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*A Leader Like No Other (Genesis 49:8-12)*  
*12/20/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow*

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We've been looking through these Messianic Mountaintops, the monumental promises of the Savior and who he would be. God told Adam and Eve that this Savior would crush Satan's head and Satan would strike his heel. We see these fulfilled in Jesus' death on the cross, where Jesus' suffering has nullified Satan's power to accuse us because the punishment for our sins has been paid in full.

God told Abraham and Sarah that this Savior would bless all nations. We see that fulfilled in the gospel message which is for all people. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the entire world! The gospel is not for just one nationality or group but it is to be received by all people through faith.

Today, in God's promise to Judah through Jacob's blessing, God again narrowed the line of the Savior and gave more details about who this Savior would be. This promise shows us the Savior's undeniable power, unending reign, and unparalleled prosperity. Like many Old Testament prophecies, Jacob's blessing on his son Judah has multiple fulfillments. We see Jacob's words fulfilled in the tribe descended from Judah but we see them ultimately fulfilled in Judah's one great descendant: Jesus Christ.

Genesis 49:8-9 (NIV) <sup>8</sup>"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. <sup>9</sup>You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him?"

In this first part of the blessing, we see the undeniable power of Judah's descendants. They would have a preeminent place among the tribes of Israel. Even their enemies wouldn't stand a chance against them. They are compared to a lion. Who's gonna take on a lion? Better just to leave it do what it wants.

In the same way, Revelation 5 calls Jesus the Lion of Judah. Jesus has the undeniable power that Jacob spoke about. No one can mess with Jesus. No one can stop him.

Maybe it doesn't seem like that to you, though. Maybe you've been a Christian

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for a long time and it seems like Christ and Christianity aren't all that powerful. It seems like so many people in our culture can just ignore Jesus. Sometimes, they can make us feel like we need to apologize for being Christian.

Well, let me ask you this: How do you defend a lion? There's an old story about a zoologist and his son. The two worked in Africa, trying to defend the magnificent animals there from poachers. It was dangerous work. Poachers in that area could make a lot of money from their kills and they weren't afraid to take a few human lives if they could get their pay.

One day, the zoologist and his son trapped a lion. They knew there were poachers in the area and wanted to move the lion to a safer place. While they were loading the lion into their transport vehicle, suddenly, they saw the poachers coming for it. The zoologist and his son couldn't defend themselves and the lion, and they weren't ready to drive away with it. "What do we do?" the son asked his father. The zoologist turned to his son and said, "Release the lion."

What better way to defend a lion than setting it loose? Let Jesus loose in your life by growing in the Word and building your life on what Jesus says there. Let Jesus loose on people who deny God's Word and mock it. Point them to the Scriptures and watch the lion's power go to work!

Genesis 49:10 (NIV) <sup>10</sup>The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.

Jacob prophesied that Judah's descendants would be rulers. And we see that clearly in King David and his dynasty from the tribe of Judah. But a much greater rule has come from this prophecy: the rule of Jesus Christ.

He does not take our obedience by force. He wins it through the gospel message of forgiveness through his blood. He does not trick us into following him with empty promises that has no intention of keeping. He earns our trust with fulfilled promises and prophecies spanning back to the beginning of time and he guarantees that he will still keep all his promises to us. He does not rule for a mere 4 years, for a mere human lifetime, or even for the mere lifespan of a nation. He rules for all eternity.

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Genesis 49:11–12 (NIV) <sup>11</sup>He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. <sup>12</sup>His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.

Can you imagine the prosperity Jacob describes here? Tethering your animals to one of your grape vines!? That would be like using \$100 bills as kindling to start a fire! If you value money that little, you must be doing pretty well financially, right?

This is the prosperity that Christ's rule brings. Christ teaches us that we don't need to waste our lives chasing that elusive dollar. He teaches us that life is worth more than money. He teaches us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to us as well.

Sometimes, it can seem like there's just never enough in this life. There's a famous story about a billionaire who was asked, "How much money is enough?" The billionaire's answer? "Just a little more." In heaven, we will know prosperity like this world simply cannot give. We will know wealth like this world cannot offer.

In this world, our life savings can be gone in an instant just because some robber found a way to get our money. Our biggest investments can disappear just because the economy took a bad turn. But the riches waiting for us in heaven? Those will never be lost. They are guaranteed to us by Jesus' death on the cross, by his resurrection for the dead, by his name written on us at our baptisms.

We have an awesome day to celebrate on Christmas. It is the first coming of Jesus. He is a Leader unlike any other. Only he has undeniable power. Only he has an unending reign. Only he brings unparalleled prosperity. Prepare to celebrate his first coming. And so prepare for his second coming. Amen.

