

My Kingdom for Some Horsing Around

The Kingdom of Wallachia has everything a kingdom should: passports, a GNP in the hundreds of thousands of euros, a currency (the jurovalsar), a navy – all of it. It claims to be the birthplace of hockey because the droppings of the local sheep are about the size and shape of a regulation puck.

They even have a downright Shakespearean dispute over the crown. Boleslav I the Gracious Forever ascended to the throne in an official coronation in 2000 but later began demanding excessive tribute. His foreign minister immediately shifted allegiance to a rival who seized power under the title Vladimir II. However, unlike the clash between, say, Richard II and Henry IV, or David and the house of Saul, the principles settled this one in court.

There is one thing Wallachia lacks – actual territory.

Tomas Harabis, the Wallachian foreign minister, invented the whole country as an elaborate practical joke. Wallachia is actually a tiny village in the mountains of the Czech Republic. The passports carry a disclaimer and the money mostly comes from selling these as gag gifts. The currency has no actual value and the navy consists of a fleet of canoes. The incumbent king is a professional clown and the usurper works construction.

Generally speaking, kingdoms need land, secure borders, sovereignty within fixed boundaries. That's how the world defines a kingdom.

"The kingdom of God," Jesus says in Luke 17.21, "is within you." Or "among you" or "in your midst;" pick your translation. In any case, he seems to mean that his kingdom consists in obedience rather than territory. No need to kill Romans; hump a soldier's pack for double the distance he can enforce and you've added two miles to the kingdom. Don't stage a tax revolt and refuse Caesar's tribute; pay him with what he puts his picture on while stamping the image of Christ on your actions and you've increased the

kingdom's treasury. Don't defy the court system; pay double the verdict and put the judge himself on trial according to kingdom laws.

The kingdom of heaven never lies any great distance away. Obedience is the border and action the passport. The name of Jesus taken seriously plants the flag of God's sovereignty on any space the believer currently occupies.

In the Kingdom of Wallachia, kings go to court for the right to sit on a throne. In the Kingdom of Heaven, those who would rule jockey for the worst seat at the table or, better still, a place on the floor with a rag and a basin. Never say that Jesus' kingdom is a state of mind; it is the very opposite – a state of activity conformed to Christ. The only question is where one chooses to live.

Servant to His Royal Lowness,

Doug