



I think for Pilate, Jesus is just a nuisance. For the Scribes and Pharisees, the leaders of the Jews, Jesus is seen as a real threat. He is claiming to be the Son of God, and, in their minds, that is blasphemy and Jesus is a threat to their religion. Their hearts are so closed to the truth of it, their minds are so stifled with their own idea of religion, that they simply are unable to see God standing before them.

But Pilate is not concerned with spiritual realities. Pilate is the Roman Governor of Judea. All he cares about is Roman rule, Roman order and so he must make sure that Jesus is not a threat to the Empire, someone who is claiming to be an authority against Rome.

So, he asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” But Jesus does not answer Pilate directly because Pilate just won’t get it. If He says “yes” then Pilate and everyone else will think that Jesus came to take earthly political power over Israel. If He says “no” then He would be lying because He is the King of the Jews — and Jesus cannot lie because He is the truth.

And so we have the key line in the Gospel passage. Jesus then says, “My Kingdom does not belong to this world.” Jesus is a King. Not an earthly, political king, but the King of life, the King of holiness, the King of justice, love, and truth, the King of our hearts and souls, the King of the universe. His Kingdom does not belong to this world.

We certainly would call Jesus our King. We certainly would name ourselves among His subjects. But let’s talk about what that really means.

If we are subjects of Jesus the King and His Kingdom does not belong to this world, then we belong to a Kingdom that does not belong to this world.

What does that mean for us?

It means that nothing in this world should become our be all and end all. It means that from nothing in this world should we expect perfect happiness, perfect fulfillment; not from a new house, not from a car, not even from our spouse or our family.

Don't we say to ourselves sometimes:

“If I just had a new house then I'd be happy.”

“If my spouse were just this way instead of that way, then I'd be happy.”

“If my kids weren't so ‘whatever’ then I'd be happy.”

“If I had perfect health, then I would be happy.”

“If I had a perfect body, then I'd be happy.”

When we do that we are chasing after fantasies. When we do that we are trying to make ourselves subjects of this world. But Jesus' Kingdom does not belong to this world. It is in His Kingdom that we can expect perfect happiness and fulfillment.

So while we are here, we use the things of this world to prepare us to be permanent residents of the heavenly Kingdom. We understand that the house we live in is a gift from God to be used with gratitude as we make our pilgrim way to heaven.

You love and cherish your spouse now as a gift from God to be a partner and helpmate on the road to holiness. If you should lose your spouse, as difficult and painful as it is because of your love for them, keep your eyes on your Kingdom, which is not in this world, but the next.

God wants us to be happy, but remember that nothing in this world was designed to give us perfect happiness. Only in God's Kingdom will we have perfect happiness because only God Himself can make us perfectly happy. That's what we were designed for.

We say that Jesus is our King. His Kingdom belongs to another world and so we too belong to another world. We are given gifts in this world, not as a be all and end all to perfect happiness, but to help us on our pilgrim journey to eternal happiness in Christ's Kingdom.

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, 2009**