

Advent, Day 14

Saturday, December 15

Read Philippians 2:5-11

"...rather he made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant..." Philippians 2:7

MAKE ME A SERVANT

It was an ancient doxology. One that was repeated over and over again, the way we do with John 3:16, or with the Lord's Prayer. It was a well-known part of the vocabulary of every early Christian:

*Have the mind of Christ Jesus
Who, being in the very nature of God
did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped,
Rather he made himself nothing and
took upon himself the very form of a servant...*

The ringing declaration at the end was probably said with rising volume as the whole congregation stood to sing,

*"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!"*

It was a daring declaration. In a world where power is seen as supreme and might and strength of arm controls the day, to declare as king the one who saw himself as a servant, and who ended his life crucified as a criminal, makes those who declare such a thing very radical indeed.

More than that, to see such a one as the chief example of what it means to be a human being and to live most fully, seems almost ludicrous to those who are used to living with the world's definition of success.

To live as a servant seems to go against the grain of the world. There is something in the nature of human beings – the whole 'survival of the fittest' thing – that sees being a servant as being weak and ineffectual. It certainly isn't seen as a life-style that many would choose to adopt.

You would think that after centuries of trying it our way and seeing what a mess we have made of the world by trying to be in control and forcing our will on others in a constant struggle for power, that we might be willing to take another look at what Jesus said, and try something different for a change.

But we are not so easily deterred from following those well-worn paths, even when we have seen where they lead. It's hard for us to decide to try a different way.

Jesus continues to call to us anyway. Jesus continues to love us anyway. Jesus continues to offer us a way of life anyway.

He does so, I'm convinced, because he knows that even if it takes a very long, long time, and even if we fail at it again and again, eventually he knows that we will finally get it. We'll finally come to the conclusion that the love of power can never win against the power of love, and that loving one another at least as much as we love ourselves will help us to live in the world the way God has always had in mind for us to do.

His kingdom is a whole different kind of kingdom. But we'll get there, eventually.