

“My kingdom does not belong to this world!”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, Mark Twain wrote a book called, “*The Prince and the Pauper.*” It concerns two boys born in England on the same day.

One boy was born to the royal family, direct heir to the throne. He was given the title, Prince of Wales and, eventually, became King Edward the VI. Commenting on his birth, Twain says:

**“England had so longed for him, and hoped for him, and prayed to God for him –that, now that he was really come, the people went nearly mad for joy....
Everybody took a holiday, the high & low, rich & poor, feasted and danced and sang.”**

As I mentioned, on the same day that the prince was born to the royal family in the palace of London, another boy was born –to a poor family in the slums of London. He was given the name Tom Canty, and, eventually, became a beggar-boy. Commenting on his birth, Twain says:

**“He was an un-wanted boy. Nobody longed for him; nobody hoped for him. Nobody prayed to God for him. And, now that he was come into the world...
nobody holidayed, nobody feasted, nobody danced, and nobody sang.”**

Both boys grew up in totally different surroundings. Both boys grew up with totally different views of the world. **BUT**, one thing about them was totally the same. Both grew up with the same freshness, the same boldness, the same ‘sparkle,’ the same enthusiasm that one finds in all boys on the verge of entering adolescence.

Well –that’s the ‘set up,’ because one day Tom Canty found himself outside the gates of the royal palace. He was awestruck by its beauty. As he edged closer to the gates to get a better look at the palace, the royal guards charged him and brutally threw him to the ground.

The young prince happened to see the incident and came running to Tom’s defense. Then, to the consternation of the guards, the prince invited Tom to visit his royal quarters.

Tom was absolutely flabbergasted. He’d never seen anything like this before. And the prince was charmed by the spontaneity and genuineness of his new friend.

Then something unusual and unexpected happened. As the prince was showing Tom the huge mirror in his room, the two boys couldn’t believe what they saw in the mirror.

Except for Tom’s rags and dirty face, he was a perfect look-alike of the prince. Amazed by their similar appearance, the prince said to Tom:

“Thou hast the same hair, same eyes, same voice, same form & face that I bear. Fared we forth naked, there is none could say which was you and which was the Prince of Wales.”

The two boys were practically identical twins!

Then, as you may suspect, they both got the same idea. Wouldn’t it be fun to switch places and play a trick on everybody? So, the prince put on Tom’s beggar-clothes and wandered off through the slums of London, rubbing elbows with the poor and exploited.

Meanwhile, Tom put on the prince’s clothes and rubbed elbows with the rich and famous.

After a while, the boys tired of their game. The prince returned to the palace and tried to enter. But the guards seized him. When he refused to go away, they threw him into the palace prison. No amount of persuasion would convince them that he was really the Prince of Wales.

Even Tom’s attempts to straighten things out failed.

To make a long story short, the situation finally got ironed out. But something important happened in the process.

As a result of his experience, the prince learned, firsthand, what it meant to be poor, to be treated badly, and to be oppressed by those in authority.

The prince, eventually, became king and was one of the most merciful, understanding, compassionate, and best-loved kings ever to reign on the throne of England.

I share that story of The Prince and the Pauper with you for an important reason.

“What, exactly, is that important reason?” you ask.
Well—I am glad you asked that question!

It is because the story of The Prince and the Pauper is NOT unlike the story of Jesus Christ and... each of us!

You see, actually, we are the beggar-boy; Jesus is the prince, destined to become the king of all creation!

Jesus switched places with us. He exchanged the royal robes of his divinity for our tattered rags of humanity.

UN-like the prince in Twain’s story, Jesus did something infinitely more:

1. He died at the hands of his own subjects.
2. He rose from the dead, and
3. He now reigns as king of heaven and earth.

We celebrate this great mystery today on the **Feast of Christ the King**. We celebrate the fact that Jesus, king of heaven and earth, understands our ‘situation/humanity.’ He became one of us and experienced, firsthand, what we experience. He did more; he suffered and died for us.

So-o, on this **Feast of Christ the King**, it is appropriate for me to turn and point to that crucifix above that altar and say:

“My brothers and sisters, take a long, hard look.
That... man... died... for you!”

And it is appropriate for you to respond by asking yourself three questions:

- 1. “What have I done for that man in the past?”**
- 2. What am I doing for him right now?”**
- 3. What will I do for him in the future?”**

May the Almighty, Tri-une God ... our Abba, bless you
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen