

**Advent Vespers III,  
The Third Sunday in Advent,**  
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*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*  
Terrebonne, Oregon.

## **“Christ Rules the World through the Truth and Grace of the Gospel, His Word and Sacraments.”**

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth..

**Psalm 72:8.**

### **Introduction.**

Here Solomon teaches that Christ exercises His dominion worldwide, unlike all the other kings of Israel. But how does Christ rule the world? Christ rules the world with the Truth and Grace of the Gospel, His Word and Sacraments.

Dominion means the place where the Lord Rules. Christ Rules through His Word and Sacraments wherein the Last Word or Rule is Absolution of all sin.

Wherever in the world one finds Christ's Word and Sacraments in use, there is His Dominion and His Rule. And this Blessed Rules extends to all nations across the earth. Unlike all other kings, Christ's Reign of Grace wins the hearts of men and through this Grace Christ rules in the heart of men.

Christ Rules the world Graciously through the Truth and Grace of the Gospel, His Word and Sacraments.

### **I. Christ Gains His World Wide Dominion by the Inheritance of the Cross.**

#### **A. Christ alone was promised a world wide Kingdom, no king of Israel ever enjoyed such a promise.**

The King sung of in **Psalm 72** enjoys a world wide dominion. No other king of Israel enjoyed such an expansive rule. David and Solomon enjoyed the greatest dominion in terms of territory, coming in second, but the boundaries of their kingdom was limited basically to Palestine. This King, however, enjoys world wide dominion. Solomon in this passage is writing of the Kingdom of the Messiah, which is world wide. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

This is obviously said of the King, Christ. This describes His dominion on earth, so long as there is a moon. It is said his rule shall extend from sea to sea, from one sea to the other, and from the River to the ends of the earth. When the kingdom of Solomon and David was described as to their extent, it was said their kingdom reached from the River to the Sea. The River is the River Euphrates, the eastern border of the kingdom of Israel at the time of Solomon and David. “The sea” was the Mediterranean Sea, which formed the western boundry [sic]. It was only for a short time that the kingdom of Israel could boast such an extent, namely, only the time of David and Solomon. However, the realm of the coming Solomon [Christ<sup>1</sup>] shall reach much farther, not only from the River to the Sea, but from sea to sea, i.e., extending over the whole earth. The earth is surrounded by, and borders on, the great seas. So the dominion of Christ is foretold as being boundless and covering the whole earth.<sup>2</sup>

While history confirms Christ’s Kingdom vastly exceeds that of any other king of Israel because He enjoys a world wide rule, we needn’t rely on history’s confirmation alone because Christ’s world wide rule was already established in **Psalms 2** by God. All the mortal kings of Israel were confined to Palestine, i.e. the Promised Land according God’s Word and Promise. But Christ’s dominion was always world wide according to God’s Promise and His Inheritance. No mortal king of Israel was ever promised world dominion. Only the Messiah was promised world wide dominion. David writes in **Psalms 2** of Christ and His world wide Kingdom:

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<sup>1</sup>Christ is the True Man of Peace, from which Solomon received his name, because He is Shiloh, namely, that Man that gives Peace with God through Absolution of all sin. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.” **Genesis 49:10**.

<sup>2</sup>” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1980, p. 146.

“for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” **Isaiah 11:9**. The knowledge is the Saving Knowledge of God, the Gospel. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” **St. John 17:3**.

“Concerning this knowledge and its power the prophets have spoken gloriously and clearly prophesied, as in Isaiah 53[:11]: ‘By knowledge of Him shall He (My Servant, the Righteous One) make many just or righteous.’ This means: ‘He will redeem them from sins and snatch them from the devil’s jaws solely through this; that they know Him and who He is.’ ... Likewise, Jeremiah 9[:23-24] says: ‘Let no one boast of his wisdom nor of his might nor of his riches’ – in short, let no one boast at all – ‘but if anyone wants to boast, let him boast in this, that he knows Me and knows who I am: the Lord, who does good and establishes righteousness and justice on earth.’” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 69, pp. 35, 36.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.<sup>3</sup>

**Psalm 72**, therefore, does not speak of Solomon or some other mortal king of Israel, as modern interpreters assert, but to the Messiah because mortal kings were never promised world wide dominion but were only promised the Promised Land in Palestine.

## **B. Christ gains His World Wide Dominion through the Cross.**

But why does God in **Psalm 2** call Christ's world wide dominion an "inheritance"? An inheritance comes to someone only when someone dies. So why does God call Christ's world wide dominion an inheritance? God calls it an inheritance because Christ would die on the Cross in order to regain His Own creation, regaining it by inheritance. The Apostle St. Paul writes on inheritance involving the death of someone:

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.<sup>4</sup>

Luther writes on testament involving the death of the testator, in this case, the Testator is God:

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass<sup>5</sup> is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of

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<sup>3</sup>**Psalm 2:6-8.**

<sup>4</sup>**Hebrews 9:13-17.**

<sup>5</sup>The Mass is the Liturgy of the Church, God's Word and Sacraments, i.e. the Gospel. "But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e. of the Gospel and the*

the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words “compact,” “covenant,” and “testament of the Lord” occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. “For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur” (Heb. 9 [16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.”<sup>6</sup>

On the Death of God to Atone for the sins of men the Lutheran Church confesses:

*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if “God’s death” and “God died” lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: “God died,” “God’s passion,” “God’s blood,” “God’s death.” For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*<sup>7</sup>

This Work of Christ is remarkable. *God regains His lost creation by inheritance.* God lost His creation because of Adam’s sin. *God regains His lost creation by becoming man, Atoning for the sin of Adam and the sins of all men by His death on the Cross, in order to bequeath to Himself what rightfully belongs to Him in the first place: His creation.* Through the Inheritance of Christ, God regains His creation, which was rightfully His in the first place. Through this Remarkable and Wonderful Work, God regains His creation and we regain our lives and gain life eternal.

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Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass, Of the Term Mass.* 80, 81, Triglotta, p. 411.

<sup>6</sup>*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 36: 38, underscore added.

<sup>7</sup>*The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.* 44, underscore added.

No mortal king of Israel dared to be so presumptuous as to claim such an inheritance and promise as their own nor did any writer of Holy Scripture pen such presumptuous blasphemy. The inheritance belongs to God and the Messiah through His, God's Own, Death.<sup>8</sup> All mortal kings of Israel were ever only promised by God Palestine because that's all Israel was ever Promised by God.<sup>9</sup> But the Messiah's dominion in **Psalm 72** is world wide. Hence, again, we see that **Psalm 72** is not about any mortal king, but about the Immortal King, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who gains His world wide dominion through His suffering and death on the Cross for our sins and the sins of the entire world.

## **II. Christ's World Wide Dominion is the Kingdom of Grace wherein He Absolves of Sin and Gives Life Eternal.**

### **A. Christ's Dominion is the Kingdom of Grace.**

What kind of dominion does Christ rule over? Christ rules over a Kingdom of Grace. The prophet Zechariah writes:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and [being saved]<sup>10</sup>; lowly, and riding upon an

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<sup>8</sup>“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” **Acts 2:28**.

<sup>9</sup>“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” **Genesis 15:18**. “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” **Exodus 3:8**.

<sup>10</sup>The translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine. “The question arises: *In Zech. 9:9, why is the Messiah not called [Savior] in the active sense, but ... ‘saved,’ in the passive sense?* We respond: ... Christ is not only ‘Savior’ but is also Himself ‘saved’” That is, because He wished to redeem us with His suffering and death, and descended into the depths of our wretchedness, therefore it was necessary that he be saved first, so that, having been saved, he might be able to save us too. ‘I looked around, but there was no helper; I was in anxiety, and there was no one to help’ (namely, among men). ‘My own arm’ (the power of My divinity) ‘has saved Me, and My anger’ (or zeal) ‘has helped Me’ (Isa. 63:5).” *Loci Theologici ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009, p. 11.

ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: 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.<sup>11</sup>

Christ speaks Peace to the nations.<sup>12</sup> This prophecy of Zechariah is fulfilled in Christ's command to the Church to Absolve men of sin:

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 sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.<sup>13</sup>

Christ's Dominion is a spiritual dominion because the Holy Spirit is received through Absolution and faith. And because His Dominion is a Dominion of Absolution and faith, then we also see that His Rule is a Gracious Reign because the Last Word in His Dominion is Absolution. Dominion means that place where the Lord (*Dominus*) rules.<sup>14</sup> In His world wide Dominion, the Lord rules through Absolution and faith. Hence, His Kingdom is a Kingdom of Grace because the Ruling or the Last Word<sup>15</sup> is not condemnation but Absolution. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

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“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout with joy, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you! Righteous and One Delivered is He. ... literally, being saved, unfailingly delivered. So He is already presented in the word of prophecy. See Is. 53:8; Ps. 22, where He, forsaken of God, cries to God for deliverance (vv. 1, 2, 8, 11-21), confesses that from His mother's womb He depended on God's aid (v. 9 f.), and in answer to His prayer is delivered (vv. 21b-25). See also Matt. 26:38 ff.; Luke 12:50; 22:41 ff.; 23:46; John 11:41 f.; 12:27 ff.; Heb. 5:7-9.” Theodore Laetsch, *Biblical Commentary The Minor Propheets*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956, p. 455, underscore added.

<sup>11</sup>**Zechariah 9:9-10**, translation from the Hebrew in brackets is mine.

<sup>12</sup>Hence, Isaiah calls Christ the “Prince [Ruler] of Peace”. **Isaiah 9:6**.

<sup>13</sup>**St. John 20:21-23**.

<sup>14</sup>“**dominion** ... sovereign or supreme authority; the power of governing and controlling; domination; sovereignty; control.” *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p. 544, s. v. “**dominion**”.

<sup>15</sup>The last word or final say is the essence of ruling. The 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.

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."<sup>16</sup>

So we sing in the Christmas hymn, *Joy to the World*:

He rules the world with truth and grace.<sup>17</sup>

The Truth of the Gospel, namely, Absolution of sin, liberates men. Jesus says:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.<sup>18</sup>

And this Blessed Reign of Christ through His Mercy toward sinners creates faith, changes hearts, and makes willing citizens in His Dominion. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.<sup>19</sup>

Again, St. Paul writes:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.<sup>20</sup>

David prophesied that the people would be willing in the day of Christ's Power of the Gospel:

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<sup>16</sup>*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953, p. 232, underscore added.

<sup>17</sup>*The Lutheran Hymnal*, #87, stanza 4.

<sup>18</sup>**St. John 8:32.**

<sup>19</sup>**Romans 10:17.**

<sup>20</sup>**Ephesians 2:8-10.**

The people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.<sup>21</sup>

Likewise the prophet Isaiah prophesied people would gladly come to the House of the Lord because the Gospel changes hearts, wins hearts over, and makes willing citizens of Christ's Dominion:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup>

So Christ also says that His Gracious Reign through the Gospel draws men back to Him. The Apostle St. John writes:

Jesus answered and said, ... Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what he should die.<sup>23</sup>

Christ's Dominion is the Kingdom of Grace wherein His Gracious Rule changes hearts, wins them back to God, and makes willing members of God's Kingdom.

## **B. Christ's Dominions gives life eternal.**

And because Christ world wide Dominion is a Spiritual Dominion, it is a Dominion wherein life eternal is granted. For the Holy Spirit in the beginning breathed life into man. Moses writes:

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>**Psalm 110:3.**

<sup>22</sup>**Isaiah 2:2-3.**

<sup>23</sup>**St. John 12:30, 31-33.**

<sup>24</sup>**Genesis 2:7.** "This is one distinction of man: Instead of merely being called into being by a word of God's almighty power, he was formed, as it were, by the finger of God, the material



Consequently, through the Gospel Christ breathes into us the Spirit of Absolution and we are given re-birth. 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 sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.<sup>25</sup>

The Apostle St. John writes:

Jesus answered and said, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.<sup>26</sup>

Luther writes of man's re-birth unto life eternal through the Gospel:

Christ has a pure, innocent, holy birth. Man has an impure, sinful, damned birth, as David says in Psalm 51[:5]: "Behold, in sin am I fashioned in the womb, and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is no remedy for this except through the pure birth of Christ. Now the birth of Christ cannot be distributed physically, even as that would not be of any help either. For this reason it is distributed spiritually, by means of the word<sup>27</sup>, to everyone, as the

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being an earth-clod, dust of the soil. This being done, God blew the breath of life into the figure which He had formed. As the dust, by virtue of the creative omnipotence, formed the figure of a man, it was charged with the living breath and thus became a living soul, named after the more important part of which he consists. The Spirit of God has made us, and the breath of the Almighty has given us life, Job 33, 4." The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, The Old Testament, Volume I, The Historical Books of the Old Testament*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 923, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>**St. John 20:21-23**, underscore added.

<sup>26</sup>**St. John 3:5**.

<sup>27</sup>"For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to

angel says, so that all who firmly believe that it is given to them in this manner shall not be harmed by their impure birth; this is the manner and means to become cleansed from the stain of the birth we have from miserable Adam. Christ will to be born so that might be born in a different manner, as he says in Job 3[:3-6]. This happens through that faith, as James 1[:18] says: “He has born us of his own will through his word of truth, so that we begin to be his new creation.” In this manner Christ takes to himself our birth and absorbs it in his birth; he presents us with his birth so that we become pure and new in it, as if it were our own, so that every Christian might rejoice in this birth of Christ and glory in it no less than if he, too, like Christ had been born bodily of Mary. ... This is the great joy, of which the angel speaks, this is the consolation and the superabundant goodness of God, that man (if he has this faith) may boast of such treasure as that Mary is his real mother, Christ his brother, and God his father. ... see to it that you make his birth your own, and that you make an exchange with him, so that you rid yourself of your birth and receive, instead, his. This happens, if you have this faith. By this token you sit assuredly in the Virgin Mary’s lap and are her dear child. This faith you have to practice and to pray for as long as you live; you can never strengthen it enough. That is our foundation and our inheritance ...<sup>28</sup>

Because Christ’s Dominion is Ruled by the Truth and Grace of Absolution, it gives life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

### **Conclusion.**

Christ’s Kingdom is a world wide Dominion of the Truth of God’s Grace in Christ through Absolution. Christ’s Dominion is a gracious Kingdom that does not condemn sinners because of sins but graciously Absolves abundantly, day in and day out, around the globe, until He returns again in glory on the Last Day.

This Gracious Rule delivers men from sin and death, gives them re-birth, and delivers them into life eternal and the resurrection of the body on the Last Day.

*Amen.*

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receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves.” *The Large Catechism, Part Second, Of The Creed, Article III.*38-39, *Triglotta*, 689.

<sup>28</sup>*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 52, pp. 15, 16.

