Sovereignty of God

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Kimby Young

Psalm 8 September 1, 2024

Colossians 1:15-20

The sovereignty of God is often where our Presbyterian theology begins. God is Sovereign, King, Lord, Master, Supreme, Ruler, Leader, Father, Creator. God is first. God is in charge. God is the center out of which everything else comes. Everything else in our theology flows from this start. Everything else in our lives should flow from this truth. God is Sovereign.

In worship, God is the center. I know sometimes we think we are the center of the universe. We think worship should be about meeting my needs, making me feel good or challenged or holy or whatever you seek. Sometimes at church we try to make everyone happy – with the music they like or the pew they prefer or the prayers that speak to them. And while all of that is good. Worship is not about entertaining or satisfying you, or me. Perhaps it is about entertaining God, satisfying God. The reason we worship is to praise God. The reason we come together and do everything we do here, is to try to talk to God, to try to hear God, to try to serve God, to try to put God first.

I know most of you come to church because you like it here. You like the music or the stained glass or the atmosphere. You like seeing friends. You have history here. You have memories here. It feels like home and family. If you are a guest, you are probably looking for some of that. That is what church should be – people gathering together, belonging together – because we belong to God. We are God’s family. God is our reason for being here. God is our reason for everything.

What does it mean that God is sovereign? We don’t really understand the concept of King today especially in America, because we don’t have a king. And most of the kings or rulers in the modern world today are not the all encompassing lords of the past. In Biblical days the king, the emperor, the Caesar was indeed in charge of everything – every single aspect of their subjects daily lives. A bad king could destroy and control with no sympathy or consistency. A good sovereign ruler would be compassionate and careful, as well as providing livelihood and security. Even with the best of rulers, the human image of sovereignty is lacking. The divine sovereign is beyond the best of the best – not dominating or controlling, restricting or limiting. Rather God is encouraging and compassionate, far reaching and inclusive. God our sovereign wants what is best for us and does everything possible to offer us the best of all possible worlds.

If that is true, why is the world not perfect. God has the power to make it so. Why doesn’t God just fix everything? Why is trouble, suffering, sorrow or sin in the world? Here is a key point in reformed faith. God has complete power. But because of God’s complete love, God chooses to not always use that power. God sometimes chooses to limit God’s own power, to not intervene in our lives, to let us choose how to act. Even to allow us to make mistakes. God does this because God love us and wants to let us choose how to live. Freedom, choice, power, purpose, love. God is very complex and mysterious. We will not always understand. We will never fully understand. But we can trust that God loves us and that God is able to care for us completely.

To capture what it means that God is sovereign, I’m going to use four P’s.

Power, Prescence, Provision, and Purpose.

I’ve already spoken a bit about the power of God. God can do anything. Creator and Sustainer of the universe. God started it all going and God keeps everything moving according to plan. This is the awe-inspiring wonder-making nature of God’s greatness. The reading from Deuteronomy reflects this God who is one and only. The God whom we adore and worship. The God who knows all, sees all, does all and cares for all. Omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient – all the omni’s. God is everything. And this God is known in the three persons of the Trinity - Father Creator, Christ the human, and Holy Spirit spark of life.

The passage from Colossians tries to express this oneness of God - this identity of Jesus as God. Jesus is the image of the invisible God – a part of creation, a part of all that follows, a part of God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. Jesus is love in the flesh. Jesus shows us how to be that love in order to bring other people into a personal profound relationship with God.

That leads to the second P. I’ve talked about the power of God. The presence of God is everywhere and at all times. But we recognize that presence most in the flesh and blood Jesus. As Advent and Christmas remind us, Jesus is Emmanuel - God with us. Jesus is the incarnation – God in the flesh. God face to face. We can know God in many way but we know God best as we come to know Jesus Christ. Look at the life of Jesus. We see the presence of God. We also know the presence of God in the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. God in spiritus. God in the Spirit. God the Spirit in us. This way of knowing God is not as concrete and tangible as Jesus in the flesh, but it is just as real. The Holy Spirit moves and breathes among us and fills us with gifts from God. The Holy Spirit makes us able to respond to God with us.

Provision is the third P of God’s sovereignty. God Provides. God gives us everything we need and more than we need. There is more than enough as we trust in God. All that we are, all that we have, comes from God. All that we offer, all that we do, should return to God. In the old days of kingship – it was believed that the king owned the land, the people, and everything in the territory. A king could seize your goods and use whatever the king wanted. But a good king, a wise king, knew that with that ownership came responsibility. If the people belonged to the king, the king must take care of those people. Much as we must care for our animals, we must care for our homes and our land. A good king felt responsible for his people and would offer protection, opportunity and everything that makes life good. So it is with God. We are God’s people. We belong to God. Because of that, God provides for us everything we need. We can trust God.

Finally – purpose. When we speak of the sovereignty of God. When we identify who God is in all of God’s greatness. When we recognize that we belong to this Almighty and Magnificent God, we also begin to recognize who we are. We are God’s people. We belong to God. As such, we have a purpose in life – to serve God as God asks. God has a plan for the world. God has a plan for each of us and for our salvation. Part of our purpose is to follow God’s purpose, to live into God’s plan for the world, to do our part in God’s plan. Perhaps this is the most important aspect of our understanding of the sovereignty of God. We trust God’s purpose. That requires faith that there is meaning in life and that life is good. It requires believing that God is here and God is good and God is working for our good. Sometimes it requires believing in that purpose in the face of a world of contradictions. Believing in goodness when evil swirls around us. Believing in joy when sorrow overcomes. Believing in ourselves because God invests in us and God loves us. Believing in the power, presence, provision and purpose of God. God is sovereign. And our sovereign God loves us at all times in all circumstances. Trust in that promise of God today and always. Be blessed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.