

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Psalm 8:1-9 *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Up until very recently in the world's history, the name of a king was an extremely powerful thing. Of course, there aren't many kingdoms left in our modern world, and the kings that do exist are really just figureheads. But if you and I had lived, say, in the Europe of 300 years ago, we'd have no trouble figuring out how powerful the name of a king could be. Back then, "democracy" was an unheard-of form of government, and the whole world was under the control of a handful of kings and emperors. These monarchs made themselves as majestic and remote as they could. If you were a commoner, you'd probably never even see your king in person. But the name of the king would govern your whole life! Tax collectors would take your money "in the name of the king." Your business would be controlled and regulated "in the name of the king." And if you were convicted of a crime, you would be sentenced to punishment "in the name of the king."

Well, our American forefathers decided, for once, to ignore the name of the king—particularly the one named George III of England. Ever since then, the idea of being subject to a king is something we Americans never have to think about. Or should we be thinking about that? For us Christians at least, this day, Palm Sunday, is a reminder that we *do indeed* have a King. Jesus Christ is His name, and that is one name that carries with it tremendous power—power that affects your daily life, and power that's available for you to use! If you haven't thought about that for a while, then pay attention to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you in our text this morning. In the words of our theme—

"THERE IS POWER IN THE NAME OF THE KING!"

- I. The most powerful name of all.
- II. The name that gives power to the powerless.
- III. The name that overpowers every foe.

King David begins and ends the 8th Psalm with the same words: ***"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*** What is it that's so majestic about the name of the Lord? He certainly can't be talking about the simple word "*Lord*"—you hear people using that name on the street every day, and there's nothing majestic about the way it's often used. But we Lutherans, especially, make a pretty big deal about the "name of God." Have you ever noticed that? We began our service this morning "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Every time we baptize, marry or bury someone, we invoke the name of the God. Every sermon you hear from this pulpit, every prayer we say ends "in Jesus name." Why do we do that? What's the big deal about the "name of God," anyway?

To begin with, “God’s name” is much more than simply the proper nouns “God,” “Jehovah,” “Lord,” “Redeemer,” etc. This is one of those concepts that we teach in confirmation, and it’s kind of a difficult concept for a 6th or 7th or 8th grader to grasp, that or maybe I’m just not very good at teaching it. But just like the “name of the king” in 17th century England meant a lot more than just the words “king,” or “Richard”—“the name of the King” stood for all the authority and power, the threat and promise and the protection that went along with those words. Likewise, the “name of God” includes *everything He has made known to us about Himself in His Word*.

There is tremendous power in the name of our Lord, because **His is the most powerful name of all**. The Psalmist says it is majestic and glorious, higher than the heavens, dwarfing every power that exists on earth. So, you see now how significant it was, that first Palm Sunday, when all the people shouted, ***“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*** This was no small thing—they were hailing Jesus as the promised Messiah. In effect, they were identifying Jesus as the Almighty God! No wonder the chief priests and scribes were upset! ***“But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?”*** (Matthew 21:15-16)

Jesus was quoting from the Old Testament; in fact, He was quoting verse two of our text. On Palm Sunday, this Scripture was being fulfilled. We were told in our text the Lord would ***still the enemy and the avenger***. Here the mouths of Jesus’ enemies—these hypocrites who had been plotting His death!—they’d been shut-up. And who did it? Who finally shut the mouths of Jesus’ biggest critics? Of all possible parties, it was the little children did it! On that Palm Sunday, infants and toddlers defeated Jesus’ enemies, when their voices rang out in joyful praise to the King of kings: ***“Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”***

You see, the name of our King is **the name that gives power to the powerless**. Now, we know that the authorities that exist are appointed by God, so without the name of Jesus, even the “mighty” of this world are powerless. *With* the name of Jesus, even the powerless—even little children!—become mighty in the Lord. Like a lot of God’s other blessings, this doesn’t seem to make much sense. It didn’t seem logical to King David, either. When David thought about the majesty of God, he couldn’t figure out why God even *bothered* with human beings at all, much less children! David said, ***“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”***

A number of years ago, National Geographic put out a poster that was supposed to be a map of the known universe. It attempted to put the distances in the universe into perspective. The earth is a tiny speck in our solar system. Our solar system is a very tiny speck in our galaxy, the Milky Way. Well, it turns out the Milky Way is only a small part of a vast cluster of galaxies which, itself, is really just a tiny dot in the middle of the universe. That type of perspective sure makes one feel small! And David tells us that all these innumerable stars were created and set in order by the merest brush of God’s fingers. So clearly, there’s great power in the name of the King! What is a human being compared to that? Why in the world would Almighty God even *notice* us, much less care for us?

But the fact is, that from the beginning of creation, God has taken very special notice of us human beings. Today’s society want us to believe that humans are just another kind of animal species, first cousins to the chimpanzees, and not different than any other creature. But Scripture tells us

otherwise. Adam and Eve were the crowning achievement of God's creation. God made them in His own image, with the righteousness and holiness of the Lord Himself. They were set apart by God, and He gave them great power! David says: ***"You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas."***

Mankind was given great power—power "in the name of the Lord." But like unreasoning animals, Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation of the devil; they forsook the name of God and the righteousness of God. And ever since then, that same sinful nature has been passed down from generation to generation. But in His mercy, God made a way for us to regain the power of His name.

That's the mystery of our Savior's love, and the wonder of Palm Sunday. Behold! Jesus Christ, eternal God, King of Creation—rides meekly into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. The hands which hold that donkey's halter are the hands which formed the universe—also the hands which won those crimson trophies that the nails left! This is the one who offered His own body on the cross as the sacrifice to take away our sins. He gives us His perfect righteousness, to take the place of our own weak, imperfect righteousness. And so, although we were powerless, tremendous power is now put at our disposal. We have been given the very power to grasp eternal life given us in Jesus' name!

And this is great power that you have in Jesus' name! You can make use of it in your daily life! Jesus says, ***"Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do."*** (John 14:13) Is there sin burdening your conscience? In the name of your King, there is forgiveness for your sins. Is there sorrow or pain in your life right now? In the name of the King, there is comfort for every sorrow, relief for every pain or strength to endure it. Whatever your wants or needs are, the power of the King's name puts everything within your grasp.

Why does the name of our King assure us of the victory in every conflict? It's because it is **a name that overcomes every foe**. No matter what forces of evil stand against you in this life, Scripture promises that, in the name of Christ, nothing can defeat you!

A few minutes ago, I quoted verse six of our text, ***"You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings . . . you have put all things under his feet."*** And I said that this applies to mankind in general, and that was true. But this verse is sort of a double prophesy—it also applies in a special way to Jesus Christ. Three days after Jesus finished His work of redemption on the cross, He rose again in triumph. Of course, we're looking forward to celebrating that next Sunday. Since then, He's reigned with glory and honor at the right hand of God in heaven. As Paul says, ***"He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."*** (I Cor. 15:25-26) I don't want to jump the gun, because of course our biggest celebration of Jesus' victory is still a week away. But the Easter victory is really something that is ours the whole year round. In the name of our King, eternal death has been defeated, and eternal life is waiting for everyone who wants it. It doesn't matter who you are—all you have to do is use the right name! Paul says, ***"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*** (Rom. 10:12-13)

How could we ever fail to use that powerful name? Could we forget to come to church and hear it? To call upon it in prayer in our homes with our families? Could we omit to offer our hosannas and praises to the King this Palm Sunday? It's impossible—it just wouldn't make sense! Because my friends, none of us can afford to give up that kind of power!

Now if you were there on that first Palm Sunday, where would you be? Would you be standing in the crowd shouting “Hosanna”? Would you be running out into the street with your cloak to lay it down? Perhaps you’d climb the tallest palm to cut down palm branches for your king. Or maybe you’d want to be walking alongside that donkey, escorting Jesus into the city. But would you really belong in that crowd? Would you really belong there walking at Jesus’ side? Here is the King who knows all; would you stick out from the crowd as not belonging? That’s a scary thought.

I’ve never really liked going into a store or restaurant that I’ve never been to before. I’ll want to go, but sometimes I’ll stop short of actually going in. Really, it’s just that idea of standing out as not belonging there, of sticking out that kind of scares me away. What I really need to pass that hurdle oftentimes is someone to go with me who’s been there before, or at the very least to tell me, “Tell them, I sent you.” Going in as the friend of someone who knows their way around, that’s really a freeing feeling. It doesn’t matter how out of place you are, when you’re there in the name of someone who belongs, it’s as if you belong.

Well, today, we’ve been hearing a lot about the name of Jesus Christ our King. There’s a lot to that name. It’s the most powerful name of all. It’s a name that gives power to the powerless. It’s the name that overpowers every foe. But the greatest aspect of all, is that when it comes to you entering into heaven—a place which by rights you don’t belong, a place where you should stick out from the rest of the crowd—you can say, “Jesus sent me. I’m here in the name of Jesus.” That would be absolutely accurate, and in His name you do belong. For He conquered your sin and the grave, He redeemed your soul from hell. In Jesus’ name, you are an heir of heaven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:7) Amen.

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