before Pilate and he is asked whether he is the king of the Jews. Jesus acknowledges by saying, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.' Pilate recognized that Jesus was a king though he was not able to understand the kingship of Jesus.

In the New Testament reading from the book of Revelation, John is in the island of Patmos where he sees several visions. John then writes a circular letter to seven of the towns in Asia Minor. The message was to bring encouragement to those who were suffering and under great pressure because of persecution, reassuring them that God will triumph over evil. Chapters 4 and 5 prepare for the implementation of God's sovereignty on earth where it is presently hidden and contested by the powers of evil. At the beginning of Chapter 4, John is summoned to the War Room or the Supreme Headquarters, a room with a map on the table with miniature images and flags indicating the movement of troops. Here John is shown a scroll with seven seals written on both sides held by God. The Scroll would reveal God's secret purpose for establishing his kingdom on earth. John hears the mighty angels proclaiming loudly, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' No one in heaven or on earth could open the scroll and then John began to weep. Then one of the elders told John, 'See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David will triumph. He is able to open the scroll and the seven seals. 'The Lion of the tribe of Judah' is an allusion to Genesis 49:9 where Jacob blesses Judah as a Lion. Matthew in his opening genealogy tracks both David and Jesus to the tribe of Judah. The Lion symbolism shows the ability to subdue all opposition. The second title the 'Root of David' alludes to Isaiah 11:1, 10 which talks about the Messiah, who will be a descendent of David. An expanded form of this title occurs in Revelation 22: 16 in the self-designation, 'I am the Root and the descendant of David.' What the Lion of the tribe of Judah has done is that he has conquered. Jesus likewise says, 'I have conquered the world' (John 16:33). Paul also praises God, 'who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 15:57).

What did Jesus conquer? Jesus defeated death which was brought in by sin by offering himself as a sacrifice for our sins. His death on the cross, and rising again on the third day has defeated death. Therefore death has no more power over us. It is no more the last step for those who believe in Jesus Christ. There is the hope of the resurrection. He has also destroyed the works of the devil. John sees Jesus as the Lamb who was slain, who stood between the Cherubim and the twenty-four elders representing the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve Apostles – indicating all those in the community of faith.

This slain Lamb takes the scroll and immediately the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb and they sing a new song saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransom people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.' The reason for the worthiness of the Lamb was because he was slaughtered and he ransomed people for God. Jesus has paid for the sins of the world by his own blood and therefore he was able to redeem people from all nations. Jesus himself through his suffering, death and resurrection established himself as Lord and King. Not only does he do that, but he also makes his redeemed people as priests and kings who will reign on the earth with him. As we celebrate Christ as Lord may we truly surrender our lives to him and be co-workers in establishing his kingdom on earth.