

## I CONFER A KINGDOM ON YOU

(Jesus tells his apostles that he is bestowing a kingdom upon them.  
What did that mean to them? And what does it mean for us?)

Some things to think about.

- 1) “I gave my back to those who beat me, my face to those who plucked my beard. I did not shield myself from blows or spittle. I set my face like flint.” That is the Suffering servant Isaiah the Prophet speaking but he is referencing the One who is to come. Jesus of Nazareth. Despite what comes. Despite how bad things sometimes get make a choice to set your face like flint and endure, persevere, persist. Jesus did. He received the necessary grace; so will we.
- 2) Jesus did not cling to his divinity or clutch it to himself. He knew who he was. He emptied himself and allowed himself to be emptied out as a human being even to the point of a cruel, unfair death. Because of this God greatly exalted him. We humans lifted him high on a cross. His father lifted him from the grave to a place on his right side in the Kingdom. God notices our suffering and will lift us up.
- 3) Jesus said: I have desired to eat this Passover with you. This is my body given for you and the cup of the covenant in my blood, for you. I confer a kingdom on you. What does that mean? I confer on you a way of life. I confer on you the grace to be able to live as we live in my Father’s house, in his kingdom. Jesus models it for us and shows us how to live it in every kind of circumstance. He invites us to live it which we can only do if we truly believe we can, truly believe we will be given the grace we need.
- 4) Pilate released Barabbas and turned Jesus over to be dealt with as they wished. What is the Barabbas story all about? Why is this bit player, this bad guy even mentioned in this gospel account? He was a bad guy. Thief. Murderer. And he goes off Scott free. Yes, he does. Imagine such a sinner going off completely free. What’s that about? Who does he represent? Me. And perhaps you. With all the sins I have committed in my long life, I can honestly say that I believe that Jesus has just set me free like Barabbas too. Barabbas didn’t even say he was sorry. But we are asked to do precisely that. Only then can we experience the true freedom that only Jesus brings. It is truth that sets us free. And Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His freedom is real.

5) Jesus enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds and triumph and adulation. Many believe he is the long awaited messiah. Others see him only as a threat to their way of life. So the excitement, anticipation and hope is overwhelmed by betrayal, false accusation and condemnation, a kangaroo Court, physical violence and ultimately a horrendous death. In the space of a few days a crushing defeat, dashed hopes, bitter despair at the triumph of corrupt leaders and powerful politicians.

But it does not end there. There was something about him, something about Jesus, something about the way he lived, something about the way he spoke, something about what he taught, something about his healings and miraculous deeds, something about his inner calm and his authority but most of all something about his humility, his love, his mercy, his forgiveness that could not be snuffed out—not by sin and not even by death.

6) He was love. He is love and Love is stronger than death. That is what Jesus will ultimately reveal. That is what he offers. That is the kingdom he confers. And this love is not part of what we call a zero sum game. A zero sum game approach to life begins with the premise that all resources available to us as human beings are in limited supply. Including love. So if I use up some of my resources for you then there are fewer resources left for someone else to use. In the areas of relationships it means that there is only so much love to go around. If I give some of my love to this person then there will be less of my love to give to you. This sets up a kind of competition for love.

7) What Jesus reveals though is that love is not such a limited reality. Actually of love the opposite is true. The more you give your love away the more love you have. In the giving there is also an increase. There is always enough love. There will always be enough love to go around. The question then is whether you and I believe that. And if we do believe that will we start living like that? You see, that too is the kingdom that has been conferred. It is a mindset, a way of life, a way of seeing things that influences every aspect of our lives. That is the gift. That is the truth that liberates. That is what Jesus attests too before Pilate and the Chief Priests.

8) That is who Jesus is. The question this Palm Sunday is this: Given all of what I have just spoken about, where does Jesus figure in your daily life, your family life, your work life? He has stretched out his arms wide as he was nailed to the cross to show the extent of his love—and its power. Can he count on us? On me? On you?