

I might as well start out by admitting that I did not come up with this sermon title myself. I saw it, some time before I moved here, on a flyer for a church, posted at a grocery store, in Clinton, Missouri. Obviously, it stuck with me. Well, it's such an intriguing idea.

Every week, when we say the Lord's Prayer, we have the part “thy kingdom come.” It's part of “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

We are praying for God's kingdom to take place here, on earth. And we are praying that the people here will be doing God's will just like God's will is done in heaven.

So—we're pretty used to the “thy kingdom come” part. It's a good thing to pray for, work for, hope for, anticipate.

But what about the rest “my kingdom go” ? There's a challenge for us!

Not only are we praying for God and God's ways to take over, we are also saying that we need to let go. You know, let go and let God, as they say.

Now, maybe some of you are thinking, “That's silly, I don't have a kingdom. I'm just a regular person. I'm not rich or powerful. I don't wear a crown.”

That's true—none of us are official, royal personages.

But along with whoever wrote up that flyer, I am inclined to agree. Lots of us think we have kingdoms of a sort. Lots of us want to have kingdoms. Maybe we want everything to be the way we want it, under our control.

Maybe we want to be in charge—of the country or of the world, or of our home or workplace or school. Or even the traffic! Wouldn't that be nice!

That's natural, to be sure, it is. The problem is that's not too realistic. We can't control everything. It's not possible—and it wouldn't be fair to other people.

I'm kind of embarrassed to tell you this, but it reminds me of an episode on the cartoon “Rugrats.” Do you know about that cartoon? The little girl on it, Angelica, who is pretty mean and bossy anyway, loved it that her father called her “Princess.” Then she had a bad dream about it. She was a princess, a big fat, fat, fat princess who got everything she wanted, like a cookie every other minute. There were several other things in the dream, too. Anyway, when she woke up, she was happy to find out that it wasn't true, like we do when we waken from a bad dream. She was in her own real life, and she said, “Daddy, please don't call me ‘Princess’ anymore.”

No, we are none of us meant to have kingdoms. We have areas of responsibility; place of pleasure and enjoyment; circles of family and friends. But not kingdoms.

The Kingdom belongs to our Lord, Jesus Christ. Today we are commemorating that on Christ the King Sunday.

And yet, what kind of King is Jesus?

Well, obviously not the kind who that overdoes the cookies.

Also, not the kind of king who is in charge of a country.

That's what Pontius Pilate was worried about, when he had that conversation with Jesus, at the trial. Here is what Pontius Pilate had to say:

“People say he claims to be a king, but when I questioned him about imperial aspirations,” Pilate continued, “he pursued a rather evasive line of response. When asked whether he was a king of the Jews, he asked me whether I had come up with that idea

myself or whether someone else suggested it to me. My response to his impertinence was to clarify our roles in the interrogation. Each time I thought I had obtained a reasonable response, he would divert the conversation in some other direction. He claims that he and his followers have no violent intentions. But I am not at all sure that is the case.”

Pilate ceased speaking once again and stared off into space. This fellow was as cagey as a philosopher. You couldn't get a straight answer out of him to save your life. Instead of confirming or denying that he was a king he babbled some nonsense about his reign taking place somewhere other than this world. Pilate's line of questioning had been intended to entrap Jesus, to get him to admit to imperial aspirations. In that case, he would be making himself a rival to Caesar, and would be guilty of treason and deserving of death. But this claim about an otherworldly kingdom. . .”

(by Michael E. Williams and Dennis E. Smith, Volume 10 of The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible, John)

So, Jesus' kingdom was not of this world. He had no ambitions to take over the government. That had to be a shock to Pontius Pilate, the government official in the case. There's always some nut wanting to take over the government! Even now.

Jesus had something else in mind: truth.

Think about that. The one we claim as Lord and Savior, the one we follow, has truth as a mainstay of his kingdom.

Wow! That's got to be a wonderful kind of king!

Think of what people do the truth all the time—bend it, twist it out of shape. Make up silly words like “truthiness.”

Think of the times someone has lied to you and how infuriating and aggravating that is!

Think of the celebrities caught in a lie who can't do any better than “I'm so sorry that those bad people and things made me do this rotten deed.”

No, with Jesus, the truth is the truth. “The truth of Jesus, the truth of God's reign, is unchanging and always knowable to those who know how to listen for it.” (United Methodist Church on-line worship resource)

What truth?

The truth that God is loving and merciful and caring.

The truth that God wants us to be happy in the best possible way, the right way.

The truth that God wants us to be in relationship with Jesus.

The truth that God wants us to treat one another with love, and respect, and fairness.

That is Jesus' kingdom. It is not a kingdom supported by military might, or power-brokering, or bribery, or any dysfunctional human system. (And we're so good at those, aren't we?)

Jesus' kingdom is marked by the truth, by love, and by power, good power, the righteous divine power which God's Son properly has. This church is part of Jesus' kingdom.

That puts us in our rightful places, too. We aren't kings, we are not queens. We are not in charge of the universe, or even of petty little kingdoms of our own design.

We are God's children, Jesus' followers, and we are the future citizens of heaven, if we'll only accept the gifts Jesus has for us: salvation of our souls; forgiveness of our sins; and eternal life in heaven.

This week, as we stop to give God thanks for our blessings, let's add this one. Let's give thanks that yes, Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus is the King of Kings, reigning lovingly and perfectly.

He is on the heavenly throne. He is asking us to be his loyal and faithful subjects, otherwise known as Christians, so that when this life is over, we can join him in heaven, and pay him our respects as we bow at the foot of his throne.

Amen.

(by Rev. Sally J. DeMasters)