

Christ the King, and Thanksgiving Last Epiphany 2015

I'm intrigued by Pilate, because he is so much like me. He likes the current order. He works well with headquarters. He keeps up a neat and orderly appearance.

He has fine robes for ceremonial occasions. He works to conserve wealth, position, social respect. He likes to go home for dinner and didn't want to be bothered too much by troublemakers.

Today, in the tradition, is the Sunday of Christ the King. Pilate is the *apparent* king. He has the political and military power. He has the palace. He wants to know if Jesus is a competing king. "Are you like David, King of the Jews?" he asks. He knew David had a palace and an army. He'd heard about the Palm Sunday demonstration, and all the people waving palms. He wants to know if Jesus is a threat.

Jesus answers the question with a question: "Do you ask on your own; or did others say this?" Pilate says, "I'm not a Jew. What do I know about how your people work?... What have you done?" Jesus said "I came to give witness to the truth." Pilate, half serious and half in jest, asks "And what is truth?"

They aren't connecting at all. They can look at the same thing: what it is to be a king, what it is to have and share power, and *not see the same thing*. Pilate shrugs and says "So, are you a king?" He finally says, "I find no case against the man." He wants to release him, and go home for dinner. "Do away with him."

You and I know the subsequent history. The Romans did away w. Jesus. But his presence didn't disappear. Christ rose when his followers broke bread in the evening, or in the morning after a long night working. He was present when his followers and their friends gathered- frightened- behind doors, when they gathered to talk and pray about what really matters, WHO really matters. Jesus was present, perhaps not at first recognized, when they re-told their stories, remembered who held and guided them then, and holds and guides now.

I was on a weeklong directed a retreat at the beginning of the month. The leader once gave this exercise: write down 72 names of people you are grateful for. With others present, I rolled my eyeballs and thought that'll take me all day. He anticipated our response and said, "Go back to periods of your life, and start writing down a few names." I won't ask you to do it now; but try it some time. I remembered my grandmother letting go my hand on the curb of a sidewalk as we were about to cross a street and saying, "Now I'm *not* going to hold your hand. Look both ways."

I remember a man named Marty Kapp, who as part of a sailing class, had us, one at a time, let our boats tip over- so that we wouldn't be afraid of capsizing.

I remember a man, who - when I was distressed in college and went to him for counsel, picked up his binoculars and said- "Let's go for a walk along the shore."

And so on. The names and occasions kept flowing.

For whom are you thankful? Do you give yourself the time and place to express that gratitude? It does take a time and place....and practice. I don't think I could have stopped on a Tuesday morning, and asked, "For whom am I thankful?" and had much of a response. I'd be too pre-occupied by the rush of events. For whom are you thankful? What times and places give you opportunity to realize for whom you are thankful?

What we do here on Sunday morning- in the breaking of the bread, our prayers, in telling our stories, creates such a time and place. It's not the only time and place, but it's the primary one when Jesus and his Spirit may be present. I can let go of being Pilate, the wanna be king, Pilate the pre-occupied manager- tired Pilate who just wants to go home for dinner. Here, I can come alive, and be grateful, and express my gratitude. Here I can know the real king, Christ, my creator, savior, and companion. Glory to God, who working in us and with us, gives us more than we can ask or imagine.