

Sunday, March 6, 2016

Hebrews 3:14:14-5:10

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Jesus is Greater... than Priests and Towers of Power /

Religious and World Leaders...

What are the most powerful nations of the world today? It all depends upon how one defines power. According to the Global Presence Index which defines countries in their effective positioning the top five are United States, the United Kingdom, Germany China and France. This Global Presence index takes into account a broad array of economic, military and soft dimensions like tourism and international sports competitions. But even if one were to compare total economic activity of nations, that is Gross Domestic Product (the monetary value of all goods and services produced within the country) this list remains the same. According to the United Nations, the US is the third most populous country in the world and within the parameters of economic, military, technological and foreign affairs it has the GDP and looks to stay in this position for another 10 years or so. To be a leader within these five nations (Canada ranks 9) means to have power authority and the ability to bring about change. But this is earthly power and to many leaders with this kind of authority it is also personal power too. If you are the head of a country with a large military, good economy, and international trade, you have power. Sometimes however this power is only perceived by those who want it themselves or those who relinquish it easily.

As we continue to look at the book of Hebrews and learn of the greatness of Jesus- being one with God the Father and Spirit, both divine and human, above the angels and above our faithful ancestors we need to look at the leadership of Jesus. Jesus is the greater than any political or religious leaders. Even Pilate recognized this about Jesus- for he saw that Jesus was not a political threat to him because it was the religious authorities who wanted him gone. Pilate did not want to have him crucified as he did not want the responsibility of authorizing the death of a 'religious leader. Yet we see in the stories of the time that the Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat to the established religion and to their leadership. They had authority over what happened in the synagogue and temple, but not in the killing any person.

Jesus is a great high priest, not recognized as such by the established religion of that time, but by God the Father and all who have faith in God. We read in Hebrews 4 that Jesus is the great high priest who has been tempted in every way yet was without sin. Other priests and religious leaders are chosen by people to serve the people in matters related to God. Yet Jesus did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest by himself—it was God who declared- You are my Son and I have become your Father. You are a priest forever.

Jesus offered prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, yet he learned obedience from what he suffered and died. And when he was made perfect in his resurrection, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who would obey and follow him. Jesus is above all leaders—religious, political, economic and any one who seeks power. For Jesus is God's Son and one person of the trinity.

Living so close to the US you have probably heard about the political race for the presidency with its state primaries and outside influences. This is an important process to follow for whoever is elected as president in November becomes one of the world's most powerful leaders and can bring about change which could effect everyone around the globe. Whoever becomes President has four years to bring about changes which not only change what will happen in the US, but in these same 4 years around the world.

Yet if we look to Jesus, his being the high priest, placed in this position by God the Father, over 2000 years ago, millions and millions of people have been transformed by his presence in their lives and by the Spirit that calls us even today to change. This is because of his ultimate sacrifice on the cross, and because of his teachings which have withstood through generations and time. These teachings which include the wonderful story of the loving father and lost son.

Two sons were raised in a caring home by a father who had become wealthy. The younger son however does not want to stay within the confines of home but wants his inheritance in order to experience a different life. He receives the money and eventually squanders it all leaving him to find work. He comes to his senses when he is feeding pigs and sees the food that they are eating is better than what he has for himself. This young man realizes that he could have a better life as a hired hand back on his home farm with his family around him. And so his plan is to return home and seek forgiveness from his father. While he is still a long way off, the father sees him and is filled with compassion, he runs to his son and

embraces him and kisses him. The son confesses to him what he has done The father tells the servants to plan a celebration because he has returned home safely.

It is the older son who questions the actions of the father to the brother who spent all the money. And in his wisdom the father says, "Everything I have is yours but I am glad that your brother is home, He was lost to this world and all its challenges, influences, powers and now he is found." I thought he was dead but he is alive!

It is such a teaching that even when we have heard it before, something new is made clear. The young son, had no authority, no power, nothing until he could take his inheritance and leave home. He became very popular party boy in wild living at least until the money was there. When it was all gone- he had nothing. But it is interesting that Jesus states, "when he came to his senses" he realized he could have a better life as a hired hand at home.

The younger son did not have any expectations from his father. He knew that he had sinned against heaven and against his father. But the father welcomed him because he was alive and still his son. Wealth and power were only temporary influences. He still believed in God and sought forgiveness from the one whom he had failed. His father still loved him and showed him his love.

Jesus is our high priest as he teaches us to forgive and love and forgive again. Because we have Jesus we are to hold on to what we believe for we are Christ's ambassadors. Go is making his appeal through us in order that all may be reconciled with God. Jesus is the one through whom this reconciliation is possible as our high priest, not because he will make sacrifices for us, but because Christ died once for all people. Now it is up to us to tell of his love and that eternal life is made possible through him. You are Christ's ambassadors, you are his witnesses, now go and tell his story of love.

PRAYER

Amidst the religious struggles and towers of power that exist in our world today, Jesus lives. His influence and story is shared around the world on a regular basis yet there are many who do not know that his kingdom is not of this world but in heaven. Help us O God to be the ambassadors, faithful followers, Christian influence that you call us to be as we journey in this life with one another in faith and with hope. Hear our prayers O God Amen.