

Genesis 49:8-12 ⁸ “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. ⁹ You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. ¹¹ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

Jesus is the Lion of Judah

- 1. His kingdom endures forever**
- 2. In grace He rules over all things**
- 3. In glory he rules in unparalleled bliss**

Jesus is alive and his kingdom endures forever. Jesus is alive and he will come again so that we may live with him in glory. This is true because of our God’s power. This is true because of our God’s grace. Today we begin with these simple statements reminding us of the truth of Scripture so that we are prepared for what will follow in this sermon.

It is said that great rulers and kings and leaders live on even after they die. They live on because of their legacies and the lessons they taught and the impact that had on the world. They have cemented their place in history and are immortalized by those who followed them. Some try to lump Jesus into this category. They say he was a great teacher. They might even recognize that he has a permanent place in history because of the great impact of his teaching and the memorable events surrounding his life and death. But many go on to deny his divinity. This great teacher died and so like the rest of history’s great men and women he no longer has any true power. “I don’t need to listen to his Word. I don’t need to follow his ways. He has no power to save, and certainly no power to judge.”

The Bible certainly paints a different picture. Jesus was not simply immortalized by the memory of those who loved him and followed his teachings, but rather Jesus is alive and as God he is truly immortal. Jesus died and rose again and has ascended to heaven. He is seated on his throne in glory and is ruling over all things until he comes again. He is the all powerful God. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the everlasting God. He lives, and his kingdom endures forever.

We know this as truth taught from Scripture. These are truths that we confess in our creeds. But sometimes we lose sight on how powerful our Savior is. Perhaps it has something to do with how much we focus on Jesus suffering, on his humble existence, and his teachings of servitude. More harmful certainly is the way the world treats our Savior. The ‘educated’ minds of our world mock our Savior and we may lead us to question his power. Accidents and

tragedies and chaos make our sinful weak minds wonder if Jesus is strong enough to control anything. And so perhaps a best-selling book is right when it says that “God is dead”.

So we are in need of these simple reminders from God’s Word again, Jesus is alive. The resurrected Lord is ruling over all things and he will come in glory to take us to his eternal kingdom. Dear friends, Jesus is more than just a baby who was born in Bethlehem and placed in a manger. He was more than a great teacher who was underappreciated and wrongfully accused and convicted. He was more than a victim mocked and beaten and then killed on a cross. Jesus was more than a great leader who met an untimely death and will be forever remembered by his faithful fans. Jesus is the eternal King of Kings. He is the everlasting Lord of Lords. He is the fullness of the living God. He is the Christ; the one chosen by God to save sinners. He is Christ the King who rules over all things for the good of the church until he comes again in glory. We are reminded of his power so that we will not doubt his strength when the world tries to belittle him. We are reminded of his glory so that we will confidently place our trust in him and find peace in him during this life of uncertainty. We are reminded of the glory and power of Christ Jesus so that we look past this world of sin and trouble and gaze upon the joy of unparalleled bliss in Jesus’ Kingdom of Glory that will endure forever and forever.

In Revelation 5:5 there is a rare title given to Jesus: the Lion of Judah. While a rare title, it is certainly a *fitting* title, which reminds us of the power of Christ Jesus. A lion is an animal that is often associated with power, strength, dignity, courage and royalty. The lion is the king of the jungle and many earthly kings and rulers used the image of a lion to promote their power, their strength, and their reign. In Revelation chapter 5 we are told that this Lion of Judah appears triumphant and he alone has the knowledge and power to reign over all things. Jesus who willingly set aside his glory and power for a time did so that he could die as the Lamb of God to defeat sin, death, and the devil for us. He then rose triumphant from the grave. He has been exalted to his place on high and again taking up full use of his power and glory he rules as the ultimate King. He reigns over all things for the good of his church until this world ceases to exist and then he will reign in the presence of his people forever and ever. He is Lion that rules who came from the house and line of Judah.

While the title the Lion of Judah is used only once in the last book of the Bible it is in the first book of the Bible that this title finds its origin. As Jacob looks upon his son Judah and speaks this blessing upon him, one wonders if Jacob truly grasps the full magnitude of the words that come from his mouth. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Jacob, or Israel as he is also known, speaks words of prophecy about the coming Messiah who would come through his son Judah. People from all the tribes of Israel and from all over the world would praise this coming king. This descendant of Judah would subdue and defeat all his enemies. The Messiah would establish a kingdom that would endure forever.

Jacob looks upon his son Judah and confesses these words about the coming Messiah, ***“the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff between his feet.”*** And Jacob uses a picture of royalty and strength when he describes this descendant of Judah as a lion. ***“⁹ You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?”***

Just think about Jacob's situation when he spoke these words. This was not a great leader of a powerful nation looking upon his royal sons to create a lasting legacy. This was an old man who had just found refuge from a famine in a foreign land under a foreign ruler. He knew that his end was near and he was surrounded by his 12 sons as they all faced an uncertain future. Certainly when he spoke these words he was not speaking of an earthly kingdom which would be powerful and his son Judah would be its king and he would live forever. This dying man, of all people, knew full well that men don't live here on earth forever and earthly kingdoms only last for so long.

Jacob would die not long after he spoke these words and Jacob's son Judah would eventually die in the land of Egypt also. Never would Judah sit on a throne in power with a scepter in his hand, with a staff of power between his feet. However, it would be true that the line of Judah would be a royal line. Judah's descendants would bring forth kings with the most memorable being King David and King Solomon. These two would be the most prolific and powerful rulers that Israel would ever see, but even these glory years of the kingdom of Israel would last for only a few generations. David would unite the tribes and expand the borders. Solomon would build a magnificent temple to the glory of God and the borders would continue to swell. But after Solomon the kingdom would be divided. David's grandsons fought for power and the kingdom was split. The kings of Judah ruled in the south. The kings of Israel would rule in the north. The kings of both the north and the south would lead the people into idolatry and both nations would eventually be stripped of power and exiled as God brought punishment on his people who had lost their way.

No, neither the kingdom of Israel, nor the kingdom of Judah would endure forever. As Jacob spoke these words he looked far beyond David and Solomon. He looked far beyond the realms of earthly kingdoms. He looked beyond his final days and joyously ahead to the kingdom of heaven that great David's greater Son, Jesus the Christ, would establish and would share with all those who believe in him.

What great joy and security we have in Christ even during the uncertainty of this world! We know things don't last forever. We have seen from the pages of history and from our own personal history that great leaders come and go, kingdoms rise and fall, and no one lives on this earth forever. But despite all that is constantly changing around us, the Christian knows that our King Jesus is in control. His kingdom endures forever.

What confidence and peace this gives to us! The Lamb of God who demonstrated such great love and compassion for us, graciously rules all things. The one who rules our hearts with his grace rules the world with his power. God reassures us in his Word that he does not sit idly by as his people are tossed back and forth by the powers of this world. King Jesus is in control. He promises that even the sad and difficult things of this world he can use them to work out for the good of those who love him. The Lord God also makes it known that He will not let his name be trampled upon forever. He will roar from Zion. He will tear to pieces those who dare to oppose him. He will bring a swift end to those who are against him, but for us, he will put his strong arms around us and gently gather his believers to his kingdom of glory.

And this is the glory that Jacob points to at the end of his prophesy. God's eternal kingdom is a place of good health and wealth that goes beyond our imagination. And Jesus is the king.

These words demonstrate how good things will be in the eternal kingdom of glory. Not only for the king, but for those who belong to him. ***11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.*** ***12 His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.*** Imagine a place so decadent, that the residents use wine to wash their clothes. So abundant is this place. So far it is beyond our imagination. Such a place of wealth must certainly have to worry about attacks from those who are envious of its wealth. But we are told that all threats to this kingdom have been crushed and removed. No one within the kingdom will ever threaten the king. No one from one outside the kingdom will trouble him. And so within this place of prosperity and peace the king can tether his donkey to a vine if he wants. This is the most unreliable of hitching posts, but the King doesn't have to worry if the donkey will wander away, because he has plenty more to choose from. He doesn't have to worry if someone will take it, because all people serve the king gladly and perfectly. So peaceful is this place. So prosperous is this kingdom. Jesus reins and he will reign forever with unmatched power and everlasting authority. Jesus is the Lion that came from Judah. The scepter will not depart from his feet. And He will bring us, his people, to his kingdom of perfection, his place of everlasting peace, of eternal health, lasting beauty, and endless wealth.

To us who clip coupons to save money on laundry detergent or bypass the name brand because it is too expensive for our tastes, this kind of extravagance of washing clothes in wine seems so far beyond our reach, but it isn't. Because our Lord Jesus has cleansed us with his blood and he will bring us to his kingdom of heaven where we will be able not to sin and made perfect in our holiness. To us who lock the doors of our homes and our cars, just in case; this security of his kingdom seems so unthinkable. But it isn't. Jesus will bring us to the safety and peace of heaven where he will deliver us from evil because he has defeated all that is evil. To us who go to the dentist for cleanings and fear what the dental hygienist will say about the color and the cleanliness of our teeth, this kind of lasting health and beauty seems so unattainable, but it isn't. Christ Jesus will give us all of this and more when he brings us to the paradise of heaven; for Jesus was not just an earthly leader, who lived and died, but he is the living God who graciously lived and died and rose again to give us the blessings of his kingdom. He is the living God who rules over all creation. He is the glorious King and will come again in all his power and might to bring his people to his kingdom of glory. This is not some attainable dream. This is not place beyond our reach, because the one we love, the one we follow, the one who we are glad to call our Lord and King is Jesus the Christ. The Lamb of God, who was sacrificed in our place to take away our sins, is also the Lion that rules over all things with royalty and power, and he alone has the strength to bring us to unending bliss of his kingdom of glory.

In the ever changing uncertainty of life we have this confidence because of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus is alive and his kingdom endures forever. Jesus is alive and rules over all things with his grace and power. Jesus is alive and he will come again to bring us to himself so that we may live with him in glory. This is all true because of our God's power. This is all true because of our God's grace. Praise be to Jesus Christ the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah forever and ever. Amen.