**Sermon Text**: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

**Occasion**: Last Sunday of the Church Year, 24 Nov 2024

**Like a Son of Man**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you in the name of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

***13****“I saw in the night visions,*

*and behold, with the clouds of heaven
    there came one like a Son of Man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
    and was presented before him.****14****And to him was given dominion
    and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
    should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
    which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
    that shall not be destroyed.* (Dan 7)

This is an impressive image prophesied here. In fact, it is an image we are currently awaiting as this prophecy won’t be fulfilled until the Last Day. What Daniel is describing is when Christ descending as the Son of Man with mercy and judgment to raise us up from death to enter his everlasting kingdom. Christ raises the frailty of human flesh—frail from both sin and the dust of death—that all those in him may greet one another in the end with death at last laid to rest. This will be a glorious end to the present age and a glorious beginning of the age to come where no longer will we be afraid of losing our lives, or the lives of those we love, for our grief will cease and turn into joy as we witness death reversing into life. Tears of sadness will give way to tears of happiness as all the funerals we have attended will fade into true celebrations of life, that is, when Christ raises those whom we have buried. This image from Daniel is meant as a picture of heaven descending to earth in the end, hence why we have it as a reading for the Last Sunday of the Church Year.

But this text can spark something else in addition to an idea of the kingdom to come. It gives us a better understanding of the king. Daniel calls him “one like a Son of Man”. You might remember that Jesus describes himself as the Son of Man quite a few of times throughout the gospels. In fact, this is his favorite way to refer to himself. You might have missed the significance of the Son of Man title if you were casually reading the New Testament. In the same way, you would be like everyone else around Jesus who did not bat an eyelash when he called himself the Son of Man. Every male Jew would undoubtedly have found no issue in referring to himself as a son of man. That would simply be accurate, although their meaning would be that they had human parents. Jesus was instead referring to this passage in Daniel. Every time he stood in front of a crowd, mentioning the Son of Man, Jesus was referring to this passage. But people did not fully realize it until Jesus stood in front of the high priest on trial.

The high priest asked our Lord, “*Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” And Jesus said, “I AM, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”* At this the high priest tore his robes and started crying out that Jesus had committed blasphemy for claiming to be God and thus the Jews had to kill him immediately. (Mark 14:61-64) This means Jesus was crucified on the charge that he claimed to be God using the divine title Son of Man.

But as I said, not everyone would notice this if you were just casually reading through the gospels. You would, like most of the people in Jesus’ day, hear “Son of Man” and think Jesus was talking about being human. This doesn’t sound terribly divine. Because what is man that God should think of him? The son of man that God would care for him? (Ps 8:4) We would never depict ourselves as descending from the heavens on high with glory and power with an everlasting kingdom. Our origins are pretty much all the same. We come into this world through the combination of our parents, born in meekness and nakedness, cold and crying now that we are outside the warmth of our mother’s womb. What are we at that time that God, let alone our parents, should think of us? The simple answer is: children.

God cares for us because we are His own. He knew us quite intimately even before our conception, and it is He who wove our flesh (Ps 139:15-16). He also gives us parents, food, drink, house, and home through the means of this world that we might enjoy them. Just like the first man, Adam, we receive care from our Creator simply because He made us as His beloved creations. There is no glory in and of ourselves we can use to justify ourselves before God—and that becomes evident to us as we continue on in life.

As sons and daughters of men, we quickly find we inherit all their problems. We inherit the problems of this world not providing everything we need. There are many figurative and literal thorns and thistles as we work the land (Gen 3:18). We often have to work hard to pass by, something that has been getting more strenuous the past few years with the economy the way it has been. And we have also inherited certain weaknesses of the flesh. Many of us suffer from some sort of condition or disease passed down in our genetics. You can likely trace some illness back a generation or two. But we not only inherit physical weakness, we also inherit spiritual disease with original sin. As Adam and Eve separated from God’s grace in their sin so we, as those who descend from them, have inherited an inclination toward what is not of God. Just as the first man sinned have we sinned; therefore, just as he died do we die (Rom 5:12). This is what we associate with human nature, isn’t it? We being sons and daughters of men means we are susceptible to suffering, sin, and death.

This is why God sent, as the prophet Daniel said, “one *like* a Son of Man”. Jesus came in human flesh and was tempted the same as we are, the difference being that he is without sin (Heb 4:15). He was *like* us as sons and daughters of men by being in flesh open to suffering and susceptible to sin. Yet Christ, relying on his divinity—his unity with God the Father—did not fall into sin but lived as one who is holy. Thus, when Christ died, he did not remain dead. Death could not hold him. It had no claim over the Lord of Life. Christ is *like* a Son of Man in that when he died, he did not remain dead but pulled himself up from death by his own power and authority (John 10:18).

We as children of men cannot do this. We cannot defy death, let alone avoid it. It is only Christ as the Son of Man who can raise human flesh from the grave. And we depend upon this. We depend upon him lifting up our wearied flesh from its final rest for we know that our bodies cannot do this on their own. It is our hope—and not ours only but the hope of everyone who is in Christ. When we dwell upon the grave and its threat toward human flesh, we don’t think merely about ourselves. We think about those who have gone before us. We think of loved ones whom we have lost and currently await. We also think about those who are finding it more difficult to live day after day. And we think about the new generations as they are being born into this world, for they fight the same war against sin and death that we do. But the hope of all generations is Christ, the one like a Son of Man who came in human flesh to raise mankind’s flesh from the dust of the earth.

Christ’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. It cannot pass away. The blessings it offers is not for any particular age of people, nor is it for any one kind of people. Christ has come for all peoples, all nations, and all languages. Whoever is in Christ through faith will be found in his kingdom. And as his kingdom does not pass away, so those who are in Christ will not truly die. Even though our flesh be destroyed—even though people you know might have been buried or cremated—both you and them will see God. Even those whom you might leave behind you in this world, if they are in Christ, they have a place in his kingdom forever.

That is the promise we cling too, isn’t it? That we will be saved, yes; but also that everyone in this world may be saved in Christ through faith. Should it be only you and Christ in the kingdom forever, that might seem lonelier than expected. As the Lord said, it is not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Likewise, the one like a Son of Man, Jesus Christ, does not want to be alone but for all people to join him in his kingdom. This is why he died and rose again as a man. He did so so that all those who share in his flesh may live eternally as sons and daughters of God (Heb 2:14).

When the end comes, the heavens shall shake, the sun will darken, and stars will fall (Mark 13:24-26). But this grand sight is not what we look forward to seeing. There will also be a trumpet call for the angels to be sent forth to the ends of the earth (Matt 24:13), but that is not what we look forward to hearing. What we hope to see is the dead in Christ rise up to meet the Son of Man who descends on the clouds (1 Thes 4:16-17). We look forward to joining together with all the children of God and joining in a new song. We wish to see our Lord and all those we have lost. We wish to hear a cry of thanksgiving and praise for God’s great salvation. And we will have our wish granted, for as surely as the Son of Man came to bring us into his kingdom 2000 years ago, he will come again on the clouds with glory and power. Amen.

The peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.