Anyone watch the Crown – a Netflix series?

The last scene of Season 4 features a conversation between Prince Philip and Diana, the Princess of Wales, during the family Christmas celebration at Balmoral Castle.

Both Philip and Diana are outsiders who married into the Royal Family, and they talk briefly about what that feels like, Diana describing it like being in a cold tundra with no break. At one point, Prince Philip says something like, “We are all lost, unseen, and irrelevant except for the queen. No one matters but the queen. She is the oxygen we all breathe.”

Let’s contrast this concept of a sovereign with that of Christ as sovereign. Yes, Christ should be the oxygen we all breathe – we should always try to live as Christ did. But the significant difference is that with Christ, those society fails to see and believe to be lost and irrelevant are, in fact, those with whom Christ most identifies. These aren’t outsiders in Jesus's kingdom; in fact, Jesus is seen most clearly in the faces of those society often casts as outsiders – the needy, the poor, the sick, the different, the other, the outsider.

Jesus also tends to his subjects as the Good Shepherd – caring for those vulnerable sheep and protecting them from all the perils of the world that might await them. In Jesus’s kingdom, the most important thing is to care for the hungry, the poor, the sick, the prisoners – all those who are most vulnerable.

We all are subjects in this kingdom. We joined it in baptism when we accepted Jesus as our Savior and promised to respect the dignity of every human being – those that society sees and thinks of as insiders, as well as those that society overlooks and thinks of outsiders.

One way we do that is to continue to wear our masks and to social distance, especially when we are around those who are considered vulnerable to the virus. Another way is through reaching out to this group with phone calls and offers to help shop or do other activities for them so that they are not endangered.

Another way we do this is to really look at people as we go through our day. Sometimes we barely glance at those people we encounter every day. What are the needs of the person in the line in front of us or behind us? What is the need of the person in the car next to ours? What is the need of this person we see in the church store or in our office? What is the need of this child we see in school or preschool?

More importantly, where is Christ in that person? Because Christ is in that person – Christ is in every person whether they know it or not. When we look at people as bearers of Christ inside them, we really see them. When we really see them, we can see their needs and respond to those needs. When we are compassionate and respond to those needs, we have responded to Christ. We have followed the example and commandment of our Shepherd King.

The world judges success based on status or possessions. God’s kingdom is different. Status and possessions are immaterial. God will judge our lives based upon how well we have “seen” those around us who society often makes invisible. God will judge us based upon how well we have welcomed those that society deems to be outsiders into our inner circle.

Bishop Steven Charleston once wrote about this paradox between what society considers as strength and success and what God considers strength and success:

We are strongest when we show our tenderness to others when we bend the rigidity of culture and custom to care for those in need. Virtue is not attained by following the rules; righteousness is not a

reward for never smiling. Prejudice has made

compassion break into history, upset the morality of the moment, and open humanity to a new understanding of justice and mercy.

The Spirit dares the conventions of our time so that love can reach out as far and wide as it can. Those from whom we would turn are those from whom we would learn. Kindness is both a risk and an invitation.

Jesus urges us to reach out in love to everyone – to see everyone and to be kind to everyone.

In Jesus’s kingdom, like in the realms of the world, the sovereign matters – the sovereign is the one to whom we hold allegiance. However, the difference is that in Jesus’s kingdom, the ruler is seen most clearly in the outsiders rather than in those who seem to have all the world has to offer. We honor our sovereign best when we help these vulnerable members of society.

Jesus’s kingdom isn’t or shouldn’t be like a cold tundra, but rather a warm place where all can find shelter. It is a place where we genuinely see everyone and provide for their needs. See others. See Christ in them. And meet their needs.