

THE ONE

On November 21, 1620, the *Mayflower* finally anchored at Plymouth Rock...“finally” because the 106 occupants - Pilgrims and crew members - first boarded the boat on August 5 and hadn’t left it since. They were delayed by multiple leaks on a sister ship which ultimately had to be abandoned, and half of the passengers were loaded onto the already overcrowded *Mayflower* before the other ship headed back to Holland for repairs. From September 16 to early November the *Mayflower* sailed against bitter winds blowing in the opposite direction from where her crew wanted to go. Then they spent almost three weeks combing the inhospitable coastline of New England trying to find a safe harbor.

In December of 1620, the Pilgrims sent out scouts. They found incredibly harsh wintry conditions. Coming from milder climates of England and Holland, they’d never experienced anything like it. A blizzard snowed them in for a night on shore and their thin sweat drenched clothes literally froze to their bodies. Not an encouraging way to start life in a new world.

That winter, they were cooped up on the *Mayflower*, forced to ration out 1 month’s worth of food for the next 6 months... just over 100 people packed into an 80 foot by 20 foot living space. A plague broke out onboard. Between illness and starvation, 53 of the original occupants of the *Mayflower* perished.

Yet, in November of 1621, the remaining Pilgrims held three days of Thanksgiving to God for His provision and blessings. They celebrated with a feast and invited their indigenous friends to join them in the celebration. “God be praised,” one Pilgrim wrote to loved ones back home, “We had a good increase of Indian corn and good barley.... Our harvest being brought in, our governor sent four men on fowling, so that we might in special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors.... And although it is not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”

What motivated the Pilgrims to take this pilgrimage? In spite of what you may have heard, the first Pilgrims, the ones who survived the harsh winter of 1620 and 1621 and built friendly relationships with the American “Indians” who taught them how to plant new crops in an unfamiliar terrain; these Pilgrims who celebrated a bountiful harvest with their indigenous neighbors; these Pilgrims didn’t come primarily to seek wealth or power. They came here for the freedom to worship according to their conscience. They acknowledged one Head of the Church: Jesus Christ. Not a pope, not an archbishop,

and not a king! They wanted liberty they were not given in England. They wanted no king but King Jesus!

Today we heard two passages which describe the way Jesus reigns as King. In the time remaining, we will briefly look at the high points of these. Put your bulletin or something else in your Bibles at Colossians chapter 1 and then flip over to Revelation chapter 19 and find us at verse 11.

As Americans we don't easily relate to the concept of a king. Our leaders are usually elected and often with term limits, if the voters have the will to turn them out. We bristle at the thought of an entity that has the ability to control our time, our words, and our money [reach for your phone] ... wait... I just got a notification. Oh really? iPads are on sale now? What? I can't find my post on TwitTok... all I did was say "Jesus loves you." ... maybe if I just say something positive about love, I could get *that* post to stay up. ... hmmm? [remember there are people in front of you] Oh... I'll be back in a minute... [finish up with phone, put it in your pocket]

So... where was I? Oh yeah, the concept of an entity that controls our time, our words, and our money is something we Americans bristle at, isn't it?

Well as the great hymnwriter Bob Dylan sang, "You gotta serve somebody." Bristle or not, there are forces that wish to control your life. It's important whom you choose to have power; and to whom you choose to give your allegiance.

In Revelation, the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse into the future. The Apostle John wrote it, and his descriptions of things are based on what he was familiar with, his grasp of the technology of his day... and that adds to its mystery to us as we read it today. But there is one thing that comes through loud and clear in the book of Revelation: Christ overcomes. And here in Revelation we have a vision of this One... this One seated on a white horse.

I called my message, "The One" because I am so taken by this verse and the truth it illustrates. Jesus isn't just a good teacher or a strong moral compass among many others. Jesus Christ is unique! None other is fully divine and fully human. No one else lived a sinless life and died as the sacrifice for all the sins of the world. No one else died and rose again by their own power.

Full of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter said this to the Jewish religious leaders who brought him in to intimidate and silence him: **"Salvation comes no other way; no other name has been or will be given to us by which we can be saved, *only this one.*" (Acts 4:12, The Message)**

This One who is seated on the white horse is called **“Faithful and True.”** Revelation further clarifies this concept.

Jesus Christ, **the One on the white horse is righteous.** Not only is He sinless; He is incorruptible. He shares in the Father’s holiness. Colossians 1:19 says that all the fullness of God was in Him.

This righteous One **wears many crowns.** This is not the same as people who wear many hats and wear themselves out running around doing one thing after another, less effectively than the task before. No, Jesus’ many crowns or diadems speaks to His *authority*. When He says something, it is carried out because He is the Boss! Colossians 1:17 tells us that **He is before all things.** He is not just the One. He is the only One. He is the first! And He is the last. No man works like Him.

Colossians 1:18 says **He is the Head of the Church.** Jesus has entrusted leadership of the church to humans. But not everyone with a degree, a title, and a paycheck is a true leader in the church. Like anyone else in your life, if they point you toward Christ - they are a true spiritual leader. If they do not, they are not. And don’t worry, Christ, the Head of the Church, has His own ways and His own timing in sorting things out. He is faithful and true and will require that of the people who claim to lead in His Name.

Part of Christ being True is that **He is complete in and of Himself.** Revelation 19:12 says He has a Name that no one knows but Himself. Though many scoffers and charlatans call Him many things, He is beholden to no one. He knows who He is, what His mission is, and nothing will confuse Him or deter Him from carrying out the will of God the Father.

In my opinion, this One’s perfection and incorruptibility - His *holiness* - is what makes Him seem so austere in this passage. But if He were not strong, He would not be able to keep His promises. He would not be faithful and true. But He is strong; He will do what He says. He is faithful and true. Praise His Name!

Another name revealed in this passage is **THE WORD OF GOD**. By the way, you know that the full name of the book of revelation is The Revelation of Jesus Christ? The whole book is one that reveals who Jesus is, and this is one of the central passages in that revealing. So we see Him as THE ONE on the white horse, called FAITHFUL AND TRUE. And now we see Him as THE WORD OF GOD.

We just sang together, “You were the Word at the beginning one with God the Lord Most High.” Haha and some people say hymns declaring great theology aren’t written today. :) But I digress. John 1 says In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with

God and the Word was God. Colossians 1:16 bears witness to this truth in John, I will continue to quote there: All things were made by Him and without Him was not one thing made. This One, the Word of God is the **Creator of all things**. Everyone say all things. Turn to your neighbor on one side and say "that includes you." Now find someone else and say, "that includes you." All things. Some things? A few things? Nothing? No... all things. Colossians 1:17 says, "All things were created through Him and for Him." "For Him" speaks to the purpose of His creation. All things have a purpose He designed.

[The Scripture teaches us that when things begin to go sideways or upside down, God steps in and does course corrections in order to lovingly invite everyone back to Him and prove that we cannot save ourselves. The great Flood, the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, God giving the Law and the Temple worship system to Moses, the establishment of Israel, Jonah's preaching to Nineveh, the preaching of other prophets to Israel, God's judgment on Israel including its exile and rebuilding, all lead up to the greatest moment of all, the coming of Christ.]

Throughout the Bible and even in human history in general, we see that when people abandon God's purposes it precipitates God's judgment, in His ways and His timing. You may be scratching your head thinking it's been a while since the flood of Noah or the fiery preaching of Elijah. This is going to date me, but I actually remember hearing the late Billy Graham say that if God didn't judge America soon He would have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. But Billy Graham, just like the apostles of old, preached a message of mercy: God's hand is stretched out still. Repent and believe that Jesus died to save you! Call on the Name of the Lord and be saved! But this offer is for a limited time, for when Christ comes again, He will come to make all that is wrong right, and to bring an end to all rebellion against God.

The Word proceeding from His mouth in our day speaks grace and mercy. **The Word which will proceed from His mouth in that day will be speaking Truth** and judgment. This incorruptibility makes Him appear austere to us humans, but it is also what makes Him - and Him alone - thoroughly trustworthy.

This One is the Word from before the beginning of time. He was the Word made flesh that dwelt among us. His Word on the cross was IT IS FINISHED. His Word from the tomb was DEATH IS NOT THE END and His Word in the End of Time will be one of truth and judgment. He is Faithful and True. He is the Word of God. Praise His Name!

The last Name of this One for us today hearkens back to Him wearing many crowns, and yet it also eclipses that truth with another glory: He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Today, no matter who or what seems to have power in your life, they are no match for the power, the integrity, the awesomeness, the authority of the One. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Somebody praise His Name!

I believe the Puritans and Pilgrims understood this, and that is why they resisted the sometimes godless authorities over the Church of England. John Wesley did the same a century and some change later.

This is why Dietrich Bonhoeffer rejoiced to celebrate Christ the King Sunday, which is today by the way, because Hitler's power seemed so all-consuming. Every day, but especially on this day, Bonhoeffer strengthened his soul in the fact that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and NO ONE can stand against Him.

Where are the Pilgrims and the Dietrich Bonhoeffer's of our day? If we met one, would we consider them to be too ... extreme? I wonder.

One aspect of Christian disciplines that I love but don't do often enough is Christian meditation. Christian meditation is not merely the emptying of your mind to a blank oneness, but after you calm your soul, you fill your heart with His truth, meditating on a passage or a verse or a phrase of Scripture.

A number of years ago I spent several minutes every day for a couple of months meditating on the phrase, "Yours is the Kingdom." Now, when I meditate, I find it effective for me to emphasize different words in a cyclical pattern. So I emphasized YOURS is the Kingdom. And I would breathe in and as I would breathe out I would say, YOURS is the Kingdom. Then after a number of repetitions, or the next day, I would say, "Yours IS the Kingdom." If His is the Kingdom, He has the right to reign.

If the Kingdom includes my life, then He has the right to reign over me as well. Is Christ's right to reign as King in me something I embrace or something I try to ignore?

He is THE ONE. The question today is, **is He *your* One?**

Sometimes preaching can seem like it boils down to a formula. Follow these steps and you can be happy with no hair out of place just like the rest of us. I hope you've hung out here long enough to know that following Christ is a journey. Sometimes a messy one. You don't get to the final destination at once. Jesus didn't say if you wanted to be His disciple you just had to wish it was so.

It begins in an act of faith expressed in repentance and trust and receiving God's grace offered to us. That's not a wish, but it's also not the end of the Christian experience.

Jesus said those who want to be His disciple should deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Christ.

Who is on the throne of your heart and life? If your life could be represented by a white horse, who is the one sitting on it?

Is Jesus Your One? **Is He ruling over your time? Is He ruling over your treasure? Is He ruling over Your tongue?**

He is King of kings and Lord of lords and one day He will come to judge a rebellious, crazy sideways and upside down world. But you don't have to be included in that.

I saw heaven opened and behold there was a white horse! The One sitting on it was called Faithful and True... He is called the Word of God... and on His robe and thigh were written King of kings and Lord of lords. May it be true on the earth. May it be true in you and me. Amen.

[i] <https://thefounding.net/the-history-of-thanksgiving-day-in-america/>