

## Christmas Eve 2010- "A King for Everyone"

When you talk about royalty and kings you associate it with importance, power, and wealth. You also expect that they will have pull where you and I may not. Mel Brooks, in several of his movies says it best when the line goes forth; "It's good to be the King" When King Abdullah of Jordan came to the United States in November for surgery, to New York City, the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, to accommodate him, and for security reasons cancelled the reservations of people who had planned to stay there during the thanksgiving holiday. It obviously made several customers who regularly stay there very unhappy.

A story is told though about a person who tried to take advantage of importance. It seemed there was a very weary and irritated traveler who got off the highway and found himself in a town where there was a special event going on, so that all the hotels were full. He really was weary and resolved not to travel any farther. After about the fourth turn down he came to the final place in the area. He went up to the clerk behind the counter and said, "Please, I've traveled a great distance, you must have something for me, and I'll even pay you double!" "I'm sorry sir", said the clerk. "We are full, we have absolutely nothing." The man looked tired frustrated and angry. At first it looked as if he was going to leave, when he quickly turned around to the clerk, and said "Look, if the president of the united states walked in this place right now, you would have a room for him, WOULDN'T YOU? Caught off guard by that question the clerk replied "Why, ah, yes, we certainly would!" The man shot back "Fine, I'll take his room, he's not coming!"

Not only can it be "good to be the king", it also means that we expect to find royalty in certain kinds of settings with the appropriate royal trappings. For example, Prince William announced his engagement recently. The wedding is to be held at Westminster Abbey.

Where else would we expect it? There will be all sort of high standing folk there, as we would expect. More than likely it will be a lavish affair. If it is any indication, the cost of Prince William's parents wedding, Prince Charles, and Lady Diana in 1981 cost the equivalent of 45 million us dollars!

Appropriately this year, the gospel our church follows in its Sunday/ Saturday worship is Matthew. One of themes of Matthew's gospel is that Jesus is the true king from line of King David. If Jesus is a king we might make certain assumptions. This king should be born to high standing noble parents. He should also be born in high class surroundings "fit for a king". More than likely he would be born in city noted for royalty. Finally the message of his birth would first be told to all those of importance in the court, then to everyone else.

So when we come to the traditional Christmas story as told by Luke, it turns all those assumptions inside out! Mary and Joseph, two of the main characters are really two everyday folks from Nazareth. The only reason they are on the road is fulfill a census that relates to saying we are all familiar; "there is nothing in this world but debt and taxes!"

In fact their own status in their society gets even lower since Mary is ready to deliver a child, and the child's father is not Joseph's! While we all know the prophecy, Bethlehem can't really hold a candle to Jerusalem! When Mary and Joseph get to Bethlehem, no pulling rank here, a barn (stable has been romanticized) A King born here? Then where they lay him( again the word manger has become romanticized) in a feeding trough for animals While certainly heavenly angels announce the birth, it falls on one of the groups on the lower rung of the social ladder; the shepherds ! ! So "it's good to be the king"?

It is if we're talking about God. It is if our hearts are surely warmed each time we hear the wonderful verse from the Bible "For God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten son. "God loves all of us" says St. Augustine, "As if there was only one of us". God's son is not just for one group of people, but for all the people. So that from the "greatest of us to the least of us" he is truly our king, our savior really relating to the human condition answering the contemporary song "What if God was one of us?" Perhaps that is why the shepherds were chosen to announce the news. The powerful have ways of sharing with their own. Shepherds could relate and tell everyone. But is not to obscure the power and awesomeness of his birth! It is the story of Jesus that most humble parts of his life make the most powerful impact. In fact it would be St. Paul, in his letter to the church at Philippi where he declares the following:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God,  
 did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
 by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant,  
 being made in human likeness.  
<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
 he humbled himself  
 by becoming obedient to death—  
 even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
 and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
 to the glory of God the Father.

Think about it; a king whose impact on our lives, is powerfully made with a feeding thorough and a cross !

Martin Luther relates to this night when he says "Let us not flutter too high, but remain by the manger and the swaddling clothes of Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", there a man cannot fail of God, but finds him most certainly"

This is most certainly what Christmas is about. It is the true power, hope and love of this season because Jesus is a king for you and for me.

This truth is highlighted by the following story. A few years back a reporter did a story on an African Country that was going through a terrible time, politically, socially and economically. While he was interviewing a leading person about the desperate plight of his country, the reporter noted that it was close to Christmas. He said to that person; “Your people are in a terrible situation, in fact it looks as if you have nothing. So you probably won’t be celebrating Christmas this year, will you?” The person looked a little amused if not irritated and responded to the reporter “You westerners, you think that Christmas consists of only the material things. Jesus is born, so we most certainly will be celebrating Christmas.”

Last Sunday we had our annual Christmas pageant. We were originally going to use a play, but we found for a number of reasons that it wasn’t going to work out. So we opted for the basic bible story of Jesus birth. With appropriate song it came off wonderfully! One the reasons it did because of the power of the story of Jesus birth that touches all of us.

So tonight, with Holy Spirit’s help forget about the hassle to get gifts this year. Forget about the fact that you forgot to send a card to someone you’re close to. Forget about the party you are going to or have to host. Younger folk, as hard as it is forget about wondering what you’re going to get for Christmas. For surely they are good things surrounding Christmas, but they are not the power and love of Christmas.

Focus on the humble birth of the King of Kings, and as we light the candles, moving from darkness to light, know that his light, as St’ John so wonderfully tells us can burn brightly in your life and it will never be dark for you again.

A hymn says it best

*.Heaven’s arches rang when the angels sang,  
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;  
But of lowly birth didst Thou come to earth,  
And in great humility.*

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,  
There is room in my heart for Thee!*

A King for everyone. A King for you and me.

Amen.