INTRODUCTION:
In Greek, the term is “kurios.” In German, the word is “Herr.” In Scotland, it is “Laird.” In English, it is “Lord.” And in the United States the concept is abhorrent.

Since 1776, Americans have found the whole idea of lords and ladies to be…well…revolting. We fought a war against peerage, titles, rank and nobility. Our nation is founded on a belief that all men are created equal.

Not only that but our religious brotherhood, the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ of the Restoration Movement, rejected titles early on. We do not typically refer to our preacher as “Reverend” or “Pastor” or any other ecclesiastical title because we want to emphasize that there is no rank, class or status in the church. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. The person we employ to provide administrative oversight and to preach isn’t a privileged character: he’s just like everyone else but is charged with a particular job to do.

In this classless, egalitarian context, the message of 1st Peter 3 can be a bit hard to swallow. Oh, the text starts off OK but then it takes a difficult turn.

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

“Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.” Who wouldn’t like that? “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.” That’s the way we
want it to be, isn’t it? But the part about “in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord” – That is a bit harder to swallow. It isn’t very democratic (small “d”) nor very republican (small “r”). Our ancestors left European monarchies to come to this country to be free of emperors and lords and potentates and rulers. We don’t want to have to acknowledge ANYONE as our sovereign lord. Not anyone! Oh, all this regalia about the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee is entertaining. Interesting. Quaint. And it is harmless enough because she knows her place and stays in it. The British people still elect their Members of Parliament and the Prime Minister really has the power. The Queen is just a figurehead and we all know it so she’s no threat. It’s still “majority rule.”

Now, be honest: isn’t that the kind of queen we would want? Isn’t that the kind of monarch we could embrace? Isn’t that the kind of lord we want Jesus to be? A figurehead. Someone we can dress up and roll out for festive occasions and ceremonial events. Lord at our Christmas pageant. Lord of our Easter celebration. Lord of our Memorial Day service at the cemetery. Lord on retainer. That’s what we really want.

But that’s not what he wants. And that is not what he’ll accept. Jesus is narrow-minded. He has declared that he must be lord of all or he will not be lord at all.

The first gospel sermon ever preached was preached on the Day of Pentecost: seven weeks after Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Simon Peter and the other apostles addressed the crowds that had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, a Jewish harvest festival held seven weeks after Passover. Peter told the crowds about Jesus. He said that Jesus was a good man who had never committed a crime and, thus, did not deserve to be executed. In fact, Peter explained, Jesus was more than a good man, he was the Son of God: a fact that God had authenticated by performing powerful miracles through Jesus. But, Peter said, you wicked men put this innocent man to death. He was buried in a tomb. But God did not abandon him. In fact, God raised him from the dead to prove one incontrovertible truth: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

See, here’s the inescapable truth, whether you want to accept it or not: God made Jesus to be both Lord and Christ. “Christ” means God’s promised and anointed one. “Lord” means king or sovereign or boss.

Jesus did not campaign for “lord.” No one nominated him for the position. We do not elect him. God has the only vote and God made Jesus to be Lord.

You have a choice. You can accept him or you can reject him but he is God’s choice for Lord and there are no other candidates…no other choices…no other contenders. Jesus is either your lord or you are his adversary, his opponent, his enemy. There is no neutrality where Jesus is concerned. He, himself, said, that if you are not for him you are against him.
Do you understand what it means to say that Jesus is Lord? Lordship means:

**THE RIGHT TO RULE**

The King made the rules, not his subjects. The Lord of the Manor established the laws, not the serfs. The Master set the regulations, not the slaves. If Jesus is Lord, he issues the directives. Our responsibility is to obey. There is no referendum to determine how we feel about it. There is no poll to measure popular opinion. He is Lord: he rules.

I know that is hard to swallow. It goes against our independent spirit and our emancipated nature but Jesus has always been counter-culture. He has always demanded a radically altered worldview.

If Jesus is your Lord, it means he has:

**THE RIGHT TO RECOGNITION**

Ever since the Garden of Eden, there has been a piece within us that has longed for respect, for credit and for praise. Satan tempted Eve with the offer that she could be like God.

That is still appealing. We’d still like to get some recognition. It’s not just Rodney Dangerfield but we all want some respect. The apostle Paul knew that tendency and he resisted it. He wrote to the Christians in Corinth, “we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2nd Corinthians 4:4). Paul and his companions were not promoting themselves but Jesus. They were not asserting themselves but Jesus. They were not doing what they were doing for their sake but for Jesus’.

That’s what happens when we let Jesus be our Lord: he gets the recognition and the glory. We? We were only doing our job.

If Jesus is your Lord, it means that he has:

**THE RIGHT TO RESPONSIBILITY**

What a liberating thought! You do not have to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders: he already has. God gave him that responsibility.

In Isaiah 9:6, God revealed to the prophet what would happen.

> For to us a child is born,  
> to us a son is given,  
> and the government will be on his shoulders.

It is both liberating and humbling to realize that the responsibility for the world is on Jesus’ shoulders and not on yours. It is humbling to realize you are not in charge. It is liberating to know you don’t have to be.
CONCLUSION:

A few years ago, the Washington Post ran a story about a church in Maryland that used market research and focus groups to design their weekly services. Among other choices, they deliberately de-emphasize Jesus Christ. Chuck Donofrio, the marketing specialist they hired, said, “The sad fact is the name of Jesus Christ has become for many people exclusionary.” The Washington Post reported that the teachings of a Zen master are given equal status with Scripture and Willie Nelson’s “On The Road Again” is one of the “hymns” they sing. Pastor Harry Brunett says, “We’re enabling people to discover God themselves, maybe through Jesus, maybe through Buddha, maybe through any number of ways.”

But Jesus did not say you could choose from a number of ways to get to God. He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” Accepting the lordship of Jesus means accepting that he is in charge: he has the right to rule as Lord, the right to the recognition as THE Lord and the right to carry the responsibility of defining the way to the Father.

In Romans 10:9, Paul wrote:
“…if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Have you grasped what that means? If you do not acknowledge Jesus as your Lord, you will not be saved. If you do not make a declaration of dependence on Jesus, you will never be saved.

Philippians 2:10-11 provides a fitting close to our time this morning: “…at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Sooner or later, everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Some will bow willingly as humble servants of their Lord. Some will bow as defeated enemies of the Lord. But sooner or later, all will bow. Let’s make it willingly. Let’s make it sooner. Let’s make it right now.

INVITATION: #599 – “Jesus is Lord of All”