

Whether it's Mel Brooks playing Louis XIV in History of the World Part I

Or Simba telling his guardian Zazu in The Lion King

One can't wait to be, or it's good to be, the king.

Why is that? What is it about royalty that fascinates us?

### Is it the wealth?

Royalty usually has the fringe benefit of lots of cash. But, not always. I think it may depend on the time of the year. If spring is the time when kings go to battle, there's probably a lot more going out of the treasury than coming in then.

Perhaps it's best to be king in the winter when you have a bunch of gold socked away.

### Is it the sex?

It's difficult to say no to the Handsome Dude on the Throne. . . . especially if you're a poor woman. If you're a wealthy woman, you may be used as bait to get your family into the royal court. Just ask Anne Boleyn and her sister Mary.

Having his way with Bathsheba certainly was a benefit from King David's perspective. Maybe not so much for Bathsheba. The encounter came with horrible consequences.

## Is it the star power?

There must be something to that. British Royal weddings seem to bring out the television audiences as much as a championship sporting event. You don't have to be the heir apparent to garner world-wide attention. Of course, it helps if you are marrying an American movie star.

Did you notice? These three benefits of being "the king" are the same benefits Anne listed last week, in her sermon about King Herod, as the American Desire: Affluence, Attractiveness, and Achievement. It appears we all think it's good to be king.

So, with all these inherent perks afforded those with royal titles, why did Jesus flee from the crowds when he discerned that they sought to make him King?

Good question.

(what do you think?)

I think that Jesus knew that kingship came with specific requirements that he didn't want to deal with. Royalty rarely associates with anyone else but royalty. Jesus preferred to be with everyday people. He needed people to tell stories to and weddings to go to and villages to visit. Can't do that when you're busy holding court.

As king, he would be under the influences of the Temple authorities. That wouldn't do. Jesus needed to challenge the Temple authorities. In short, being king would radically change and hinder Jesus' ministry. Being king would prevent Jesus from teaching his followers what the reign of God means. Bottom line: Jesus knew his mission and ministry and nothing, even the glamour and glitter of being royal, was going to distract him from it.

Jesus' message to his disciples is that Yahweh is Sovereign. Israel wanted a king. God didn't want Israel to have a king. Israel insisted. God relented. The rest is history: Saul implodes, David (literally) screws up, and Solomon builds a temple that eventually falls.

Jesus teaches that the reign of God looks like hungry people being fed. He demonstrates that abundance comes from God's hands and we are the ones he asks to distribute it. It is not about a ruling elite gobbling up resources that should be shared with all of God's people.

Jesus used his power to comfort his disciples in a storm and supernaturally delivered them to the shore. David used his power to cover his mistakes by putting his general to death. (More about that next week.)

As followers of Jesus, what do we see when we compare our lives to the reigns of earthly kings versus the reign of God? Are we jealous of the Affluence, Abundance, and Achievement of David? Do we lean toward the words of Rabbi Jesus? Maybe we're somewhere in between.

When I think about David and his contemporaries, I realize that problems arise when their earthly powers made them forget that they were accountable to someone higher than themselves. Jesus never forgets that.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus remembers that his Abba wants time with him; wants to hear his prayers. The Incarnate Word is of one substance with the Father at the same time Jesus defers to the Father.

The knowledge that you belong to God carries its own power. When that is solidly in your psyche, there is no need for outward trappings. Knowing he belonged to his Abba freed Jesus to walk and talk with the people who needed him most. He didn't need to create an entourage, the way David or Herod might; the entourage just happened.

It happened because Jesus was authentic in his love for the people who ached to hear his teachings, be healed by his touch, or be fed by the works of his power. His compassion drew the crowds to him. Jesus didn't have to order people to follow him; they wanted to follow him. True power is found in humility and compassion. Jesus used his kingly power to further God's reign not to enhance his own image. But, if the crowd had made him a king in the image of David or Solomon, he may not have been able to escape the system in which power always corrupts.

Think about the people who fill up our print and broadcast news. Who are the people you admire? Do they fashion themselves more like David or more like Jesus? Who do you prefer to see and hear? For whom would you travel to hear speak? Why?

Now, think about the people who aren't prominent on the local or world stage, but who are a part of your life. Who are the ones who need to create their entourage? Who naturally has people following them around. Who uses their power for good? Who doesn't? Who are you most drawn to and what does that reveal to you about them and about yourself?

It may be good to be the king, but it's even better to be in the service of the King of Kings. Following Jesus in humble service will attract others to faith. Our power of faith, in attracting other to join us in our journey, is the first step to healing ourselves and our world.

Amen.