

Homily for Friday of 11th Week of Ordinary Time
 2 Kings 11:1–4, 9–18, 20
 Psalm 132:11–14, 17–18
 Matthew 6:19–23

We have just heard a complicated passage from 2nd Kings 11. Perhaps when you heard it read you may have said to yourself, “what was that all about”? I know I did and so did some research.

Let me introduce the key players. Enter Athaliah. She was the daughter of Queen Jezebel that dastardly wife of King Ahab. At this time in the Holy Land there were two Kingdoms. In the North was Israel and it was more powerful, ruled for 22 years by King Ahab. Remember Athaliah, the villain in our story was his daughter. She married Jehoram who was the king of the southern nation of Judah. Because Judah was weak in comparison to Israel, Jehoram, who was also a nasty piece of work, formed an alliance with King Ahab by marrying his daughter. They had a son named Ahaziah, who after his father’s death, reigned for a year, and was then murdered by a man named Jehu.

Now Athaliah thinks to herself . Ah hah! My son is dead. I know what I will do. I will kill all of his children – her grandchildren, and the throne will be all mine. Athaliah succeeds in killing all but one. Joash, who is a baby at this time. He is sequestered by his great aunt Jehosheba, Jehoram’s sister and therefore sister in law of Athaliah. For six years he was hidden in the Temple while Athaliah wrecked-havoc in Jerusalem. A year later, when Joash was seven the chief priest Jehoiada summoned together all of the captains of the elite guards, called the Carites and disclosed to them that there was a rightful successor to the throne still alive, the seven year old Joash. They Carites now in league with Jehoiada make their move. Jehoiada had in hand all of the armor and King David and he delivers it to the Carites. Securing the Temple and protecting the altar Joash is brought out by Jehoiada and made king. Athaliah gets wind of this and cries foul. Jehoida, like and Umpire says foul my eye. You Queen are done. You are out. And she and all who had corrupted the throne with her were then killed.

At the heart of this story is this verse:

Then he Jehoida the priest brought out the king’s son and put a crown on him and gave him the covenant.

What is the Covenant the priest gave him? It is described thus in Deuteronomy 17:18-20:

When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. ¹⁹ It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

You see the king’s in Israel and Judah were to be servant kings, like King Jesus. They were to daily read the Torah, fearing God and observing all the words of this law. Sadly most of the kings disregarded the Lord’s instruction. What about Joash? We are given the answer in 2 Kings 12:

In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. ²And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him.¹

He was a humble man who all his life was open to the instruction of Jehoiada. He was a king who in the words of Jesus from today's Gospel had the right treasure in his heart. Athaliah on the other hand had a heart and eye that lusted for power and was suspicious of everyone. She epitomized the Lord's conclusion "If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness. Her grandson on the other hand had a healthy eye because he learned to fear the Lord and keep his laws.

This is a cautionary tale for us all. It is only as we learn the way of humility and obedience that we can counter the pull of the world to place wealth and power as ultimate values. What really matters is stated so clearly in today's Psalm:

If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons forever more will sit on your throne.

The Kingdom that is eternal is the Kingdom of David – that finds its fulfillment in King Jesus. Like Jesus Joash was hidden from one who wanted him dead so that he could then reign in holiness and righteousness.

Thanks be to God for so great a story. Thanks be to God that this is our story too!

¹ *The Holy Bible*. (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, 2 Ki 12:1–2). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.