

Advent Vespers I
The First Sunday in Advent
1 December 2013
Concordia Lutheran Mission
Terrebonne, Oregon

“Jesus is the King Who Rules Men Graciously through His Word and Sacraments, the Gospel.”

“Give the King Thy judgments, O God: and Thy righteousness unto the King’s Son.”

Psalm 72:1¹

Introduction

Here Solomon teaches us that Christ is King over Israel and also the Son of the King because He is God’s Only-Begotten Son. Hence, Christ is the True God because He is begotten of the Father from eternity.²

But Christ is also True Man because He is Israel’s King that receives blessed judgments and saving righteousness. According to His Deity Christ cannot receive anything because He is the Almighty God. But according to His Assumed Human Nature He can and does receive gifts from God in time for the sake of men’s salvation.³

¹Quoted from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 138.

²“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” **Psalm 2:7**. Like **Psalm 72**, **Psalm 2** is considered a Messianic Psalm by the Reformers, the ancient interpreters of the Church, and the Rabbis. The rabbis have only demurred on **Psalm 2** being Messianic when disputing with Christians, in which case they say it speaks of David not Christ. “All these considerations have been conclusive so that the Messianic interpreting of this Psalm (2) has been from the earliest times recognized. This interpretation was also adopted by the Jews. [Rabbi] Jarchi (ca. 1330 A.D.) wrote: ‘Our doctors have expounded this Psalm of the Messiah; but that we may answer the heretic (i.e. Christians) it is expedient to interpret it of David’s person.’” The Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg, *Exegetical Essays and Materials Dealing with the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 30.

³“First, there is a unanimously received rule of the entire ancient orthodox Church that what Holy Scripture testifies that Christ received in time He received not according to the divine nature (according to which He has everything from eternity), but the person has received it in

Christ received His Human Nature for the purpose of saving men from their sins. In and through the human nature He atoned for the sins of all men and saves.⁴

Christ takes up this Atoning and Saving Work and distributes it to men world wide through His Word and Sacraments, His Gracious Rule through Absolution, the Gospel.

Christ is the King who is the Almighty Son of God to save through His Passion on the Cross and His Gracious and Saving Rule worldwide through His Word and Sacraments.

I. Christ is the King Who is God become Man in order to Aton for the Sins of Men and Save.

A. Psalm 72 is a Messianic Psalm.

During this season of Advent, we will be meditating on **Psalm 72**. **Psalm 72** is a Messianic Psalm. A Messianic Psalm is a psalm about the Person and Work of the Messiah to save men from their sins.⁵

There are different kinds of psalms.⁶ There are, for example, psalms that teach (didactic psalms), psalms of comfort, and psalms of petition (supplicatory). *The Fountainhead of all*

time ... as referring, and with respect to, according to the assumed human nature.” The Formula of Concord. Thorough Declaration. Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.⁵⁷, Triglotta, p. 1035, underscore added..

⁴“... the Scripture truth that the Son of God became Man to destroy the works of the devil in and through the human nature” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 274, underscore added.

⁵“Weissagung von Christo und seinem Reich” [Prophecy of Christ and His Kingdom], *Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments, nach der deutschen Uebersetzung Dr. Martin Luthers*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 590, translation in brackets added.

“This is a Messianic Psalm, as one can readily see. It treats of the King ... without comparison, the Messiah-King. Already the old Jewish Talmud arrives at this conclusion. Things are predicated to this King, which go far beyond that which ever can be said of a mere human king.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1980, p. 142.

“**The Majestic Reign of the Messiah.**” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament, Volume II, The Poetical and the Prophetical Books*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, p. 132.

□“Of the general contents of the psalter, Luther writes: ‘It should be noted that the entire Psalter deals with five subjects; therefore we divide it into five parts. In the first place, some

*psalms are Messianic psalms. The Messianic psalms teach and sing about the Person and Work (Office) of Christ for the salvation of sinners.*⁷ And because the psalms are the church's hymn book, they have to be about Christ, the Gospel, for only the Gospel teaches us to praise and worship God aright.⁸

psalms prophesy of Christ and of the Church, or the saints, what would happen to them, etc.; and to this class belong all the psalms in which there are promises given to the pious and threats to the ungodly. In the second place, there is a number of doctrinal psalms, which teach us what we should do and what omit according to the Law of God; and to this class belong all the psalms which condemn the doctrine of men and extol the Word of God. In the third place, there are several psalms of consolation, which comfort the sorrowing and suffering saints, and, on the other hand, condemn and terrify the tyrants. . . In the fourth place, there are a few psalms of prayer, in which we pray to God and cry in all distress; and to this class belong all psalms which lament and mourn and cry over the enemies. In the fifth place, we have psalms of thanksgiving, in which we laud and praise God for His various benefits and His assistance; and to this class belong all psalms which praise God in His works, these being the finest and principle psalms. . . . But we must know that the psalms cannot be just exactly and even divided into such part and verses, for sometimes two, three, and even all five divisions, as noted above, are found in one psalm, so that prophecy, doctrine, consolation, prayer, and thanksgiving are found together. But this division serves for the better understanding of the psalms and that we may the more easily learn and remember them.'" P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The Old Testament: The Poetical and the Prophetical Books, Vol. II*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, pp. 59-60.

□ "Of special interest to us are the Messianic psalms, including Ps. 2, 8, 16, 22, 24, 40, 45, 47, 68, 69, 72, 89, 93, 97, 110, 118; they refer to the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of the world, portraying more or less vividly and completely His person and work, His birth, betrayal, agony, and death, His triumph over death, His ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." *ibid.* p. 59.

□ Our Lutheran Confessions declare that seeking the remission of sins from Christ is the highest worship: "Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ. To seek from Him the *remission of sins* was truly to acknowledge the Messiah. This worship is the *highest*

Messianic Psalms, then, are God's hymns about His Messiah. The word Messiah comes from the Hebrew word meshiach. Meschiach means anointed (Christ is the word which originated from the Greek, *christos*, which means "anointed"), as, say, we would anoint (pour out) someone with oil. But Jesus was not anointed with oil, but rather with the Holy Spirit because **A.** Jesus is God and, therefore, possesses God's Holy Spirit already, and **B.** was anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to save men from their sins.⁹

Psalm 72 is a Messianic Psalm, i.e. a Psalm that teaches us about Christ and teaches us to sing in hymnic praise and worship about the Person and Work of Christ to save men from their sins, in this case, His sitting Ruling Graciously through His Word and Sacraments in order to save men from their sins. Of the Messianic Psalms, the Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann writes:

Of special interest to us are the Messianic Psalms, including Ps. 2, 8, 16, 22, 24, 40, 45, 47, 68, 72, 89, 93, 110, 118; they refer to the Messiah, the promised Redeemer portrayed more or less vividly and completely His person and work, His birth, betrayal, agony, and death, His triumph over death, His ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.¹⁰

B. Christ is True God Begotten of the Father from Eternity and born of the Virgin St. Mary in order to become True Man in order to save men from their sins.

worship of Christ." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article III.33*, emphasis added.

As for the word "hymn", the English word hymn comes from the Greek word "hymnos". "Hymnos" is a song of praise to a god or hero. ("hymn, ode, in praise of gods or heroes" *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Revised and Augmented Throughout By Sir Henry Stuart With The Assistance of Roderick McKenzie, *With Supplement* 1968, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. 1849, **s.v. "hymnos"**.) The God and Hero of the Christian faith is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus Christian hymnody sings the Praises of our God and Savior Jesus Christ for His Work to Redeem us from our sins.

9"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." **St. Luke 4:18.**

10The Rev. Dr. P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The Old Testament: The Poetical and the Prophetical Books, Vol. II*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, p. 59.

Psalm 72 begins with Solomon petitioning the Lord to bless the Messiah with His Blessed Judgments and Saving Righteousness. Most modern interpreters¹¹, departing from the prophet Zechariah¹², the interpreters of the ancient Church¹³, the Reformers¹⁴, and also the old Rabbinic

11e.g. John Calvin. “**Calvin, John** (Cauvin, Jean), 1509 to 1564. Chief founder of the Reformed Church of France and French Switzerland. ... a theologian of high endowments, enormous capacity for work, and profound moral earnestness, who, however, because of his intellectualistic and legalistic bias, and especially because he made reason the criterion in church doctrine and not the Bible failed to attain the full stature of an evangelical teacher of the Church.” *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, pp. 105, 106.

12“And He shall proclaim peace to the nations, and His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. ... [**Zechariah 9:10**] By this Gospel His kingdom shall spread from sea to sea (Ps. 72:8), not only from the Mediterranean to the Salt Sea, but beginning at the Mediterranean and going westward also to the Atlantic, the Arctic and the Antarctic, the Pacific, and back to the Mediterranean. ‘From the River’ ... , the Eurphrates, named as the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; 2 Sam. 8:e, etc.). Messiah’s kingdom extends eastward to the ends of the earth. ‘Jesus shall reign where’er the sun does his successive journeys run.’” Theodore Laetsch, *Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets*, pp. 456. 457, underscore and amplification in brackets.

13““And when it has been said, “O God, give Thy judgment to the king,” since Solomon was king, you say that the Psalm [72] refers to him, although the words of the Psalm expressly proclaim that reference is made to the everlasting King, i.e., to Christ. For Christ is King, and Priest, and God, and Lord, and angel, and man, and captain, and stone, and a Son born, and first made subject to suffering, then returning to heaven, and again coming with glory, and He is preached as having the everlasting kingdomMoreover, that Solomon was a renowned and great king, by whom the temple called that at Jerusalem was built, I know; but that none of those things mentioned in the Psalm happened to him, is evident. For neither did all kings worship him; nor did he reign to the ends of the earth; nor did his enemies, falling before him, lick the dust. Nay, also, I venture to repeat what is written in the book of Kings as committed by him, how through a woman’s influence he worshipped the idols of Sidon, which those of the Gentiles who know God, the Maker of all things through Jesus the crucified, do not venture to do, but abide every torture and vengeance even to the extremity of death, rather than worship idols, or eat meat offered to idols.” Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, Vol. I, reprint: Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, October 1989, pp. 211, 212, amplification in brackets added.

“**Justin Martyr**, famous apologist and philosophical theologian; b. ca. 100 at Flavia Neapolis (now Nablus), in Samaria; sintered martyrdom at Rome

under Marcus Aurelius 166. ... His principal works are his two Apologies, the Dialog with the Jew Trypho" *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, p. 381, s. v. "**Justin Martyr**".

St. Augustine argues that Christ is the Solomon here written of, not the mortal Solomon. St. Augustine says Jesus is the True Solomon, the True Man of Peace (see **Genesis 49:10**, wherein Christ is called 'Shiloh', i.e. the Man who Gives Peace), because He brings peace between God and man by atoning for the sins of men. "'For Salomon' indeed this Psalm's title is fore-noted: but things are spoken of therein which could not apply to that Salomon king of Israel after the flesh, according to those things which holy Scripture speaketh concerning him: but they can most pertinently apply the Lord Christ. Whence it is perceived, that the very word Salomon is used in a figurative sense, so that in him Christ is to be taken. For Salomon is interpreted peace-maker: and on this account such a word to Him most truly and excellently doth apply, through Whom, the Mediator, having received remission of sins, we that were enemies are reconciled to God. For 'when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.' ... [**Romans 5:10**]. The Same is Himself that Peace-maker Since then we have found out the true Salomon, that is, the true Peace-maker; next let us observe what the Psalm doth teaching concerning Him." St. Augustine, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Volume VIII, Saint Augustin: Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, ed. Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids, MI: reprinted May 1989, p. 326, amplification in brackets added.

St. Augustine's approach would seem, and if so, correctly, to suggest that Solomon got his name from David's knowledge of the Gospel. Just as men like Joshua's name meant, "the Lord saves", reflecting his parents knowledge of salvation in Christ and desiring to remind their son of this salvation, so Solomon would be a name given by David to remind his son of the True Man of Peace, Jesus Christ, who gives peace with God through atoning for the sins of men on the Cross, in order to cultivate his son, Solomon, in saving faith.

"**Augustine.** One of the greatest of the Latin Church Fathers and one of the outstanding figures of all ages ; b. Tagaste, 354; d. at Hippo Regius, 430., both in Africa. ... For more than thirty years Augustine was the leading theologian and leader of the Church in Africa, his influence at the various synods and councils being decisive. As a defender of the orthodox faith he stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries, although in some points he did not reach the clearness in the doctrine of sin and grace which is found in the later writings of Luther. But he fought the Pelagian heresy ... consistently, chiefly in the interest of letting the grace of God stand forth in the fulness of its beauty over against man. Among his chief writings are: *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio* (Of Grace and of Free Will), *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (a treatise on the art of catechizing), *De Doctrina Christiana* (Of the Christian Doctrine), *De Civitate Dei* (Of the City of God), and his *Confessions*." *Concordia Cyclopaedia*, pp. 49, 50, s.v. "**Augustine**".

14" In a propitiator these two things concur. In the first place, there ought to be a word of God from which we may certainly know that God wishes to pity, and hearken to, those calling upon

interpreters¹⁵, believe this opening refers to David or Solomon, or some other mortal king of Israel.¹⁶ But when one speaks of the King of Israel, the default understanding in Scripture is referring to the Messiah, to Jesus, because the Messiah is God. Jesus says:

Him through this propitiator. There is such a promise concerning Christ, John 16, 23: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.* Concerning the saints there is not such promise. Therefore consciences cannot be firmly confident that by the invocation of saints we are heard. This invocation, therefore, is not made from faith. Then we have also the command to call upon Christ, according to Matt. 11, 28: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor, etc.,* which certainly is said also to us. And Isaiah says, 11, 10: *In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek.* And Ps. 45, 12: *Even the rich among the people shall entreat Thy favor.* And Ps. 72, 11, 15: *Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him.* And shortly after Prayer also shall be made for Him continually. And in John 5, 23 Christ says: *That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.* And Paul, 2 Thess. 2, 16. 17, says, praying: *Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, ... comfort your hearts and stablish you.* [All these passages refer to Christ.]” The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XIII. (IX).17, 18, *Triglotta*, p. 347.

“**The worship of religions adoration.** ... Until now we have been showing that divine names, attributes, and works belong to Christ the man. It remains for us to show that we also owe Him, according to His human nature, *the divine worship of religious adoration.* ... We prove our position: [A.] *From clear passages of Scripture.* Ps. 72:11: ‘All kings will worship Him, all nations will serve Him.’ The entire context and the New Testament’s quoting make it clear that this psalm must be taken not as a reference to Solomon, ... but ... to Christ” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, p. 249, underscore added.

15“*Ps. lxxii.* This Psalm also was viewed by the ancient Synagogue as throughout Messianic, as indicated by the fact that the Targum renders the very first verse: ‘Give the sentence of Thy judgment to the King Messiah, and Thy justice to the Son of David the King,’ which is re-echoed by the Midrash on the passage (ed. Warsh. p. 55 *b*) which applies it explicitly to the Messiah, with reference to Is. xi, 1. Similarly, the Talmud applies *ver.* 16 to Messianic times (in a very hyperbolic passage, Shabb. 30 *b*, line 4 from the bottom). The last clause of verse 16 is applied, in Keth. 111 *b*, line 21 from top, and again in the Midr. on Eccl. i. 9, to the Messiah sending down manna like Moses.” The Rev. Dr. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2 (*Two Volume Set*), New American Edition, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962, second printing, p. 719.

16John Calvin: “Those who would interpret it simply as a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ, seem to put a construction upon the words which does violence to them; and then we must always beware of giving the Jews occasion of making an outcry, as if it were our purpose,

sophistically, to apply to Christ those things which do not refer directly to him.” *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Volume Second, tr. the Rev. James Anderson, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprinted 1998, p. 100.

Calvin imposes his own violence upon the words of the psalm in order to slap down Christ who so inconveniently keeps rising up from the text. Calvin, for example, in order to limit the boundaries of his king who is not Christ, distorts verse eight. Verse eight reads, “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” Calvin, violating the text, restricts this expansive and unbounded language to the Middle East, forcing it into the Procrustean bed of his prejudices. “If it is objected that such narrow bounds do not correspond with the kingdom of Christ, which was to be extended from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, we reply, that David obviously accommodates his language to his own time, the amplitude of the kingdom of Christ not having been, as yet, fully unfolded.” *ibid.*, p. 109.

Apparently, Calvin fell for the deception of the Rabbinical interpreters. “Jarchi [Rabbi] (ca. 1330 A.D.) wrote: ‘Our doctors have expounded this Psalm of the Messiah; but that we may answer the heretic (i.e. Christians) it is expedient to interpret it of David’s person.’” The Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg, *Exegetical Essays and Materials Dealing with the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 30, amplification in brackets added.

Keil-Deilitzsch, liberal commentators from the 19th century: “The subject of the Psalm is either Solomon ... or the Messiah (Targum [a Targum is a translation of the Old Testament in Aramaic] ‘O God, give Thy regulations of right to the King Messiah ...). Both are correct. It is Solomon himself to whom the intercession and desires of blessing of this psalm refer. Solomon, just as David with Psalm xx. and xxi., put it into the heart and mouth of the people, probably very soon after his accession, it being as it were a church-prayer on behalf of the new, reigning king. But the Psalm is also none the less Messianic, and with perfect right the church has made it the chief Psalm of the festival of Epiphany, which has received its name of *festum trium regum* out of it.” *Commentary on the Old Testament, Psalms 36-38, Volume 5, Psalm, Two Volumes in One*, tr. Francis Bolton, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, first printing, February, 1989, p. 299, amplification in brackets added.

Concordia Self-Study Bible: “A prayer for the king, a son of David who rules on David’s throne as God’s earthly regent over his people. ... The prayer reflects the ideal concept of the king and the glorious effects of his reign. ... Later Jewish tradition saw in this psalm a description of the Messiah, as did the early church.” gen. ed. Robert G. Hoerber, assoc. eds. Horace D. Hummel, Walter R. Roehrs, Dean O. Wenthe, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986, p. 859.

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.¹⁷

The origin of mortal kings, e.g. Saul, David, Solomon, et. al, lies in Israel's sin. In the **First Book of Samuel** we read:

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.¹⁸

Here the people reject God as their king and, therefore, are rejecting Christ, the Messiah. In addition, we see the Gracious Rule of Christ already manifest in Israel and articulated again in **Psalm 72**. For Christ does not strike down the people of Israel for their insolence, but suffers them for the sake of the Gospel and the salvation of men, including those impudent Israelites. Not many kings or gods stand for such insults, but Christ is patient in order that men be saved.

Secondly, we see in fact that the King in **Psalm 72** is Christ and not David, Solomon, nor any other mortal king, *because Christ remained the King in Israel in spite of Israel's impudence*. Even though Christ suffered and permitted Israel's request for a mortal king, He, nevertheless, did not abandon His Monarchy, but remained Israel's King. Hence, when Solomon writes of the King in **Psalm 72**, He is writing about Christ, the Messiah.

17**St. John 5:39**. "If you would interpret well and confidently, set Christ before you, for he is the man to whom it all applies, every bit of it." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 36, p. 246.

"They think that they have enough in the New Testament and pretend to seek in the Old Testament only a spiritual sense. Origen, Jerome, and many persons of high standing have held this view, but Christ says, 'Search in the Scriptures, for they give testimony of me,' and St. Paul bids Timothy continue in the reading of the Scriptures, and declares, in Romans i, that the Gospel was promised by God in the Scriptures, and in I Corinthians xv, he says that Christ came of the seed of David, died, rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures; and St. Peter, too, points us back more than once, to the Scriptures. ... The ground and proof of the New Testament, are surely not to be despised and therefore the Old Testament is to be highly regarded. And what is the New Testament except an open preaching and proclamation of Christ, appointed by the sayings of the OT and fulfilled in Christ?" Martin Luther, quoted in the Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg's *Luther's Hermeneutical and Isagogical Views as Reflected in His Prefaces to the German Bible of 1534*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, pp. 7, 8.

18**I Samuel 8:6-7**.

Thirdly, we also see that Solomon is writing of the Holy Trinity in this psalm. For Solomon writes:

Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's Son.¹⁹

Solomon writes that the King of Israel is King and also the Son of the King. How can Israel have two Kings? Israel does not have two kings, but Israel has One King, namely, God. Moses writes:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD ...²⁰

But earlier, in the **Book of Genesis**, Moses writes of God in the plural and the singular:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.²¹

Moses writes in the plural of God not because of the plurality of Gods, which would be polytheism, idolatry, and apostasy, but because of the plurality of Persons, namely, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And Moses afterwards writes of God in the singular because while there are Three Persons in the Godhead, there is only One God.

Even David in another psalm writes:

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.²²

Israel doesn't have two kings, nor three kings, nor more, but One God in Three Person, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When, therefore, Solomon writes of the King and the King's Son, he is writing of Christ Who is King of Israel because He is True God and also of Christ Who is the Son of the King,

¹⁹**Psalm 72:1**, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 138. *The Lutheran Hymnal* reflects this Trinitarian understanding when it capitalizes "King's Son".

²⁰**Deuteronomy 6:4**.

²¹**Genesis 1:26-27**, underscore added.

²²**Psalm 110:1**.

namely, the Father, begotten from eternity. David writes of the Eternal Begetting of the Son in yet another psalm:

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I beogtten thee.²³

*Solomon teaches also in this passage that Christ is True God and he also teaches that Christ is True Man.*²⁴ For Solomon prays the Lord “Give the King Thy judgments, O God, and Thy Righteousness unto the King’s Son.” Because Christ is God, God cannot give Him anything because He is God and He already has everything. But now that God has become man in Jesus Christ, He can and does receive gifts from God *according to His Assumed Human Nature*. The Lutheran Church confesses:

First, there is a unanimously received rule of the entire ancient orthodox Church that what Holy Scripture testifies that Christ received in time He received not according to the divine nature (according to which He has everything from eternity), but the person has received it in time ... as referring, and with respect to, according to the assumed human nature.²⁵

For this reason, St. Elizabeth speaks of the Virgin St. Mary as the Mother of God not because St. Mary can give God life, but because the Son of God received His Blessed Human Nature from her:

And when *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?²⁶

The judgments and righteousness God gives to the Messiah are not judgment and righteousness that condemns, but rather that Absolves sinners and saves. For this reason Solomon writes that Christ’s reign saves souls:

He shall spare the poor and need, and shall save the souls of the needy.²⁷

23Psalm 2:7.

24“I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord” *The Small Catechism*, p. 10.

25The Formula of Concord. Thorough Declaration. Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.⁵⁷, Triglotta, p. 1035, underscore added.

26**St. Luke 1:43**, underscore added.

In **Psalm 71**, the psalm immediately previous to **Psalm 72** David writes of God's righteousness that saves or delivers and does not condemn:

Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.²⁸

Righteousness that saves or delivers is Christ's Righteousness for us, i.e., because we were not righteous because of our sins and perished, Christ stepped in for us conducting Himself righteously in our behalf so that His Perfect Righteousness becomes ours and we become pleasing to God and are saved. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.²⁹

This judgment is Absolution of all sin for Christ's sake. Our knee-jerk reaction to judgment is dread. *Judgment, however, can also be favorable.* Under Christ's Rule the Judgment is always favorable because His Word and Sacraments always Absolve us of sin and declare us righteous for Christ's sake. The Last Word or Judgment in Christ's Kingdom is Absolution. The Apostle St. John writes:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sin ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.³⁰

The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes that the Decision, the Judgment, or the Last Word, in the Church is not condemnation for sin but Absolution of all sin for Christ's sake through God's Word and Sacraments:

27**Psalm 72:2**. "Moreover, poor and needy in the Old Testament has become a technical term to designate the pious and God-fearing people." The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1980, p. 143.

28**Psalm 71:2**, underscore added.

29**II Corinthians 5:21**.

30**St. John 20:21-23**.

It is therefore a part of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel that the Gospel be recognized as the "higher Word", which is to be God's final Word for the terrified sinner. Luther adds: "For as the lesser Word it [the Law] should and must give way and place to the Gospel. Both are God's Word, the Law and the Gospel, but the two are not equal. One is lower, the other higher; one is lesser the other greater."³¹

To have the final say or word is the essence of ruling.³² In Christ's Kingdom, the final say, word, ruling, and judgment is Absolution of all sins and salvation.

II. Christ Rules Graciously through His Word and Sacraments, Saves, and Gives Life Eternal.

A. The Cross of Christ is the Justice of God.

This Blessed and Gracious Rule of Christ God established in the Cross of Christ. The prophet Isaiah writes:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.³³

Justice means to be done right by. In the Cross of Christ, everyone is done right by because the Cross of Christ is the Atonement of all sins. God, therefore, is done right by because all our sins against Him are Atoned for. Our neighbor is done right by because all our sins against him are Atoned for. And we are done right by because all his sins against us have been Atoned for in the Cross of Christ. Everyone has been done right by and Justice has been established on earth in the Cross of Christ.

And where there is Justice, there is Peace:

³¹*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953, p. 232.

³²The final say or the decision or the resolving of a matter is what is meant by headship or governing. "To govern is to choose." President John F. Kennedy, quoted in "A Lamm Candidacy: Welcome but Improbable", Politics and People, Albert R. Hunt, *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 July 1996, p. (A)17.

³³**Isaiah 42:1-4.** "Till He has established justice in the earth. He wants to denote the cross." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 17, p. 67.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.³⁴

That the Justice, Judgment, and Righteousness of Christ established in the Cross is not condemnation but aid to men through Absolution is articulated again by Isaiah when he writes that the Messiah does not condemn the broken hearted and the weak:

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.³⁵

David writes in another psalm of Christ's Gracious Rule:

The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.³⁶

The Gracious Rule and Judgment of Christ is established in the Cross of Christ because He established Justice on earth through the Atonement of all sins.

B. Christ reigns Graciously through His Word and Sacraments.

This Gracious Rule, Judgment, and Righteousness we have here with us today in Christ's Word and Sacraments. The prophet Zechariah writes:

... and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.³⁷

The Apostle St. John writes:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them,

34Psalm 85:10.

35Isaiah 42:3.

36Psalm 51:17.

37Zechariah 9:10.

Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.³⁸

Luther writes of this Gracious Reign of Christ through His Word and Sacraments:

*Because He will speak peace to the nations. ... That is, He will preach the forgiveness of sins to reconcile God and men. Wherever there is forgiveness and reconciliation, mutual love and peace must also follow among us.*³⁹

And so Christ's inaugurated His Gracious Reign 900 years later, exactly as Solomon prophesied in **Psalm 72**:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Christ is a Gracious Ruler who rules by God's Mercy in Christ and Him Crucified.

Christ's Gracious Reign we have in His Word and Sacraments. In His Word and Sacraments Christ's Ruling is the Absolution of sinners. This Ruling not only Absolves of sins but bestows upon men the righteousness pleasing to God and saves.

Through this Gracious Rule in His Word and Sacraments Christ, our Immortal King, gives us life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

Amen.

38**St. John 20:21-23.**

39*Luther's Works*, Vol. 20, p. 95.

40**St. Luke 2:13-14.**