

Daniel Waldschmidt – St. John’s Burlington – 11/20/2016

It’s always an important thing when world rulers meet. You remember the pictures of FDR sitting next Winston Churchill. Well, today in our Gospel we see two rulers meeting. One is a ruler of this world, Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, and the other is a King from another world: Jesus Christ. And today we get to listen in on this conversation between two rulers. Jesus tells Pilate about a kingdom from another world.

Today we’ll look at this kingdom’s 1. Its Ruler, 2. Its Realm, and 3. Its citizens.

First, its Ruler. The Gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus is from heaven. In John 8:23 Jesus said, **“I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”** Jesus came from heaven into this world. Why did he do that? Well, here in John 18 Jesus is at the beginning of his suffering. We say in the Creed that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate. Jesus came into this world to suffer and die for our sins.

In our text Pilate was interrogating Jesus to find out if Jesus was a threat to the Roman government. **Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (John 18:33)** The Jews did not like it that the Romans were ruling over them. The Jews thought, “This is the Promised Land. A foreign government shouldn’t be ruling over us!” And so there were always uprisings among the Jews, trying to kick the Romans out. So when the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate and said, “This man claims to be the King of the Jews, Pilate had to interrogate Jesus to find out if he was a threat to the Roman government.”

How did Pilate know that Jesus was no threat to the Roman government? Well, Pilate had seen one or two rebels before. Rebels usually don’t get beaten by their own people. But Jesus was beaten by his own people. Pilate says to Jesus, **“Your own people and your own chief priests handed you over to me.”**

Pilate was also amazed that Jesus was just letting this all happen to him. The Bible says that Pilate was amazed when the chief priests were accusing Jesus and Jesus never protested or said anything in his defense. Jesus was letting this all happen to him. Why? Because he was submitting to God’s plan, that he would be crucified for your sins and mine.

Jesus is a King who dies for his people. The sign above his head on the cross said, “Jesus of Nazareth: The King of the Jews” and that was very appropriate because Jesus is functioning as king most of all when he dies on the cross to take away all of our sins. Jesus is a King who bought us with his own blood. Luther said in the explanation to the Second article of the Creed: “He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death, all this he did that I should be his own and live under him in kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”

Jesus often talked about the kingdom of God, but his kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. Jesus says, **“My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:34)** The realm of Jesus’ kingdom does not have a geographical place. Jesus’ kingdom does not try to topple earthly kingdoms. In fact, Jesus told his contemporaries to pay their taxes. He said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.” The Bible says in Romans 13 that we should respect the governing authorities. The Bible tells Christians to be good and respectful citizens.

Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. When you believe the Gospel, Jesus rules in your heart and gives you spiritual life and peace.

Jesus came from heaven to tell us the truth about his Father. He says "I came to testify to the truth." And everyone who believes Jesus' words are on the side of truth. Jesus said to Pilate: **"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."** The citizens of Jesus' kingdom are everyone who believe his words.

You hold a dual citizenship. You are citizens of the United States and you are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. You are citizens of the United States because you were born in the United States. But in order to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, you had to be born again. Jesus said in John chapter 3. **"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."** ⁴ **"How can someone be born when they are old?"** Nicodemus asked. **"Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"** ⁵ Jesus answered, **"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.** You became citizens of Jesus' kingdom when you were born again of water and the Spirit in baptism.

The Greek word that is translated born again can also mean "born from above." So just like the King is not of this world also you are not of this world. That's why the Bible says you are "foreigners and exiles" in this world. Philippians 3:21 says: "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Jesus said that believers are in the world but not of the world. As those who have a dual citizenship we Christians want to be good citizens of this world, but we also want to keep in mind that our ultimate and real citizenship is with our King in heaven.

Just yesterday I was reading a book that said, "Christians are like people are swimming with their heads above water and their eyes on the shore." Just like the swimmer is in the water, we are in the world and we want to do good in the world. But just like the swimmer has his head above water and has his eyes on the shore, we also have our eyes on the shore, because we know that our King is heaven and we know that we are going there too. Amen.