

## **Homily - The Kingdom of Jesus**

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A few weeks ago I shared that I am reading about the greatest writers and books of the eastern canon. Through 111 chapters I am learning about the writers from China, India, Japan, Korea and finally the middle east. As I read this book about books I am learning a lot about history. There were dynasties that lasted for four and five hundred years, though one history writer from ancient Persia insisted that monarchies really only lasted for three generation. The first generation builds the kingdom, the second generation institutionalizes the new kingdom with processes and rules. And, with the third generation we have the decay of the kingdom. Be that as it may the kingdoms of China, India, Japan and Persia are ancient and often lasted for much longer than this two hundred and forty-five year experiment we have here in the United States. However, if our TV and movie watching habits are any indication we continue to be fascinated by royalty and their kingdoms. And today, based on our Gospel reading I want contrast the kingdoms of this world with the kingdom of Jesus.

Today - as we conclude the season after Pentecost and start the Season of Advent next week - today, we celebrate Christ the King Sunday. In past years on Christ the King Sunday I have preached about the Cosmic Christ. At the beginning of time, Cosmic Christ was the first emanation from God and was the perfect union of spirit and matter. The Christ is throughout all of time and space, and two thousand years ago, perhaps when humanity was finally ready for it, Jesus the perfect union of divine and human was born into the world as a baby boy. These concepts about the Cosmic Christ are not perfect but they have been helpful in my own spiritual journey as I try to understand the Trinity and understand the relationship between Christ and Jesus.

And, this year as we celebrate Christ the King Sunday I want to turn the facet of the gem once again and look at today's Scripture readings in relationship to the Kingdom of Jesus.

A few minutes ago in our Gospel reading we heard, "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.""

As twenty-first century Americans we have trouble with the concept of King. As I said, two-hundred and forty-five years ago we got rid of kings and nobles, and moved forward in our journey to embrace the concept that all men and women are created equal. We certainly fall down on this concept a lot, but still this is the story that we tell about America and the people that we want to be.

And, as we read the Gospels, over and over again Jesus says that he does not want to be king. He does not want to use the powers of God to defend himself and make people obey him. Instead, Jesus wants to lead us into the kingdom of God, a way of living that is life changing for those who embrace it. Notice that I said that the kingdom of God is a way of living, and not just what happens to us after we die.

I am one of those that is convinced that we continue on after death. We continue on in ways that we can scarcely imagine, and we continue on within the embrace and love of God. I think that the kingdom of God includes what happens to us after death, but I also think the kingdom of God is here with us in this life time.

For you see, the kingdom of God is any time we put Jesus at the center of our lives, but sadly, at least in my own life, this is much less frequent than it should be. For me, the ways of the world are what I put at the center of my life.

I want to have more money and stuff.

I want to have people pay more attention to me.

I want to have approval and validation from others.

I want to understand everything and use that understanding to control.

In my life, I let my ego and false-self take over way too frequently, and Jesus takes a back seat to these other needs.

Now, I am sure that some of you recognize yourself in my list of distractions. It may be that like me you are in the grip of your false self, or on the bright side, it may be you recognize the way that you used to be. Some of you have been able to embrace the kingdom of God in this lifetime. Some of you have been able to put Jesus at the center of your life, and you are able to share Jesus with others too. Somehow you increased the frequency of the kingdom of God in your life and the duration as well. I want to follow your example, and the example of the early followers of Jesus back in the first century.

The early church centered itself on Jesus crucified and risen again. It centered itself on the teachings of Jesus. And, like the early church, Jesus must be the foundation and center of our Church and of our lived lives. To our detriment, even in the church we often shift our center to something other than Jesus. We shift to a center on the institution, or human efforts, or wisdom, or knowledge. All of these are important, but we cannot let them be the center of our being. Instead we should be centered on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We must stay true to the kingdom of God rather than the deceptively misleading ways of the kingdoms of this world. Here is a poem about what works and doesn't work in God's kingdom.

Daniel Berrigan is a Jesuit priest and peace activist, and in his 2008 book "The Kings and Their Gods" he shares a poem called "Credo."

"I can only tell you what I believe; I believe:  
I cannot be saved by foreign policies.  
I cannot be saved by the sexual revolution.  
I cannot be saved by the gross national product.  
I cannot be saved by nuclear deterrents.  
I cannot be saved by aldermen, priests, artists,  
plumbers, city planners, social engineers,  
nor by the Vatican,

nor by the World Buddhist Association,  
nor by Hitler, nor by Joan of Arc,  
nor by angels and archangels,  
nor by powers and dominions,  
I can be saved only by Jesus Christ.”

Likewise, we cannot be saved by Joe Biden, by the Republican National Committee, by the Supreme Court, or by the Pentagon. None of these are Jesus.

“My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.””

Jesus knows what he is talking about. We are to follow him into his kingdom, a kingdom that is not like the kingdoms of this world, even though it is in this world. It is a kingdom in which the being of Jesus reigns at the center of our lived lives. It is a kingdom in which love prevails. It is a kingdom in which we let go of our ego and false selves and become the people that God has created us to be. It’s a kingdom in which truth once again prevails.

As we say each week in our Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.”

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Part of this homily is based on or taken from Dan Clendenin’s blog “Journey With Jesus.”