

The King & the Pauper

'He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. And being found in the appearance of a man, he humbled himself...' (Phil. 2:7-8).

'The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'' (Matt. 25:40).

The story is told of a King who before sunrise, discretely and undetected slipped out of the palace grounds. He deliberately dressed as a poor man so he wouldn't be recognised by his subjects. He wanted to observe his people, their places, their productivity and their disposition to his reign.

Incognito, he freely roamed the streets enjoying every scene. He watched the people interact as they went about their daily affairs. He saw the traders engaging in their business activities. He observed the gleeful play of children and families conversing with neighbours. By and large the King was glad and satisfied to see his people content with their lives.

As evening approached the ponderous King headed back towards the palace. Deep in thought about how he could improve his kingdom, crossing a busy thoroughfare he failed to see horses at full gallop pulling a stagecoach. Unaware of pending disaster he collided with the horses and was knocked to the ground. Flattened, bleeding and bruised the unrecognized King was hauled off the street and left in the gutter. As far as most people were concerned this was just another beggar who was probably better off dead. Left to die on the streets of his own Kingdom, everyone passed by the unconscious man.



Late that night a pauper came along and heard groaning from the gutter. Kneeling beside the injured body, he could see this man, as poor as himself, was seriously wounded and needed help. Kindly, he picked up the disorientated man and carried him to his humble shelter. For many days, the good-hearted pauper tended to his damaged companion. Days turned into weeks as the cuts and concussion were treated, and small scraps of food given to the unknown King. Slowly, the pauper nursed another man back to health.



Meanwhile, the palace was in great despair as their King had been missing for weeks. No-one knew what had happened or where he was. Rumours of kidnapping and murder were whispered in the corridors of power. The palace had no idea their King lay broken under a rough shelter being gently cared for by a compassionate homeless person.

As time passed, the wounds of the King healed and his strength returned. Although grateful, curiously the King never revealed to his new friend his true identity. The day came when the King thanked the pauper for his gracious benevolence, said he would never forget it, and made his way back to the palace.

The courtiers, rejoiced on seeing the return of their King, relieved and grateful he was alive. Some thought it strange he was dressed as a poor man, nevertheless, they were elated he was safe and well. Once the King was clean and dressed in his royal robes, he called the court together and revealed everything that had happened. Above all, he expressed his sincere gratitude to the unknown man who had rescued him from near death.

The King ordered his guards to organise the royal carriage. He would return to the location where he had been nurtured back to health. Keeping his promise, he would bring back that poor but hospitable man and reward him by allowing him to live in the palace forever.

With great fanfare, the King and his entourage left the palace and made their way to the small shelter that had been the King's hospital. There they found the merciful pauper and there the King introduced himself to his friend. The beggar was stunned to learn he had helped the King who now wanted to repay his kindness by having him come to live in the palace. The Royal Court received the man with open arms and poured abundance on him. His life radically changed that day. From that new beginning, he enjoyed clean clothes, a palatial room, a view over the city, the best food and even better, daily conversations with his friend the King.

Living in the palace was a completely different world for the ex-pauper. He spent his days learning about the everyday activities and business of running a palace and a kingdom. The friend asked the King for a job, but the King reminded him that he was a guest and he should simply enjoy his new home. Sometimes, much to the embarrassment of the servants, the King's friend helped them go about their duties. This caught the King's attention and so to give his friend a sense of belonging, the King appointed him the servant's manager.

As the weeks progressed, the courtiers saw just how good the King's friend was at organising and dealing with people. The King even consulted his friend for advice on some kingdom matters and the recommendations he received were wise and helpful. As the weeks moved into months, the King kept promoting his friend for the significant discernment he brought to conducting the kingdom's administration. Over time, the King's friend became so invaluable in all State affairs the King finally promoted him to be Prime Minister of the land.

This rapid elevation in responsibilities surprised some in authority and a few felt the King was misguided to advance his friend into to such a high position.

However, the Prime Minister proved to be an exceptionally noble leader and every decision he made for the kingdom was honourable and beneficial to the land, the people and the King. The commoners learnt to love their Prime Minister as much as they loved their King.

During his tenure, it became noticeable that every Friday afternoon without exception, a strange pattern emerged when the Prime Minister withdrew to his room, locked the door and asked never to be interrupted. Undisturbed he remained there for several hours. Nobody knew why he did this and it caused quite the stir among those who observed his curious behaviour. Eventually, everyone knew that on Friday afternoons, the Prime Minister was absent from his duties, locked in his room. Murmurs began to circulate among the palace staff. Most thought it was an odd thing for a Prime Minister to do. The murmurs turned to innuendos and those who resented the Prime Minister began to gossip. The hearsay was that every Friday the Prime Minister went to his room planning to overthrow the King. Eventually, the unverified scandal was reported to the King. At first, he was sceptical refusing to believe his friend would do such a thing. But as a matter of national security, he had to face the reality that even his friend could depose him.

The next Friday afternoon the King watched and as described, the Prime Minister left his office and locked himself away. The King's suspicion was aroused, and he began to wonder if his friend's newfound power had made him untrustworthy. Was he planning sedition? Was he really preparing to dethrone the King? The King just had to know, so ordered the guards to break the door down.

With a mighty crack, soldiers smashed through the door. The King and his entourage scrambled into the room and what they saw stunned them. They found the Prime Minister sitting on a chest, dressed in his old pauper clothes. There were no maps, documentation or plans that pointed to subversion. Everyone seemed embarrassed at the awkwardness of it all until the King said, 'I believe you owe me an explanation.'



The Prime Minister, dressed in his old rags, stood and said to the King, 'Sire, I cannot forget that a few years ago you left this palace to observe the people you love. After your accident you were rejected and left to die in the gutters of your own streets. By God's grace I stumbled across you and did what any good human being would do by helping you. Returning home, you kept a promise that you would not forget the kindness I had shown you in your weakest hour. Every day since you brought me to the palace, I have experienced your love and gratitude. You have given me a new life, new hope, new joy and a new purpose.

Every Friday I leave my work as your Prime Minister to come to my room. I come here, take off my fine clothes and dress myself in my old clothes to remind myself who I once was. I sit here and contemplate that I was once a beggar. I look back and remember there was a time when I was hungry, cold and homeless, until you found me. I can never forget the abundance and responsibilities you have given me. I then put my royal robes back on and stress to myself that I am who I am because of you. I leave my room with a fresh commitment to faithfully serve my friend and King.'

Kneeling before His Majesty, he said, **'Everything I have is because of you. I will never forget your love to me. This day and for as long as I live, I am your Prime Minister, to serve you and your people.'**

May all you fellow paupers who now live richer lives go on to serve your King.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

*Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life my all.*

- Isaac Watts