"Christ Is Our Victorious King!"
(1 Corinthians 15:20-26 – Christ the King – November 22, 2026)

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 – *[20]But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. [22]For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. [23]But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. [24]Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. [25]For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. [26]The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

Dear Redeemed in Christ, our once crucified and now living and victorious King:

When Jesus was brought to trial before the Roman governor, His enemies accused Him of falsely claiming to be a King. Thus, they claimed, Jesus was in competition for power with the Roman emperor and guilty of treason. When Pontius Pilate asked Him if He was a king, Jesus answered that He was. But He said: *"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here"* (John 18:36).

In a way it must have seemed laughable, though pathetic, to Pilate that Jesus claimed to be any kind of king. In our Gospel lesson in Matthew 27:27-31, Jesus does not look like the picture of royalty. He stands there defenseless, having been arrested without a fight, bound and beaten, mocked and spit upon, crowned with thorns. He does not look like a King as they lead Him away to be crucified, like a lamb led to the slaughter.

It seemed laughable to Satan. Heaven's King had concerned him with His power to cast out demons, forgive sins, and raise the dead. But where was Jesus' royal power to save now, as He tripped along in weakness under the cross? Where was His royal power now, as He cried out in helpless agony on the cross? As Jesus breathed His last, a cry of victory rose from Satan's forces. Hell's prince thought for sure that fallen humanity belonged to him. For now, there was none to save us from sin and eternal death.

On the outside Jesus did not appear to be a King, but a weak man worthy of mockery. But in our Epistle lesson in 1 Corinthians 15:20-27, we see the glorious side of Jesus' rule. We see that **"Christ is Our Victorious King!"** He is indeed our Savior from sin, death, and Satan; for **1) He lives victorious** and **2) He reigns victorious.**

1) He lives victorious

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write these words to the Corinthians because some were trying to convince them that there was no resurrection of the dead. This false

teaching has serious consequences. Before our text, Paul pointed out that if you deny the resurrection of the dead, you also deny that Christ rose from the dead: *"And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished"* (1 Corinthians 15:17-18).

Many funerals claim to be a celebration of life, but they really do no one any favors. For they fail to address the cause of death, which is sin. Therefore, they miss the only way we can really celebrate life, in the victory over sin and death Christ won for us.

Our text give us true cause to celebrate life in Christ's victory: *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming"* (vs. 20-23).

Death came into the world by the sin of one man, Adam. God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan, speaking through the serpent, tempted them to disobey God and act on their own desires. God had warned that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die; but now they ate (Genesis 3:1-6).

Adam's sin did not just affect him; for *"in Adam all die"* (vs. 22). Adam's fallen condition has passed on to his descendants. As those who inherited his sinful nature, we all are conceived in sin and born guilty, deserving death. Romans 5:12 says: *"through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."* Sin is the reason there is a 100% death rate, affecting all from the womb to old age. Sin is the reason there are countless funerals every day.

Yet heaven's King loved us and came to save us by His power. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary. So He was born without inheriting Adam's sin. As the sinless Son of Man, He was the one human who did not deserve to die. Yet He took our sin and guilt on Himself and suffered to save us from the death and punishment we deserved. In our Gospel lesson there is heaven's King, crowned with thorns, being led to the cross like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). There is heaven's King laying aside His glory, in deepest humiliation suffering and dying for our sins. No, He did not look like any sort of King. Hell's Prince had begun to rejoice in his assumed victory.

But behold the victory heaven's King won for us! With a note of triumph, Paul says: *"But now Christ is risen from the dead"* (vs. 20). Death had to happen, due to our sin. But Jesus' resurrection had to happen, because death could not hold Heaven's King (Acts 2:24-

27). On the cross He paid for our sin, removing the cause of death. So just as Adam's sin brought death to all: *"even so in Christ all shall be made alive"* (vs. 22).

Christ is *"the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (vs. 20). The firstfruits were the first part of the harvest offered to God, a sure sign that the rest would follow. Heaven's King is risen from the dead as the firstfruits, guaranteeing that all in His Kingdom shall be raised with Him from the sleep of death: *"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming"* (vs. 23).

Through faith in Jesus, we belong to His Kingdom. One day, He will gather us to Himself to share His eternal victory. In heaven, He is restoring all things to perfection in that wonderful home He is preparing for us. This is why, even in the face of death, we can truly celebrate life – in the name of our victorious Savior and King!

2) He reigns victorious

Since our King lives victorious, He also reigns victorious for our good. We need this reminder every day, for we are often tempted to doubt this. We see the outward appearance of things, and we begin to wonder where our victory in Christ really is.

Sometimes it still seems like the enemy, the devil, is in control. Satan and his demons still wreak havoc in the world through hatred, injustice, persecution, violence, and wars. Satan is still there tempting us to sin, pushing false teachings and misbelief, turning many away from Christ, luring many down to hell with himself.

Sometimes it seems like we are still living under the control of the enemy of sin. Even as believers, there is a constant battle going on inside us between our Old Adam, the sinful nature, and the New Man, the Spirit-led nature. We know how often our Old Adam wins these battles as we fall into sins of thought, word, and action.

And sometimes, it still seems like the enemy of death is in control. It enters our lives and the lives of our loved ones. It may come quickly by accident, or slowly by disease; and when it comes, nothing can be done about it. We feel helpless. We grieve.

Sometimes, it looks like the enemy is still in control. But our text reminds us that Jesus reigns victorious. He is still in charge, working all things together for our good. He is giving us the final victory over all our enemies. Our text puts things into eternal perspective as it says: *"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet"* (vs. 24-25).

Jesus reigns to give us His victory over Satan. God promised Adam and Eve a Savior who would crush the serpent's head and redeem us from his evil power (Genesis 3:15). Jesus did that when He cried out on the cross: *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). Having won forgiveness for our sins, He has delivered us from Satan's power and dominion. Through faith, He has brought us into His Kingdom of Grace (Colossians 1:13).

Jesus reigns to give us His victory over sin. Romans 6:14 says: *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* Since God forgives all our sins in Christ, He sets us free from all condemnation, free to live in His grace, free to live the new life by the power of His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-2).

And Jesus reigns to give us His victory over death. 1 Corinthians 15:56-57 says: *"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Since Jesus has taken away our sin and risen from the dead, He frees us from the sting of death. For believers, death has become a peaceful sleep and awakening to heavenly rest with our Savior.

We share a lot in common with heaven's King. In this world, He sure did not look like the royal Son of God. Jesus knew what it felt like to be despised and rejected. He knew what it felt like to be a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He knew what it felt like when it seemed by every appearance that the enemy was gaining the victory.

Likewise, we may not look like royal children of God. But 1 Peter 2:9 says: *"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people."* Dear royal children of God in Christ: when we feel the heavy burdens of sin, death, and evil, no one understands like our heavenly King. He has been there. Now He lives and reigns to give us His forgiveness and salvation. He lives and reigns to work all things together for our good. He lives and reigns to bring us the final victory in eternal life.

Paul concludes: *"The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"* (vs. 26). One day, death will be destroyed forever. Christ our King will return victoriously on the clouds. At His voice, every tomb will burst open. He will reunite our souls with glorified bodies in perfect health and bliss. *"There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"* (Revelation 21:4). The King of Heaven will place His crown of life on our heads (Revelation 2:10). And we will live with Him forever, as royal children of our heavenly Father, in the Kingdom of Glory He has prepared for us.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.