

March 16, 2008

“Living for the King”  
Romans 11:36

FCF: Need for meaning, direction, and purpose

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Because Christ is the King,  
(magnet) He must be central in every aspect of our lives.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

The great hypothetical. An alien from another planet lands out in the field and says, “*Take me to your leader.*” They want to know “*Who’s in charge?*” And in this political season, that’s a tough question, a hard thing to project. We’re trying to figure that out ourselves. What of the candidates? What are their plans, agendas, priorities?

Of course, the question could be turned. What are our plans, agendas, priorities? Hard questions to answer not just with candidates but often with ourselves. Alice asked the Cheshire Cat (**READ quotes**), “*Which way ought I go from here?*” “*That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,*” he said. “*I don’t much care where,*” said Alice. “*Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.*” But it does matter which way we go. It does matter the direction we take. We were made for meaning and purpose. And a King.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** **Romans 11:33-36**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

What is it to have a king? That’s hard for most westerners to imagine. To be ruled by one not elected or placed by the people, someone with absolute power and authority over a realm whose word is law. But that was the expectation, the longing of Israel. The Old Testament records the failed kingdoms of man yet the promised coming of a greater King. The New Testament announces His coming, the establishment of His kingdom in this world, and the wonders of His rule of grace. And the King is Jesus.

What is it to have such a King? It requires a change not just of mind but of heart. It is to live with Jesus at the center of all we are and all we do. It is to take Paul’s words here in Romans 11 to heart. Chapters 1-11 is the theology of grace. Paul begins in chapters 1-3 with an introduction and explanation of the gospel. He moves on in chapters 4 and following with a series of clarifications. By the time he gets to the end of chapter 11, having reflected back over the wonders of God’s plan, Paul can contain himself no longer and breaks into song. Which is exactly the effect that the gospel should have on all of us – theology breaking forth into doxology, our study overflowing into song.

Such is the background for our text and these extraordinary claims Paul makes here in vv.33-35 and the astonishing reason he gives in v.36 (**READ Romans 11:36**). Now it’s been said that each of these differentiate between the activities of the persons of the Trinity – from the Father, through the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. That seems a stretch. More likely, Paul is speaking here of the triune God in all His fullness – each a part of the whole picture. For our purposes this morning, we’re going to focus on how these are each true even of just the Son, of Jesus our King – all things from, through, and to Him. It’s time to talk about some prepositions, little words that combine with a noun or a pronoun to form a phrase. These little words that shed a great deal of light on what it means to have a King, what it means for Him to be central to every aspect of our lives.

**I. FROM HIM**

First, “from (Jesus)...are all things.” This has to do with the source.

A) *Origins*

It has to do with origins, with where things came from.

1. All things out of nothing

It has to do with the fact – mind numbing though this may be – that there was a time when there was nothing but God. “*I am*” the LORD declared to Moses at the burning bush. He is dependent on no one, creating all things out of absolutely nothing.

2. By the word of His power

How? By the word of His power.

And all this true of Jesus. We read in John 18 of His arrest ([READ John 18:3-6](#)). Literally, Jesus' words were, “*I am*.” A seemingly mild response on the surface but with a dramatic effect – like a lightning storm, an earthquake, driving these men down to the ground. In that moment, they encountered “*I am*.” John speaks to the activity of the Son in creation ([READ John 1:1-3](#)). As does Paul ([READ Colossians 1:16](#)).

*B) Ownership*

“From Him...are all things.” It speaks to origins. It also speaks to ownership.

1. All His

All is His. This all belongs to King Jesus. Everything. And all of it.

2. None ours

None of this is ours. We have no bargaining position. We are but squatters.

*Illustration:*

We survey so much and think to ourselves with a contented and deluded sigh, “*And it's all ours.*” All these little domains – our careers, our possessions, our relationships, our lives, our very days. At times, even this very property. “*And it's all ours.*” No, it's not. This is a simple but profound reality that should be imbedded deeply into every one of our hearts. “*None of this is mine. It's His. All of it.*”

*Application:*

I was reminded of this just last week in reflecting on the number of Jesus' parables that speak of a landowner of some kind. What's the governing assumption behind every one of those stories? That it's all His. That it's all from Jesus. Think with me as to the astonishing implications of that. Paul speaks to it ([READ Romans 11:33-35](#)). We can't give Him what He doesn't already have. And we can't tell Him what He doesn't already know. He cannot be indebted to us. And he cannot be enlightened by us.

“From Him...are all things.” This means there's not a thing in this world you or I can take credit for. Which blows up any self-congratulation. Nor is there a thing in this world we can take over. Which blows up any self-rule. Jesus is the King! That's who came riding into Jerusalem that day. And as the King, He then has to be central.

**II. THROUGH HIM**

“From Him and through Him...are all things.” The first has to do with origins. The second with potential. Look with me again at Colossians 1 ([READ Colossians 1:17](#)).

*A) Sustaining*

“In Him all things hold together.” This is Jesus' sustaining work and power.

1. Not just putting together

Not just putting it all together as a master Designer or Craftsman.

2. But holding together

But holding it all together by bonds actively fastening, with hands continuously working.

*B) Flourishing*

All things sustained through His work and power. And flourishing as well.

1. Source of our strength

Our King is the source of our strength. As we trust and rely upon Him, He guides and enables, renews and empowers. Think of it this way. The One who is behind your location, gifts, talents, abilities, and opportunities then goes yet further and grants the wisdom, love, patience, perseverance, faith that we might be and do what He calls us to.

## 2. Object of our pursuit

He is the source of our strength. And so, with that, He then has to be the object of our pursuit. To know Him is to want to know more of Him. He bids us to make time to spend in His Word and prayer, to seek fellowship with other believers, to participate in the Lord's Supper, to give ourselves to ministry and service in various arenas, to seek wise counsel through other mature disciples. This is *how* He strengthens His subjects.

"Through Him...are all things." We are not self-sustaining or self-flourishing. Not a one of us. And it is the height of hubris, the pit of pride, to think otherwise.

### *Illustration:*

Jesus speaks to this very point in His image of the Vine and the branches (**READ John 15:1-11**). Clearly it is as much God's purpose for His people to be fruitful as it is the function of the vine to produce grapes. But something worth noting – while such fruitfulness includes multiplication through outreach and evangelism, that is not all He is speaking to here. There's much more. Real fruitfulness consists first of Christlikeness.

### *Application:*

"Through Him...are all things." What are the principles we see here of spiritual horticulture? What are the chief means this Gardener takes to make us more like Himself? Two things. First, pruning that we might bear more fruit. Which entails suffering. The branch is cut back in the fall. It looks cruel. Often shaved back to a stump – naked, jagged, scarred, mutilated. Then comes the spring and summer. Then comes the growth. Much more than otherwise possible. All because of the pruning.

That's the first thing. The second has to do with abiding, an organic union one with the other – we in Him and He in us. J. C. Ryle put it this way (**READ quote**):

*Abide in me. Cling to me. Stick fast to me. Live the life of close and intimate communion with me. Get nearer and nearer to me. Roll every burden on me. Cast your whole weight on me. Never let go your hold on me for a moment.*

And how do we abide in Him? Day by day, through the appointed means we alluded to earlier. For none of us are self-sustaining. None of us are self-flourishing. We need the King. And that's who came riding into Jerusalem that day. He has to be central.

## **III. TO HIM**

"From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things." This speaks to the aim and end of all things – Jesus. Look again at Colossians (**READ Colossians 1:16b-18**).

### A) *Praise*

"All things were created through Him and for Him." For His praise.

#### 1. If all is from and through

Which stands to reason. After all, if it is all from Him and if it is all through Him...

#### 2. Then it must be to

...then, in terms of the One to whom praise is due, it must be to Him as well.

### B) *Purpose*

"All things created...for (to) Him." His is the praise. And His is the purpose.

#### 1. Motive

He is to be the motive, the reason we do everything we do. Our very desires, what we value, what defines us, who we follow and long to represent – all driven by this King.

## 2. Goal

The ultimate goal, the glory we would seek – all lesser goals and lesser glories not oriented under serving self but Him. The subjects ultimately living but for their King.

There is to be, in all of life, ultimately one orienting compass – Jesus!

### *Illustration:*

Something akin to navigating by Polaris, the North Star. The whole sky appears to rotate around it. Actually, it's the Earth that rotates, but the effect is the same. If you can figure out where it is, you can figure out which way is north. In fact, during the War Between the States, this is how runaway slaves found their way to Canada. We are always to be moving northward, toward that star. All other paths serving that one pursuit.

“To Him are all things” – all our praise and all our purpose.

### *Application:*

Those closest to Him know this (**READ Revelation 5:9-14**). Now I read texts like that and I have to ask, “*What do they know that I don't? What have they come to see and understand that I'm too blind and foolish to embrace?*” Who is it, what is it, that has captured and now dominates my attention and my affection? The tragic truth is that too many of us are bored with Jesus. There is so little Christ in so much of our Christianity.

Think of our careers. We go in early and then stay late. It occupies our thoughts on our way in and on our way out. We're given to work. Think of our hobbies. We plan, we plot, we scheme, we're frantic for ways to spend time at them. But we're bored with Jesus. Something's got to be at the middle. Something's got to be at the center. And so Jesus is pushed to the periphery. What's happened? We lost sight of who He is.

### **CONCLUSION:**

All things are from, through, and to Him – to Jesus our King. Now this has some significant application and impact on every conceivable arena of our lives. Our marriages – ultimately they are from, to be lived unto, exist only for Jesus. Our children – ultimately they are from, belong to, will be what they were meant to be only through Jesus. Our possessions – ultimately they are from His hand, belong to Him for His purpose, are kept by means of His care. We could go on and on. He is the King.

This is the One who came riding into Jerusalem that day. And by week's end it becomes quite clear that He came for us. Make no mistake about it. He is the King. Which means He must be central. Which means we need to cast aside all lesser reasons we would hold to for His coming. We just had our van checked out for a trip. The mechanic assured me that it just needed a tire to be plugged but other than that it was good to go. That's not us folks. We are great big sinners in need of a great big Savior. If our problem was such that all we needed was a plugged tire, an upgrade, a realignment, there would be no King coming into Jerusalem. Little sinners don't need a great Savior.

But that's who we have. So what does that tell you? No, we have a King, a King who told stories about what it meant to follow Him, to yield to His reign and live by His rule (**READ Matthew 13:44-46**). Becoming part of His kingdom, following this King, is a thing so valuable it can transform the lives of any who possess it. And it is worth taking whatever steps, making whatever sacrifice, giving up whatever we treasure in order to have it. For all things, all things, are from and through and to this King. Jesus.

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