



Reflection Guide for April 1, 2018

Act 4 / CHRIST: The Coming of the King

Suppose there was a king who loved a humble maiden. The king was like no other king. Every statesman trembled before his power. No one dared breathe a word against him, for he had the strength to crush all opponents.

And yet this mighty king was melted by love for a humble maiden who lived in a poor village in his kingdom. How could he declare his love for her? In an odd sort of way, his kingliness tied his hands. If he brought her to the palace and crowned her head with jewels and clothed her body in royal robes, she would surely not resist—no one dared resist him. But would she love him?

She would say she loved him, of course, but would she truly? Or would she live with him in fear, nursing a private grief for the life she had left behind? Would she be happy at his side? How could he know for sure? If he rode to her forest cottage in his royal carriage, with an armed escort waving bright banners, that too would overwhelm her. He did not want a cringing subject. He wanted a lover, an equal. He wanted her to forget that he was a king and she a humble maiden and to let shared love cross the gulf between them. For it is only in love that the unequal can be made equal.

The king, convinced he could not elevate the maiden without crushing her freedom, resolved to descend to her. Clothed as a beggar, he approached her cottage with a worn cloak fluttering loose about him. This was not just a disguise—the king took on a totally new identity—He had renounced his throne to declare his love and to win hers.

—Søren Kierkegaard, *The King and the Maiden*

1. No parable gets everything “right,” but as a story it delivers truth in a way that mere statements cannot. What do you think of the parable above? What captures your imagination?
2. Two different passages in the gospels come the closest to Jesus giving us his own personal mission statement: Luke 4:14-30 and Mark 10:41-45. What do these suggest about Jesus’ own understanding of who he was and what he was to be about? What are some examples of him living out this mission?
3. Three themes from the Old Testament converge in the life and ministry of Jesus: *torah* (law), temple (God’s presence), and kingdom. Read Matthew 5:27-20. How do you think Jesus embodies and fulfills the law?
4. Read John 1:1-5, 14 and 2:18-22. John’s introduction to his gospel and Jesus’ comments reveal in his own words that he was the very presence of God in human form. We call this the *incarnation* (think “chili con carne” = chili with meat). Jesus was God with meat. How important is this?
5. One of Matthew’s favorite titles for Jesus in his gospel is “Son of David.” God had promised through the prophets that another from the line of David would sit on the throne of Israel. The last week of Jesus’ life begins with him entering Jerusalem openly proclaiming his kingship. It ends with him dead on a Roman cross. Flip through Matthew chapters 21-28. What events of that last week stand out? Why?
6. Jesus had foretold both his death and his resurrection on multiple occasions. Why do you think his disciples were skeptical (and then surprised) when it actually happened?
7. Jesus knew that death (his and ours) holds great potential for life. Read John 10:7-13 and 12:20-26. How does this “eternal-kind-life” hold promise for you?



CHRIST