

The king of an African tribe, after many years, faced the fact that his throne was wearing out. It was repaired a couple of times, but eventually collapsed and was replaced with a new one. The king, for sentimental reasons, hated to part with his old throne. So it was hoisted on ropes to the ceiling of his grass hut and stored there. Then one night during a storm, the throne fell down and hit the king on the head. The moral of the story is that people who live in grass houses shouldn't stow thrones.

We talk about kings and kingdoms today. This is one of the newer church observances. The last Sunday after Pentecost, before we launch into the new church year and Advent, on this last Sunday we celebrate Christ the King.

There is something grand and glorious about the festival. We spend a lot of time talking about Jesus as meek and humble through the church year, **but today unashamed we see our Savior as a king.**

Jesus said, *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne."*

The New Testament is full of the analogy of kings and kingdoms and yet, *that isn't very relevant to us in the United States who have never known anything except a congress and an elected president.*

However, those who were around Jesus didn't seem to understand his claims of kingdoms and kingship then either. They thought he meant a political king who would drive the Romans out of Jerusalem. When he fed the crowds, the Scripture says that they wanted to make him king. **He explained repeatedly with his parables what his kingdom was really like.**

Richard Roberts tells of a student of Tolstoy who was hauled into court for refusing military service. When he defended himself by quoting from the Gospels, the judge impatiently said, *"But that is the Kingdom of Heaven; and it has not yet come."* The student replied, *"Sir, it may not have come for you, but it has for me."* **Today's Scripture tells us about the King and his Kingdom and how BOTH HAVE COME TO US!**

In the Gospel from Matthew begins by telling of the King on his throne separating sheep and goats, and then we have the words, *"Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'"* (Matthew 25:34-36).

There is a bold and frightening lesson in this parable: *God will judge us by seeing how we react to human need. God's judgment does not depend on how much we learn, or how popular we are, or how regular we are in our church attendance, or how much money we have saved, but on how much help we have given to those who need it.*

We have the promise here that it is help which we give to others and which we don't even realize or calculate. **Notice that in this story, they hadn't realized that they had helped.** *"... Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee ..."* When we have Jesus Christ as our King, and he is on the throne of our earthly lives, we will make automatic responses to others' needs. For subjects of Christ the King, it is the natural thing to do. In Book **I of The Harbor**, Ernest Poole writes: *"Though (my mother) was a strong church woman, I heard little from her of the terrors of hell. But I heard much of heaven, and more still of a heaven on earth. 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' I can never forget how she spoke those words as I knelt and repeated them after her - not so much in the tone of a prayer to a higher being, as in one of quiet resolve to herself. To do her share, through church and hospitals and charity work and the bringing up of her children, her share in the establishment of a heaven upon earth, this was her religion."*

Out of an overflow of our hearts we just must help. With no thought of reward or merit or "brownie points" with anyone, we want to do the deed. In concert with the heart of our king, we respond, instinctively we help.

Be sure, not all religions are about "giving a buck to a beggar" or "doing some charity." But such charity coming out of love of Christ and is an essential act, *without such acts of love, faith dries up and dies.*

It is a beautiful thing when you and I have a heart that can be touched and that is sensitive and compassionate.

If you are one who brags about being "self-made" and "shrewd" and never being taken advantage of, you may have the wrong king on the throne. Often our little bit of response is for the wrong reason. It can be selfish motivation that moves us to help and thus receive the praise and thanks. We have manipulated our own ego trip. **That isn't the way it is for those in Christ the King's kingdom.** We're tender-hearted subjects who must respond to needs of people. That means we respond to all sorts of *people who need us.*

There is something else here. Notice we aren't asked to do the grand, dramatic thing, but rather the little everyday help. A cup of water, or something to eat, some clothing, visitation of the ill, going to see someone in prison - these are the deeds that count in the kingdom of Christ. Jesus, in telling this parable, wanted us to know that the little spontaneous, loving gestures are the ones that are significant. We so often make the mistake of thinking in terms of gifts of a thousand dollars or large endowments or spectacular work or contribution: **Those surely help in the kingdom, but we must always look for the opportunity to respond to the simple, human we meet each day who is in need of help.**

AND WHEN WE CHOOSE TO "HELP" WE THEN HEAR OUR KING ANSWER... ***'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'*** " (Matthew 25:40). That's a real surprise, isn't it? That our King says that when we help someone, we are also helping him; ***and when we refuse to help, we are refusing none less than the King!*** Consider again, with this additional information, you're saying a hard "no" to the last appeal that your church made to you for help and support. It seems odd. Yet, it is so, isn't it? ***God is saying, if you give something to my son, you have given to me. If you refuse my children, you have refused me. Our God is the Father, and when we help his children, we help him. His children are our fellow neighbors in need.***

William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible on Matthew **tells of two men who found this parable "blessedly true."** "The one was **Francis of Assisi**; he was rich and wealthy and he was high-born and he was high-spirited, but not happy. He felt that life was incomplete. Then one day he was riding, and he met a leper, loathsome and repulsive in the ugliness of his disease. Something moved Francis to dismount and fling his arms around this wretched sufferer; ***and, lo, in his arms the face of the leper changed to the face of the Christ.***"

"The other was **Martin of Tours**. He was ***a Roman soldier, and a Christian***. One cold winter day, as he was entering a city, a beggar asked him for help. Martin had no money, but the beggar was blue and shivering with cold, and **Martin gave him what he had**. He took off his soldier's coat, worn and frayed as it was; he cut it in two and gave half of it to the beggarman. **That night he had a dream.** *In it he saw the heavenly places and all the angels and Jesus in the midst of them; and Jesus was wearing one-half of a Roman soldier's cloak.* One of the angels said to Him, ***'Master, why are you wearing the battered old cloak? Who gave it to you?'*** Jesus answered softly, ***'My servant Martin gave it to me.'***"

Christ is indeed king, but like some fabled ruler, he walks through the streets in beggar's clothing.

There is a joy in giving the simplest things to people who are need, because we soon have the joy of helping our King. What a glorious picture Jesus gives to us. He tells us to respond if we are really his subjects, and he is our King. He tells us we indeed do have a king, that God rules, He is in control. He is on the throne, and we need not be afraid. And the promise is ... **"but the righteous into eternal life"** (Matthew 25:46).

So, we have from our King a promise of eternal life. A life not so much by duration, but rather, by quality. It is a new, rewarding fulfilling life in the kingdom of our King.

When we help the unfortunate, we help Christ. It is often the simplest things that our King asks us to do...HELP OTHERS. ***We are judged by the help we give to our fellow Neighbor. Christ is indeed on the throne and our King.***

One Palm Sunday in the city of Florence, 450 years ago, Savonarola was preaching to a great multitude. Suddenly, in the middle of his Speech he cried aloud: ***"It is the Lord's will to give a new head to this city of Florence."*** For a moment he paused, keeping the people in suspense, and then he went on: ***"The new head is Christ! Christ seeks to become your King."*** And with that the whole multitude were on their feet, shouting: ***"Long live Jesus, King of Florence!"***

JESUS IS "KING OF KINGS, & "LORD OR LORDS." AND HE WILL LEAD US WHERE WE NEED TO GO.

FOLLOW HIM AND CARE FOR OTHERS AND YOU WILL FIND TRUE "JOY" IN YOUR LIFE. AMEN.