

Sermon preached by Pastor Ben on November 22, 2015 at Victory of the Lamb on Colossians 1:13-20

**Series: It's the End of the World...and I Feel Fine!**  
**Today's Focus: My Kind of King**

**"Relinquish Control to the One Who's Really in Control"**

In the name of Jesus Christ *"who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth"* (Revelation 1:5).

I'm going to start off today by simply reading our text from the Bible and then I'll do my best to unpack what I think God is trying to tell us today.

*13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

*15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

This is an epic sounding sort of passage, isn't it? It's a fitting way I think to end a series called: "It's the End of the World...and I Feel Fine!" Over the last couple weeks we've been learning why you can really, truly feel fine even if it feels like the sky is falling, even in the face of death or Judgment Day itself when something as significant as our eternal destiny is at stake. We can in fact feel fine in any scenario because we have an epic Savior! His name is Jesus—in whom we see the fullness of God wrapped in human flesh and blood.

Today we're going to talk about what it means that Jesus Christ is the King of kings who is in control not only of our eternal destiny but also of our day to day lives. Because it's a funny thing, you may have noticed. We who entrust our eternal destinies to Jesus aren't always so eager to do the same with our day to day lives, are we? It's not easy to relinquish control, is it?

For example, have you ever accidentally locked your kids in the van while the engine is running? I'll never forget when that happened to me a couple years ago after church back at the Polonia Soccer Club across the street. The kids were buckled into their car seats and they were both too little to be able to unbuckle themselves and get out. Meanwhile our only key was in the ignition. The van was running and the heat was on but it was about 10 degrees outside in the middle of winter and Sarah and I were standing out there looking into the van.

What a wretched feeling! Relinquish control? That's the last thing I wanted to do in that situation. Maybe it's a guy thing, or a parent thing, or just a human thing... but I was ready to do anything to get into our van and take control of the situation. I mean if ever there was a time to take control...that was it. "I am in control! I am super pastor, super dad, I will show my family how *in*-controllably awesome I am!" Or not.

It turns out that no matter how worked up I got, I couldn't accomplish anything. Stomping, yelling, and blaming the van manufacturer didn't help either. And I had just gone to church! In fact I had just preached the sermon, distributed the sacrament, and blessed everyone with the Lord's peace and I was outside storming around like a two year old (while the actual two year old was inside crying as her dad did not nothing but make matters worse!) Nothing I could do in and of myself could change the situation. Finally after God let me come to the end of myself, I pulled out my phone and within minutes a helpful Franklin police officer patiently got me back into our van...and back into control of my life...or so I'd like to think.

Do you ever feel that way about your life? "I'm in control." It's easy to slip into this kind of thinking especially when things are going smoothly, right? And to think, "Things are going smoothly because I'm in charge. Things are going well because I've planned so well." But what happens when God lets you have one of those "lock-your-keys-in-the-car-with-the-kids" kind of moments? You see to the degree that you think you are ultimately in control, or you feel the need to have every single detail work out according to your carefully crafted plans, then here's what's going to happen. You will be disproportionately disappointed when God allows something to happen so as to remind you that you're not in control. And when that happens, the worst case is that the devil wants to shine a spotlight on your disappointment so that instead of relinquishing control to the One who's really in control in, you instead feel devastated by your own perceived failures until you end up in a pit of personal despair. What a trick the devil tries to play on us! One moment to puff us up with undue amounts of pride to think things are going well because we're in control and the next to plunge us into the pit of despair when he persuades us that things have failed because we're so pitiful.

This ever happen to you? Friends, that's why God wants us to see today who's really in control. That's why God invites us to relinquish control to the One who's really in control so that you can say in every moment of your life, even though it might feel as if it were the end of the world...*I feel fine!*

*13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Why is it so hard to relinquish control of our lives to God? It's not because there's something uniquely wrong with you. I mean it's true that there are different personality types. And depending on your personality type you are perhaps more prone to feeling the need to seize control just because of how are "hard wired". But here's the thing about this: no personality type deals with this perfectly because each and every personality type is impacted by sin. No personality type is more broken than another or better than another but rather every personality type is thoroughly corrupted by the one thing we all have in common and that is this—we all have

inherited a sinful nature from our birth parents. This is true of every single personality type of person. Our sin nature arrogantly wants to be in control of certain aspects of our lives. And if it doesn't feel like it's in control, it wants to storm its way into the throne room of our hearts where it can try and seize control.

And if we live according to our sinful nature—that is, if we prioritize and run our life according to how it urges us—then we've gone back to live under what our text calls "the dominion of darkness". And friends, that's not good. That's the dominion where the devil controls our desires, where sin enslaves us to behaviors that are harmful, and where pride is considered the highest virtue. Where people insist that they can call their own shots and God's will has nothing to do with their lives. Where people insist that because they're in control it's ok to run rough shod over other's people opinions and feelings because they're just stupid anyway. Where people manipulate other people and play games with their emotions. But here's what Jesus says about the person who thinks this way: *Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 25:30). So maybe the dominion of darkness isn't the party some people think it's cracked up to be.

Anyone still want to let your sinful nature be in control of your life? Because the good news is you don't have to! Much better to let go and let God. Here's why: *13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* As baptized children of God, we've been pulled out into the light of God's mercy and grace. We no longer live under a slave master named Satan who manipulates our sinful nature. We now live under a gracious King, King Jesus, who loves us and gave himself up for us as the atoning sacrifice for all our sins committed under the control of our sinful nature. He made peace between us and God *through his blood, shed on the cross*. He demonstrated his victory over Satan when he rose from the dead. So now this proclamation of peace from the palace of the great King in heaven rings out here on earth through the gospel in Word and sacrament: Your sins are forgiven! You're a citizen of God's kingdom. By faith in Jesus you will live in heaven forever. You will stand side by side with the holy angels in worship of the one, true King. You will sing with a choir of people from every nation, tribe, people, language, and personality type and no one will complain about the style of music or who gets to sing what part and when. You will all get to be part of the great heavenly praise band. And your King Jesus shall reign supreme forever and ever. And of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (Is 9:7)!

*17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Friends, let me ask you. Do you have peace right now in your life? It's there! Jesus has secured it through the cross. But maybe the question is, Would you like to experience more of this peace right now in your life? Or for that matter more love, more joy, more peace, more patience, more kindness, more goodness, more faithfulness, more gentleness, more self-control? Well the Bible

calls these things the “fruit of the Spirit” (cf. Gal 5:22-23). In other words these aren’t things we can just manufacture on our own. But they are a sort of a spiritual litmus test for us.

Here’s what I mean. If I’m so busy, running around trying to control everything in my life, feeling good about how full my calendar is...but I’m not kind to my wife, or I’m not patient with my kids, or I’m not gentle to the people whose emotions are more fragile than my own...then I’m not relinquishing control to the One who is really in control. You see I can’t be faithful to God in any of my life vocations if I’m exhibiting nothing but frustration with the people that God has put in my life. And friends, neither can you. If you find that in your life these fruits of the Spirit are not evident (and I don’t mean perfectly evident for none of us are perfect!)...like there’s little love, little joy, little peace evident in your life...then you need to stop whatever it is that you’re doing and be spiritually fed so that you can be led by the Spirit. **Relinquish control to the One who’s really in control.** Take your desire to be in control and lay it at the foot of the cross of Christ to experience more fruit of the Spirit.

Friends, how’s your private devotional life? For the record, mine could be better. But when I’m stressed out and I find that the fruit of the Spirit is lacking in my life, I know that means I need to take the time to be spiritually fed. And yes that means I have to stop doing something to do that. I have to stop doing something to spend time with the word of God and prayer. But you see this is a way to relinquish control to the One who is really in control. I need to surrender my schedule to Jesus to hear his words and pray for his help.

You remember the time when Jesus stopped by Mary and Martha’s house? Martha was so busy, busy, busy. She was occupied with all the details and the dinner preparations. She wanted everything to go just right, according to plan, her plan of course. She was clutching to her need to be in control until inevitably she started to feel stressed. In fact it seems she started to feel more stressed almost just because Mary didn’t seem to be stressed like her. You get the feeling that Martha turned her being constantly stressed out into sort of a badge of honor. But Mary? Jesus says that she chose something “*Better.*” Friends, what could be “better” than being stressed out? Being with Jesus!

*38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)*

So friends, **relinquish control of your life to the One who is really in control—your Savior, Christ the King.** If He rules on the throne of your heart, then you will have peace. In fact if Jesus is your King then whether it’s really, truly the end of the world, or something happens in your life that just feels like it...you can truthfully say, “I feel fine!” Amen.

## My Next Steps

**Question to Ponder:** What makes it particularly hard for you to relinquish control of your life to Christ the King? Is it the “hard-wiring” of your personality? Is it some person or people involved in your life? Is it the poverty of your prayer life? Is it something else?

**Treasure to Share:** *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:13-14).

**Action to Take:** Luke 10:38-42 records the story of Jesus interacting with Mary and Martha. Regardless of whether you’re a man or woman, young or old, which one of them are you more likely to imitate when stressed out...Mary or Martha? What would change in your life if you responded more like *Mary*?

Make a plan to engage more regularly with the “one thing needful”...not when life slows down, but especially as life speeds up!

*“I have so much to do today that I'm going to need to spend three hours in prayer in order to be able to get it all done.”* - Martin Luther