

“Reign of Christ”

Revelation 1:4b-8, Mark 1:15, Philippians 4:7 & 2 Samuel 23:4-5

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Prayer for Understanding May the words of our mouths and meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you gracious God our rock and redeemer. Amen

You are asked to introduce Jesus to someone who has never heard of Jesus. What do you say?

Homiletics has the following introduction as a possible way Jesus was introduced to the religious council.

“Honorable members of the Sanhedrin, it is with great reverence and humility that I stand before you today to introduce a figure whose presence has captivated hearts and minds throughout the land of Judea and beyond — Jesus of Nazareth. In the bustling streets and dusty villages of our land, Jesus has emerged as a teacher, a healer, and a beacon of hope for the masses. Jesus’ words, spoken with authority and compassion, have stirred the hearts of the people, drawing crowds wherever he goes. Yet, amidst the fervor and admiration that surrounds Jesus, there are also questions and concerns that weigh heavily upon the minds of many, including members of this esteemed council. Jesus’ ministry, marked by acts of healing, compassion, and inclusivity, has raised eyebrows among some members of our community. Jesus’ willingness to associate with tax collectors, sinners, and outcasts challenges our understanding of righteousness and purity according to the laws of Moses. Moreover, Jesus’ teachings characterized by a profound emphasis on love, forgiveness, and grace, have sparked debate and controversy among scholars and religious leaders. Jesus’ interpretation of the Scriptures, particularly regarding matters of Sabbath observance and ritual purity, diverges from the traditions handed down to us by our ancestors. Therefore, I urge my esteemed colleagues to approach this deliberation with open minds and hearts, guided by the principles of justice, righteousness, and compassion. Let us engage in thoughtful dialogue and prayerful reflection as we seek to discern the path forward in our interactions with Jesus and his followers. May the wisdom of our ancestors and the guidance of the Almighty be our companions in this sacred endeavor.”

John introduced Jesus in Revelation as follows: **Revelation 1:4b-8 NLT** “**Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before God’s throne; and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to Jesus who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. Jesus has made us a Kingdom of priests for God, Jesus’ Parent. All glory and power to Jesus forever and ever! Amen. Look! Jesus comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see Jesus—even those who pierced Jesus. And all the nations of the world will mourn for Jesus. Yes! Amen! ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,’ says the Lord God. ‘I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.’”**

John begins with grace; the unconditional love of God for all people; the forgiver of every sin and giver of endless opportunities to love: the transformer of fear and hate to love and community: the convertor of all that diminishes life to all enhancing life; the glorifier of the image of God, the goodness, in every person; the resurrector of every form of death to abundant eternal life; the wiper of every tear, healer and giver of overflowing joy. Grace is all of this and much more. John begins by introducing Jesus as grace personified.

Grace is the good news, the gospel, the foundation of Jesus ministry. Jesus often announced: **Mark 1:15 NLT** “**The time promised by God has come at last! The Kingdom of God is near! Repent and believe the Good News!**” Repent means to turn, to change, to transform, to resurrect. Turn from bad news to good news. Change from negative thoughts to positive thoughts. Transform from fearful hate to uniting love. Resurrect from loss, grief, and death to reunion, rejoicing, and eternal life. Grace is God’s eternal power that does all of this and much more. Prevenient grace claims everyone as God’s beloved before they were created. Perpetual grace declares that everyone will be loved forever. Grace is the catalyst that produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. John begins by introducing Jesus as the source of grace.

Next, John introduces Jesus as peace. Our English word *peace* is a faint translation of shalom. Jesus often greeted people with, “Peace be with you.” The Apostle Paul declares that **Philippians 4:7** “**the peace of God transcends all understanding.**” God’s peace produces tranquility, harmony, and unity in any situation. Peace that guides one through grief. Peace that calms anxiety. Peace that dissolves shame, blame, and depression. Peace that enables warring factions to cease violence, to respect each other, to seek the most excellent way of love together, to be in harmony with each other. Peace that enables one’s soul to proclaim “all is well” even in the midst of chaos. Peace

that makes us enough, worthy, complete and whole producing tranquility. Peace that blesses and inspires us to be a blessing. Peace that fills us with gratitude. Peace that fills us with hope, confidence in the promises of God, trust that God's kingdom is coming, everyone, the entire cosmos, will be glorious, heaven will be enjoyed by all. Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Peace transcends all conflict, chaos, and brokenness. Peace will yield harmony, rhythm, and wholeness. John introduces Jesus as peace personified.

Jesus the giver of grace and peace is eternal. John begins and ends his introduction by accentuating that Jesus was, is, and will always be. Jesus is love. Love endures forever. Jesus is almighty, all powerful, all wise, all knowing, all present. John's introduction encapsulates the timeless nature, absolute sovereignty and eternal reign of Jesus. God in human flesh, God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus, is the eternal, steadfast, ever sure foundation upon which all of creation rests. Jesus is our good shepherd whose reign will bring everyone home, so the entire cosmos will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. In a world marked by uncertainty, turmoil and constant change, Jesus is the constant, the grace, the peace, the love, the life, the freedom, the resurrection, the glory, the Almighty, amid the ebb and flow of human history. In an era where it is challenging to decide what is real and what is fake, be comforted by God's promise that Jesus' reign will ultimately prevail. When we feel overwhelmed by the pace of life or the pressures of the present moment, let us remind each other that Jesus transcends time, that grace, peace, love, freedom, and life will reign forever. Let us comfort each other by proclaiming God's eternal presence. Let us find hope in Jesus who is always with us. On this Christ the King Sunday, we celebrate that we are connected to God's infinite power and resources.

Jesus is the faithful witness of love and life after earthly death. Jesus conquered death. Jesus reigns over death. Jesus is freedom, love, and life. Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead. Jesus walked out of the tomb showing us that Jesus has power over death and offers the same to us. Jesus' journey through death assures us that Jesus is indeed the sovereign ruler over all creation. The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate expression of hope. Jesus' resurrection transforms our understanding of death, turning it from an end into a beginning. In Jesus, conqueror of death, we know that death has been defeated and that eternal life awaits everyone. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. Jesus' resurrection was a validation of his divinity, a proclamation that Jesus' radical, inclusive love for everyone is ushering in God's kingdom where all are loved, appreciated and celebrated for being their unique self. The empty tomb represents total and absolute victory over death, and all forms of death. Resurrection is our sure future. Jesus' resurrection is described as the "first fruits" which everyone will follow.

John declares that "everyone will see Jesus, even those who pierced Jesus". Those who did not see Jesus on earth will see Jesus in heaven. Those from other religions, those with no religion, those who actively work against love, those who pierce Jesus with the intent of killing grace, peace, love, freedom and life will see Jesus. Everyone will belong to God's kingdom. Everyone will be priests serving God. Everyone will glorify God, be a partner with God, in exponentially growing grace, peace, love, life, and freedom forever.

Second Samuel paints a picture of the reign of Jesus: **2 Samuel 23:4-5 NLT** "like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land. My house is like this with God. For God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. God will cause to prosper all my help and my desire."

The promise of Jesus' coming kingdom fills many with anticipation and expectation. Jesus' coming kingdom is a reminder that our present struggles and sufferings are temporary. The time is coming when all will be pure joy and glorious.

Liturgically, today is Omega, next Sunday is Alpha. Today is the last Sunday of the church calendar. Next Sunday is Advent the beginning of the church calendar. Jesus reigns throughout the year. Jesus reigns in every season of our life. Jesus always has reigned. Jesus always will reign. Jesus' reign fills the cosmos with grace, peace, love, life and freedom. Jesus' reign is bringing heaven to earth forever. Jesus' reign is good news for everyone.

How have you introduced Jesus? John said: **Revelation 1:4b-8 NLT** "Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before God's throne; and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to Jesus who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. Jesus has made us a Kingdom of priests for God Jesus' Parent. All glory and power to Jesus forever and ever! Amen. Look! Jesus comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see Jesus—even those who pierced Jesus. And all the nations of the world will mourn for Jesus. Yes! Amen! "I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.""

How will you introduce Jesus? Amen

