

## **(162) THE KINGDOM OF JESUS,**

**OR**

### **THE COUNTRY, THE LAND OF FREEDOM AND LIFE**

1. Jesus whom we recognize as Christ, our saviour, is king. We mostly only think about him as the martyr, who suffered and who gives, in the fellowship with him, joining in with him, to be freed of the mechanisms of this world. Several old confessions of faith, in which the churches tried to describe who Jesus was, distinguished three aspects in his work: He was prophet, priest and king. The gospel knew already about his kingship: He was a descendant of David. The magi asked for the king. Time and again Jesus being the king comes back in the gospels, although in the same time it is clear that people did not know what to think about it. The Eastern Orthodox Church knows, much better than the Western churches, that Jesus really is Pantokrator, the ruler over everybody and everything. This is not the Kingdom of God, which will come when this old world will pass by. Jesus is king now, this old world still going on. The same atmosphere of mystery which is in the gospels when it is about Jesus' kingship is still there. And nevertheless, he who "won" over this world, who brought his own world, he must be king, not although but just because he refused to be the king of the old world of culture (Matth. 4, 8 – 10).

2. Jesus, the king of the world, is everywhere in this world. The old world of culture and his kingdom are everywhere co-existent. Where this world is, he is there too. There is not a place in this world, however god-forsaken, however horrible, where he is not. Lutheran theology learns that the risen Christ is ubiquitous, that he really is everywhere. He is, as the risen Christ, not defined by time and place. He is outside of these cultural categories. Consequently he always is everywhere. His reality and his work are always around us. We are immersed in them. He is not only in our heart and in the heart of some others, as long as we remember him, "believe" in him. We are all together moving in the space which is filled by him, in the world of his reality. We live, we move and exist in him (Acts 17, 28). Where he, the king is, is his kingdom. Where ever we are, it is around and in us.

3. Thus the reality we live in always and inextricable is a mixture of two worlds. There is, very visible and powerful, the "old" world, the world of culture, of the mimesis of desire, with all its mechanisms, strivings, compulsions, heights and depths, with its justices and injustices, its niceties and cruelties, its successes and disasters. Interwoven through it, through all that, invisible but finally more real, there is the world of Jesus, of Christ, there is Christ as the king, who takes, time and again, this old world out of its hinges.

4. Jesus always is already there, in all the situations we live in and come into in. He always is there before us. In all our meetings with others, in all circumstances, in our family, our work, in difficulties, in conflicts, in tribulations, when we are ill or dying, he is there, silently and effectively. He always is earlier than we are. He is always around, in between us, triangulating all relationships in his manner.

5. We can trust on the presence of Jesus as the king and when we trust we experience that it is true, that he really is king. We can experience it, time and again, with people from all

over the world, whom we don't know, but with whom we are together as soon as his name is mentioned. In the very moment he proves to be the bond, the reality who binds together. The mentioning of his name founds the reality of his kingdom. We experience it when we really trust him when we are together with people, when we are working with people in difficult situations, when we come into danger and fear. Our trust shows us, makes it clear to us that this kingdom is a reality.

6. When he is with us in his kingship, we are brought into his world, into his realm. Amidst of the havoc, the tribulations and fears of this old world we experience to live in a new one, which does not come by winning over the old world, pushing the old world to the backside of this new world, but which comes, pushing the old world, although still visible and in a sense still real, into oblivion, as if it never really existed at all, never had any power over us.

7. In this world of Jesus' kingship there is peace, which fills our hearts and fulfils our lives, which is given and not conquered in any manner. There is freedom, which gives us the possibility to move around freely, to be freely with everybody, however they think about and act against us, a freedom which is not paid for by the slavery of others. There is joy, which expands life, which has nothing to do with the joy of this old world, in which we drive everything out what threatens us, a joy which has nothing to do with success and remains with us even when the cultural circumstances are not joyful at all.

8. In this kingdom of Jesus, of Christ, everything is "simple", is one-fold. It only has one side, life itself, life and abundance. In culture everything is duplex, two-folded. Everything has a visible, a front-side, and an invisible, a back-side. The whole of culture is built on this division in two sides, from the very beginning on, when the community stood opposite of the scapegoat. Here is the origin of the duplicity of everything in culture. This duality, this ambivalence, is gone in the kingdom of Jesus. In his kingdom nobody any longer is thorn, as we all are in the old culture. Nobody any longer has "two sides". In the kingdom of Jesus, with him, we are simple, one-fold.

9. Because we are, in his presence, in his kingdom, out of, away from the mimesis of desire, not any longer thorn, the consequences of the mimesis of desire are not any longer there. There are no accidents, there is no illness, there is no death. There is no danger. We can move around freely, without any fears, because there are no longer threats. Relationships are healed and, consequently, bodies very often are healed. In the end we die, but death has lost its sting. It has become dying with him, the king, being with him in his resurrection.

10. The mimesis of desire has gone. Thus all the differences, which were culturally necessary because of this mimesis, have gone. As a consequence relationships are not any longer incarcerated by cultural rules. As a consequence for our experience all relationships turn upside down. Maria is singing about this (Luke 1, 47 – 55). The Beatitudes (Matth. 5, 3 – 12) say it in a very clear manner. The theme is repeated in the gospels time and again. This is not a repetition of the old structure, only the other way round, as so often is thought. That again would be culture, another consequence of the mimesis of desire. Instead of the cultural differences come the real ones between people, giving each of them their own place. That place has to do with realities which do not count in culture: With suffering, humility, wisdom, which we recognize in the kingdom of Jesus, which make us humble and, maybe,

even wise. We find these relationships in the fellowship with Jesus, who of course and in fact was already this king in his earthly existence.

11. Knowing about this kingdom, with our very being, with the whole of our existence, we are really safe in this old world of culture. We can live in peace, in the midst of turmoil around us. We are safe at home, in our family, on the street, in our work, amidst of enemies. We are safe, doing our work, with people, in groups, where ever. In all this we know that we are moving around in Jesus' kingdom and thus we are "certain (...) [that] neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing [or human being], can ever come between us and the love of God (...) [which is a reality] in Christ Jesus our Lord [who, as our king, is always amongst and amidst of us]." (Rom. 8, 38 – 39 Jeruz.Bible; changed). We are safe, everywhere and thus can be safe, free and in peace, where ever and with whom ever we are.

Hengelo, 20.12.93

Roel Kaptein