

I AM THANKFUL...

That God entrusts His rule to Jesus, *Matthew 28:18*

Paul wrote that Christians should "give thanks in all circumstances"¹ (*1 Thessalonians 5:18*). Thankfulness, however, proves elusive in the face of a pandemic, political turmoil, and an economic recession. Those challenges to our gratitude have now taken a very literal form – health officials are encouraging people to cancel their Thanksgiving holiday plans due to COVID risks.

Considering the challenges confronting us, we have been using this month to explore some of the things revealed in the Bible that motivate the thankfulness Paul described in *1 Thessalonians 5:18*. Last week we looked at the order, purpose, and goodness God's rule brings into our world. We recognize that God's order, purpose, and goodness can sometimes be hard to see in our world. Too often, disorder, uncertainty, and pain seem to fill our world, making it difficult to feel thankful. But the Bible presents another aspect of God's rule, an element that ought to engender an abiding thankfulness in us:

We are thankful because God entrusts His rule to Jesus.

King Jesus

- God entrusts His rule to Jesus.
 - The angel who announced Jesus' birth to Mary said that Jesus would "rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (*Luke 1:31-33; cf. Ezekiel 37:15-28*).
 - After God anointed and empowered Jesus to rule (*cf. Luke 3:21-22; 4:14*), Jesus began preaching "the good news of the kingdom of God" (*Luke 4:42-44*).
 - Jesus' "good news," however, revealed surprising truths about his identity as God's anointed king and about his kingdom:
 - Jesus possesses God's divine authority (*Luke 5:17-26; John 5:26-27*).
 - God gave to Jesus "all authority in heaven and on earth", expanding his kingdom's borders beyond the Jewish people to include all people and all nations (*Matthew 28:18-20*).
 - Jesus' rule and kingdom differ from the world's empires (*John 18:33-37; cf. Matthew 5:2-10; 20:20-28*).
- A clear and specific agenda drives the rule God gave to Jesus.

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- Paul described the mission God gave to Jesus when He entrusted him with His rule – Jesus must "put all his enemies under his feet" so that he can resubmit the creation to God's authority (*1 Corinthians 15:20-28*; cf. *Revelation 11:15*).
- Jesus' mission includes defeating "death" (*1 Corinthians 15:26*), which the Bible presents as a symptom/consequence of sin (*Romans 5:12-13*; cf. *Genesis 5:1-32*; *Revelation 21:1-4*).
- Jesus' mission to defeat God's enemies, including death, involves freeing the people from sin/death's oppressive regime so that they can instead serve God (*Romans 6:1-14*; cf. *Matthew 1:20-21*; *John 11:1-44*).
- Love motivates God's choice to entrust His rule to Jesus.
 - God's identity as love drives the mission He gave to Jesus (*1 John 4:9-10*).
 - Because love drives his mission, mercy rather than condemnation defines Jesus' God-given agenda (*John 3:16-17*).
 - Also, because love forms Jesus' mission, his kingdom's greatest good focuses on relationships rather than infrastructure, economics, politics, or any other common goal of kingdoms in our world (*Romans 5:6-11*; cf. *Luke 19:1-10*; *Revelation 5:9-10*).
- Jesus' love-motivated, agenda-driven rule cannot be defeated.
 - John's vision of Jesus in the opening chapters of Revelation portrays Jesus as an all-powerful, all-conquering, all-knowing king (*Revelation 1-3*).
 - Jesus received his overwhelming sovereignty through his death (*Matthew 28:18*; *Ephesians 1:20-21*); he achieves victory through defeat (*Revelation 5:1-6*).
 - Jesus' death-secured sovereignty guarantees our victory (cf. *Revelation 1:18*; *2:7, 11, 17, 26*; *3:5, 12, 21*).

Applications

- God works through Jesus' rule to bring about our greatest good but understanding that greatest good requires us to rethink our world and our place in it (*Romans 8:28-30*).
- Jesus' experiences make his rule sympathetic (*Hebrews 2:14-18*; *4:14-16*).
- Jesus' rule focuses on each of us individually (cf. *Matthew 10:29-31*); unlike our world, Jesus' kingdom contains no overlooked people.
- Jesus' rule expresses itself through the lives of obedient people; we participate in his rule through our loving submission to him (*Colossians 3:12-17*).
- Jesus' rule ought to give us peace and confidence (*Colossians 3:15*; *Hebrews 4:14-16*).

Jesus' rule ought to result in an abiding thankfulness in our lives. That thankfulness should express itself through our willing submission to his authority. We should consequently ask ourselves, "What does my life reveal about my relationship to Jesus' rule?"

