

Not Your Father's (King)

Intro. Since our country took independence from a royal monarchy more than two hundred forty years ago, our usual idea of king is pretty simple: a king of a particular *product* like a burger or a beer. For us, kings seem like an outdated form of government rather than royal and respected people. For Pilate, kings were deadly serious. He worked for one of the most famous – and infamous - in history, Caesar, who would have his head if things got out of control in Jerusalem.

I. There was no love between the Jews and their Roman rulers. Normally Pilate was not interested in the petty, family arguments of the scribes and other Jewish religious leaders. The chief priests and scribes who wanted to be rid of the Lord had to come up with something that would get the civil ruler's

attention. They found a sure thing: *say* the Lord claimed to be “King of the Jews”. Pilate would have to investigate and be sure there wasn't any threat to *his* power and more importantly, *Caesar's* power. Pilate was no dummy. He wondered what scam the scribes and chief priests had dreamed up to use him for their own purpose. The Lord surprised Pilate by asking a question: “Someone told you that I was a king, didn't they?” Pilate got angry and asked what he had done to get in trouble with his own people. They continued to talk past each other about two different kinds of kings and kingdoms. Pilate could not understand the Lord's explanation of a non-earthly kingdom without an army. Sometimes we don't understand what the kingdom means either. In scripture we are told variously that “the kingdom” is coming and also that “the

kingdom” is already here. Some of our experiences tell us that God’s kingdom couldn’t possibly be here and now, not with the hatred people have for each other that culminates in violence and war. Natural disasters and cancers *can’t* be part of God’s kingdom either. Some of the evil in God’s kingdom we have brought ourselves and if we really work at it, maybe we could get that stuff *out of* His kingdom.

It might seem strange to hear about Jesus and Pilate now rather than closer to Easter. It is because of the image of different kings and kingdoms. The Lord is not the usual king with armies which destroy enemies. He is a king who heals and reconciles people with himself and one another *and* who gives his life for his people. That is a **king** worth following.

Concl. We conclude the Church’s liturgical year with reminders of “thy kingdom come” that we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. As Christians we are familiar with the kingdom of heaven as a place we hope to be someday in the future, the *distant future*. But we are also already living in the *kingdom of God*. The kingdom that is coming is not intended to cause us to be fearful because as disciples, we believe and hope in being with the Lord when this world ends. That’s good news. But there is an edge to this belief: we have to “**want to be in that number**” by living in the Kingdom of God **now**. That means seeing *injustice* and *reducing* it, and seeing the *good* and *increasing* it. That, is a **kingdom** worth belonging to.

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