

“Contrasting Kingdoms”
John 18:28-40
February 21, 2021
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

This morning we come to the first portion of Jesus’s trial before Pontius Pilate.

Jesus has been tried – in a fundamentally unjust trial – by the Jewish leaders. And now, in John 18:28-40, the chief priests bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor in charge of Jerusalem.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

^{18:28} Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” ³⁰ They answered him, “If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.” ³¹ Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.” The Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.” ³² This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ⁴⁰ They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was [an insurrectionist].

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, you have dealt well with us,
just as you have promised in your word.
Teach us now good judgment and knowledge,
for we believe in your word to us – your commandments and your testimonies.
You are good and you do good;
teach us your ways.
We know that your word to us in the Scriptures is of more value for us

than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.
Help us now to treat it and attend to it as such.
Grant this, we ask, for Jesus's sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:65, 66, 68, 72]

Introduction

This morning we come to the first portion of Jesus's trial before the Roman authorities.

At a surface level, what's happening here is simple: a powerless peasant from a nowhere town is brought by one set of authorities (the Jewish leaders) to another authority (the Roman governor) to be put on trial. On its surface, that is what's happening.

However, if we know the story up to this point, or even if we just pay attention to the dialogue here, we soon see that at a deeper level something very different is going on.

Because Jesus, the supposed peasant, isn't just a powerless peasant from a nowhere town. He is a king. And he comes from heaven.

Jesus makes both of those claims here. In verse thirty-seven Jesus is claiming to have a kingdom, and to be a king. And then, right after that, he claims to have come into the world from outside – presumably from heaven.

And with that dynamic, things get weird. Pilate is supposed to be questioning Jesus, but soon it is Jesus putting questions to Pilate. It suddenly doesn't seem so obvious who outranks who here.

From a human perspective there are two kingdoms from this world that are interacting in this text: There is the kingdom of the Jews, represented by the Jewish leaders, and there is the kingdom of Rome, represented by Pilate.

But as we listen to Jesus, we soon begin to see that there are really two *kinds* of kingdom here, with their difference rooted in their origin. There are kingdoms from this world and there is a kingdom from heaven.

That distinction of origin is a contrast that Jesus raises. In verse thirty-six Jesus says: "My kingdom is not of this world." A little later he says: "My kingdom is not from the world."

As commentators point out, Jesus is saying the same thing in two different ways. The "of" there is an "of" of origin. It is another way of saying from. In both cases Jesus is stressing that his kingdom does not come *from* this fallen and corrupted world. [Carson, 594; Wright, 114-115]

That is contrasted with the kingdom of the Jewish leaders and the kingdom of Rome – both of which *do* come from this world.

And that is the contrast we will focus on this morning: the contrast between kingdoms that come from this world, and the kingdom that comes from heaven.

As we do, we will first see three ways that Jesus's kingdom from heaven is *contrasted* with the kingdoms from this world, and then we will see three ways that Jesus's kingdom from heaven *conquers* the kingdoms from this world.

We begin with the ways that those kingdoms are contrasted.

Contrast #1: The Appearance of Holiness vs. Actual Holiness

And the first contrast we see between the kingdoms from this world and the kingdom from heaven is in their relationship to holiness – to righteousness.

What we see is that the kingdoms from this world are primarily concerned with *the appearance* of holiness and righteousness, while the kingdom from heaven is primarily concerned with *actual* holiness and righteousness.

And we see this contrast especially as we look at the Jewish leaders here, compared to Jesus.

The Jewish leaders provide us here with a striking image of the world's concern with the appearance and the symbols of righteousness rather than the substance of righteousness.

We see this in the second half of verse twenty-eight. There we read that the chief priests “themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.”

Now, we need a little historical background on this.

First, we need to remember that these events are occurring during the Feast of Passover – a holy festival in the Jewish calendar. And in order to participate in the festival, someone has to be ritually clean. And the Jewish leaders here refuse to enter Pilate's headquarters because they believed going in would make them ritually unclean.

Here's the thing: There's no passage in the Old Testament that says that entering the home or the workplace of a Gentile made one unclean. It's not there. Scholars debate the origin of this belief in the first century, but it is an extra-biblical belief. The Jews here make a big show of not going into Pilate's headquarters, requiring him to go outside instead. But there is no Biblical basis for this. It is a human-made *symbol* of holiness. [Carson, 588-589; See especially Hayes, 19-44]

And in this case, it is an extremely hollow symbol. Remember, the Jewish leaders have just conducted a wildly unjust trial, with the goal of *murdering* Jesus. But here they make a big show of following some man-made rules to protect their appearance of righteousness and holiness ... while they are in the act of committing an unrighteous and unholy murder of an innocent man.

In the actions of the Jewish leaders we see that the kingdoms from this world are primarily concerned with *the appearance* of righteousness and holiness, rather than the substance.

And we see this still today.

Of course, in our fractured culture people often disagree on exactly what is righteous and holy. But even so, within their own views of righteousness they still often display this worldly tendency to value the appearance and the symbols of righteousness over the actual substance of righteousness.

Let's consider two more stark contrasts from recent events.

In some circles, "Black Lives Matter" is a slogan that summarizes a righteous cause. And, of course we should agree that racial equality and the protection of black lives from unjust violence are important righteous goals.

But then, last June, in St. Paul Minnesota, protestors carrying Black Lives Matter signs set fire to and burned down a black-owned Ethiopian restaurant – one of multiple black and immigrant-owned businesses severely damaged by those protesting against the mistreatment of black people and immigrants. [McCarthy]

And we might ask: How could that happen?

Well, it happens when people value their symbols of righteousness more than righteousness itself. And it's hard to think of a more glaring example than a protestor marching for the protection of minority rights, who then set fire to a small, local, Ethiopian restaurant.

Of course other examples like this do exist.

In some circles, support for law enforcement is seen as an obvious righteous cause. And, of course, we should agree that proper protection and gratitude for law enforcement workers who justly enforce the law is an important and righteous goal.

But on January 6th, in Washington D.C., police officer Mike Fanone was grabbed by rioters at the capital, tasered a number of times, and beaten with a metal pole until he suffered a heart-attack.

Attached to the metal pole that he was beaten with was a "Thin Blue Line" flag – a flag meant to symbolize support for law enforcement. [Bensen]

How does that happen?

Again, it happens when people value their symbols of righteousness more than righteousness itself. And it's hard to think of a more glaring example than a protestor carrying a symbol of support for law-enforcement, and then using that symbol to brutally beat a law enforcement officer.

This pattern is not a progressive pattern or a conservative pattern. It's also not just a political pattern. It is a worldly pattern. It is the way of all kingdoms that come from this world.

Now you might say: Oh, come on – those are extreme examples. And of course, they are. The extremity of them is unusual. But the overall pattern is not. In ways big and small, the way of this world is to value the symbols of righteousness more than righteousness itself.

Christians are, of course, called to be different. But often we're not. Often, we fall into the same patterns ourselves.

We can think of both mundane examples of this, as well as more heartbreaking examples.

Think of yourself or your family getting ready to come in to worship this morning. Many of us tend to dress up for Sunday morning worship here at Faith. And in itself that is not a bad thing. It is meant to reflect the gravity of coming into the presence of the living God, and our desire to honor and respect him – to come into worship prepared to meet with our Lord. It is a human-made symbol of the fact that we are setting aside this time for God.

But here's my question: As you got ready to come in today, did you spend more time and more emotional energy this morning worried about the symbol or the reality?

Were you more worried about how you looked than about whether your heart was ready to encounter the living God? Did you spend more time thinking about your spouse's appearance as they got ready for church than thinking about where your spouse's heart is before the Lord right now? Did you spend more time thinking of how your children's appearance or behavior might embarrass you than thinking of how your children will interact with (or not interact with) the Lord himself this morning? Far too often, we care more about the appearance of holiness than the substance of holiness.

And that is true in much more heartbreaking ways than that. It is a common lament among counselors and pastors that most married couples – including Christian couples – don't come for marriage counseling until things are already a terrible mess. Why is that? Why don't Christians seek help at the first signs of trouble in their relationship? Well ... because we usually care more about the *appearance* of having a good marriage than we care about *actually* having a good marriage.

And it's not just in marriage. At any given moment there are so many men, women, teenagers, and children who are struggling alone with sin, or with mental health, or with other kinds of struggles – and they choose to struggle alone because when it comes down to it, they are more concerned about maintaining the appearance of health and holiness than pursuing the real thing.

And our communities can reinforce that. Because we are far too often interested in symbols rather than substance. We so often care more about the terms someone uses to frame the issue of race in our culture than the substance of their actual views. We so often care more about the labels someone uses to describe their experience of same-sex attraction than the actual state of their hearts or the faithfulness of their lives. We are often more worried that someone affirm the right parenting techniques than whether they are actually seeking their children's hearts. When dealing with other people, we often gravitate to the surface-level symbols rather than the real substance of the issue.

We do this because it's easy. We do this because it's reassuring and feels simple. We do this because it feels safer that actually trying to understand complex issues ... or understand people's hearts ... or get in the trenches with people as they wrestle with sin and brokenness.

Of course, that is *not* the way it is supposed to be. That is the way of kingdoms from this world, and it is a shame that we see these patterns in the Church, because what we see in our text is that that is *not* the way of the kingdom from heaven.

Jesus stands in stark contrast to the chief priests who bring him to Pilate. Jesus, again and again in his ministry, was willing to discard the appearance of righteousness if it was at odds with the substance of righteousness. And so he spends time with prostitutes and with corrupt tax collectors – not because he thinks their sins are inconsequential, but because he wants to see righteousness take root in their lives instead. And so, though keeping away from such people would enhance Jesus’s appearance of holiness, he is far more concerned with increasing actual holiness in the world.

As we see here, he is even willing to be counted and condemned as a criminal, if that is what real righteousness requires.

The first contrast we see here between the kingdoms from this world and the kingdom from heaven is that the kingdoms from this world are primarily concerned with *the appearance* of holiness and righteousness, while the kingdom from heaven is primarily concerned with *actual* holiness and righteousness.

Contrast #2: From Acquiring Power vs From Receiving Truth

The second contrast we see here is that the kingdoms of this world are established by acquiring power, while the kingdom from heaven is established by receiving truth.

And we see this especially in the interaction between Jesus and Pilate.

Because Pilate understands how worldly kingdoms work in his own life. His life is shaped by the careful acquiring and managing of power. This is true both in his interactions with Rome and with the Jews.

As a Roman leader Pilate is trying to grow his power in Rome. How he does that in his position in Jerusalem is by keeping grain quietly flowing from the Middle East to Rome, to meet Rome’s needs, and then quietly handling whatever trouble may arise in Jerusalem. [Wright, 109-112]

How he does that in his interactions with the Jewish leaders is by being intentional about protecting, asserting, and increasing his power among them. And we see several power-plays along those lines here.

First, the fact that Pilate even holds a hearing for Jesus is something of a power play. Roman soldiers were involved with the arrest of Jesus, and so presumably Pilate already knew something of Jesus’s arrest and agreed to support it with his men. His insistence on hearing the case himself in verse twenty-nine is therefore an assertion of power, one the Jews respond to with frustration in verse thirty. Then, in verse thirty-one he pushes it even further. He knows that they need him, and he takes this opportunity to rub their face in the fact that he has power over them. [Carson, 590-591]

As the hearing progresses, we see that Pilate has some interest in getting to the bottom of what is going on with Jesus – he wants to know where the real threats lie. But as he gets a clearer picture, the Jewish leaders affirm his assumptions. They are not interested in truth but in power, and this is made obvious when they ask for Pilate to release an insurrectionist (Barabbas) even as they ask Pilate to execute Jesus for being an insurrectionist. The irony would not have been lost on Pilate. [Carson, 593, 596]

In both Pilate and the Jewish leaders we see kingdoms seeking to establish themselves by acquiring power rather than truth.

In contrast, Jesus presents his kingdom as a kingdom that is established through truth. He says so in verse thirty-seven: “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Jesus’s kingdom – the kingdom from heaven – is a kingdom rooted in the truth: the truth about this world, and the truth about God.

Jesus is not interested in manipulating the truth in the pursuit of power. He is not interested in twisting the truth about things in this world, and he certainly is not interested in twisting the truth about God to meet anyone’s preferences. He is interested only in speaking about this world as it actually is. He is interested only in making known and revealing God *as God actually is* – not as we might *want* God to be. [Carson, 595]

And Jesus presents that truth as an invitation – an invitation to truly listen to his voice and to embrace the truth, as he says in verse thirty-seven. Even here on trial, Jesus implicitly extends an invitation to Pilate. Pilate could forsake a kingdom that is established by gathering power, to instead become part of the kingdom from heaven that is found by receiving truth. [Carson, 595]

But Pilate is not interested. “What is truth?” is his cynical response. And he walks away from Jesus before Jesus can respond.

Pilate’s response is stark. But it’s also common. It is the way of the kingdoms from this world: to prioritize power over truth – so that truth only interests us if it serves our quest for power and control.

We can see this in all kinds of ways.

We see it in so many debates in our culture, where data is cherry-picked to win a disagreement and words are designed to score points among our allies, rather than to earnestly seek the truth.

We often see the same dynamic in our relationships, when someone confronts us or disagree with us. Rather than honestly considering if they are right, and desiring the truth, we try to rhetorically out-manuever them or emotionally manipulate them until we get our way – until they agree with us or back off.

And we see this in our relationship with God. When we hear things we like in a sermon, we receive it. But when something makes us uncomfortable – when something convicts us – we often find a way to deflect it. We think about *someone else* with that problem, or we nitpick at some aspects

of the sermon so we can reject the message as a whole. I know what it's like – I do it too! And it's not unique to preaching. When we hear spiritual guidance from others, we do it. Even when we read the Scriptures, we do it – maybe even just by kind of zoning out and letting ourselves be a bit distracted when we read portions of the Bible that reveal truths we'd rather not see about God or about ourselves. We often prefer to preserve our personal autonomy – which is simply another form of power – than to receive the truth revealed to us in God's word.

In contrast, Jesus presents his kingdom as a kingdom that is synonymous with truth. His kingdom comes not by power manipulation – it comes by proclaiming the truth. And so his kingdom cannot be received by picking and choosing which of the truths he proclaims we are willing to accept – for that is simply another worldly way of asserting our own power and autonomy. Instead, we are called to accept his testimony in its fullness – even the parts we may struggle to receive.

The kingdoms of this world are established by acquiring power, while the kingdom from heaven is established by receiving truth.

That is the second contrast we see here.

Contrast #3: From Violent Attack vs From Willing Self-Sacrifice

The third contrast we see is that the kingdoms of this world grow out of violent attack, while the kingdom from heaven grows out of willing self-sacrifice.

And that assumption is behind all of the interactions here.

Living in a democracy, we may need to remind ourselves of this: In the ancient world, you became a king in one of two ways: You either inherited the crown or you seized the crown through violence – through violently attacking and defeating those who reigned before you. [Wright, 113-114]

That's why the Jewish leaders present Jesus to Pilate as a self-proclaimed king. It is their way of claiming he is a violent insurrectionist. [Carson, 592-593]

Pilate's questions are focused on determining whether Jesus is in fact a violent threat.

And what Jesus makes clear to Pilate is that his kingdom is fundamentally different from the kingdoms of this world, because it is neither established nor maintained by worldly violence. [Carson, 594]

Jesus makes that point in verse thirty-six. He understands what Pilate is trying to determine, and so he points out that his followers have not used violence to defend or promote him.

And Pilate hears what Jesus is saying. And so, even though Jesus affirms that he is a king in verse thirty-seven, and Pilate calls him a king in verse thirty-nine, Pilate also says that he finds no guilt in Jesus, because he understands Jesus's point that he has not sought a kingdom through violent attack. [Carson, 594-595]

Pilate sees that Jesus does not fit the model of kings from this world. But actually, the contrast is even greater than Pilate realizes. Because Jesus not only refrains from violence towards others to establish his kingdom, he does the opposite: Jesus establishes his heavenly kingdom not by violently attacking others, but by willingly sacrificing himself.

Jesus, in these events, is establishing his heavenly kingdom here on earth. And he establishes it through the cross. He establishes it not by seizing power as a tyrant, but by giving himself as a sacrifice. It is sacrificial love, not the violent grasping at power, that establishes the heavenly kingdom.

And that is a pattern so foreign to the kingdoms of this world. Just listen to how people in our culture speak about those who are different from them – those outside their cultural tribe. Though they don't usually bear swords, their words are aimed as attacks. We see it in the public square, but we see it in our private lives as well: how we speak about people around us, or people who are different from us. We cut others down in an attempt to push ourselves up. We try to establish our worldly kingdoms by going after those we see as obstacles to us.

But at the heart of the heavenly kingdom is a king who sacrifices himself, in love, for those who hate him. *That* is how Jesus establishes the heavenly kingdom here on earth.

So, taken together, we have three contrasts:

First, the kingdoms from this world are primarily concerned with *the appearance* of holiness and righteousness, while the kingdom from heaven is concerned with *actual* holiness and righteousness.

Second, the kingdoms of this world are established by acquiring power, while the kingdom from heaven is established by receiving truth.

Third, the kingdoms of this world grow out of violent attacks, while the kingdom from heaven grows out of willing self-sacrifice.

These are the contrasts our text holds out before us.

But thankfully, our text does more than that. It not only shows the contrast, but it also shows the trajectory of these two kingdoms that are set at odds with one another.

It also points us to three ways that the kingdom of heaven conquers the kingdoms of this world: It points to how Jesus's kingdom from heaven conquers the kingdoms of this world through substitution, through sanctification, and through glorification.

Conquering #1: Substitution

First, the kingdom of heaven conquers this world through substitution.

And the events here unfold and are recorded in such a way as to remind us of this.

In verse thirty-eight Pilate says that he knows that Jesus is innocent. And he offers to release him. But the people don't ask for Jesus to be released. Instead they ask for Barabbas.

Barabbas was an insurrectionist. We've put the footnoted marginal translation of the ESV in the bulletin for you because we tend to think of a "robber" as a possibly non-violent criminal. But what's being described here is one who is not a simple thief, but one who, as Mark 15:7 tells us, had committed murder in an act of insurrection. [Carson, 596; Wright, 116]

All four Gospels tell us about Barabbas being set free in light of Jesus's condemnation. Why is that?

The exchange of Jesus for Barabbas gives us a picture of the gospel. Barabbas deserves to be condemned and executed as an insurrectionist. Jesus is innocent and deserves to be set free. But instead, Barabbas is released, and Jesus receives the sentence that Barabbas deserved.

Now ... I'm not saying that Barabbas was a believer or that he experienced spiritual salvation – the text doesn't say that at all.

Rather, it seems as if all four Gospel writers recognized that in this political exchange, there was a picture of the spiritual exchange that came with Jesus's condemnation: Jesus would be condemned as a substitute, so that others could be set free. [Wright, 116]

And this is how the kingdom of heaven conquers our lack of true righteousness and true holiness. As we see how we fall short, the world urges us to grasp at the appearance of righteousness all the more frantically. But such desperate attempts at justifying ourselves are always in vain.

Instead, the kingdom from heaven conquers our guilt and hypocrisy through substitution. We admit that we are not righteous. We admit that we are not holy. And then Jesus steps in as our substitute. On the cross he takes the condemnation and the sentence due to us for our unrighteousness. And then he releases us. He gives us life. By Christ's mercy, the kingdom of heaven conquers our guilt through the substitutionary death of Jesus. Like Barabbas, we are spared.

That's the first way that the kingdom from heaven conquers the kingdoms from this world.

Conquering #2: Sanctification

The second way the kingdom from heaven conquers the kingdoms from this world is by sanctification. The kingdom from heaven changes us.

We see a hint of that in verse thirty-six. There Jesus says to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

Now ... Jesus's words here are true ... but in some ways they seem more aspirational.

Peter tried to fight, of course ... but Jesus stopped him. Jesus's other followers did not fight, though that is mostly because they fled. In the context of Jesus's discussion with Pilate, Jesus's words of course fit and are true – Jesus clearly has not raised his disciples as worldly fighters.

But we can find ourselves wishing that his words had been true in even greater ways. We can find ourselves wishing that the disciples had refused to fight because, like Jesus, they were willing to give up worldly power in order to stand for the truth. That's not what we see in the disciples that night.

But it is what we would see in the disciples eventually. The eleven would eventually be willing to stand before the powers of this world, and, like Jesus, to give up their worldly power and security – and in most cases even their lives – in order to stand for the truth. And what began with the apostles would continue on in the Christian martyrs, from the early church up until today: those who followed Christ and held to his truth even to the point of death.

What happened in those believers that they were able to do that? What happened in the apostles that they went from fleeing danger to being willing to follow the way of the kingdom of heaven even to death?

Well, Jesus is what happened to them. Jesus was at work in them. Jesus was not done with the apostles that night. He was still completing the work he had begun in them.

He was at work not only as their substitute, but as their sanctifier – as the one who would work in their souls, transform their hearts, and sanctify them to God.

When we are saved, we are forgiven by the substitution of Christ. We are formally released from the dominion of sin. And yet, so often, the ways of the world – the patterns of the kingdoms from this world – continue in our hearts. But Jesus continues his work in us. And as we pursue him, and cling to him, and seek to follow him, he sanctifies us. He conquers the kingdoms of this world in our hearts, and he makes us more like himself. It will take time. It will take struggle. It will take suffering. But Jesus conquers the kingdoms from this world by his sanctifying work in our souls.

That is the second way we see that Jesus's kingdom from heaven conquers the kingdoms from this world.

Conquering #3: Glorification

The third way that the kingdom from heaven conquers the kingdoms from this world is through glorification.

And on this final point it is important that we see that the kingdom of Jesus is not *from* this world, but it is *aimed at* this world. And its goal is a total transformation of this world. [Carson, 594]

As one commentator puts it: Jesus's "kingdom doesn't come from this world, but it is for this world." [Wright, 115]

And that, again, makes it unique.

The kingdoms of this world do spring from this world, but they are not for the benefit of the world. They aim to *take* from the world: to push others down in order to elevate ourselves, to gain power to be used for ourselves, to attack the world in order to establish ourselves. Left to themselves, the kingdoms from this world destroy the very world they spring forth from.

But the kingdom from heaven is different. The kingdom from heaven is *for* the world. It is aimed at transforming this world. It is aimed at remaking this world for the good of the world – for the life of the world. It offers this world forgiveness. It offers this world sanctification. And its end, its goal, is the transformation – the glorification – of this world.

Jesus comes not to destroy this world. He comes to make it new. And that is the picture that the Apostle John gives us in the Book of Revelation. At the end of history Jesus will come back, and he will make all things new. True holiness will saturate this world. True truth will cover the world, so that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” [Isaiah 11:9b]. Jesus’s self-sacrifice, made out of love for this world, will come to its fullness as the world is glorified, by his grace. And then, all the kingdoms from this world will pass away – they will pass away from our hearts, from our lives, from our relationships, and from our societies.

That is the final conquering act of the kingdom of heaven that the Bible points to. That is the goal that Christ had before him as he went to the cross. That is the destination we should all desire.

And so, let us embrace true holiness, let us embrace true truth, let us embrace loving self-sacrifice. And turning to Christ, let us receive his grace, walk in his ways, and long for his final victory in this world.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Bensen, Jackie. “‘It Was Brutal, Medieval-Style Combat’: DC Police Officers Describe Defending US Capitol.” NBC Washington. January 16, 2020. <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/it-was-brutal-medieval-style-combat-dc-police-officers-describe-defending-us-capitol/2542536/>
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