

THE KINGDOM OF KINGS AND QUEENS: A PARABLE

Jesse Baker on a Transformational
Encounter

From a distant, war-plagued land, a lone traveler set out to find a safer place to live. Carrying his few possessions on his back, he walked for days with no set destination in mind. He slept where he could and ate what he could find on the trees he passed. One night, after another long day of walking, he came across a high wall and decided it would be the best spot to take off his pack, sit down, and rest for the night. With his burden removed, he quickly fell asleep.

The traveler awoke at dawn to the sound of rustling metal. Opening his eyes, he was startled to find two men walking toward him. The traveler jumped up, worried the men were going to harm him. “Perhaps I trespassed without knowing it,” he thought, “or ate some fruit forbidden to me.” His fear intensified as their armored bodies approached, shields glimmering in the early morning sunlight. Anxiety only paused for a moment as he puzzled why these soldiers had no swords on their belts. Still, each man looked as if he was a royal warrior of some kingdom.

“What is your name, traveler?” said one of the men.

“Please, gentlemen, my name is Xeno. I have come from a distant land, and I have walked until I could walk

no more. I simply stopped here to rest before I continued my journey. Let me go, and I will be no trouble.”

“Friend, we mean you no harm,” said the other man with an unexpected kindness in his voice. “You may continue your journey if you wish, but know that you will also be welcome in our kingdom. If it is rest you seek, there you will find it. We are kings of this land. The High King Aeon commanded us to invite all who are burdened and weary to enter our land and enjoy the rest he gives.”

“What is the name of your country?” asked the traveler.

“Our kingdom is called Eternal. You are only steps from it. We can show you the way.”

“What is it like inside?” Xeno asked.

A rapturous smile appeared on one of the kings, and he answered simply, “Come and see.”

The traveler nodded in agreement and began following the kings. It was a short walk to the gates, but as soon as they were opened, the traveler was met with a surprise. Just inside was a mighty, rushing river. Xeno looked around for a place to cross but saw no bridge in sight. The two kings started walking toward the river, but Xeno did not move. Even after the two kings waved their arms, urging him forward, he did not budge.

One of the men asked, “Do you not want rest? You can see the kingdom from here,” he said, pointing off in the distance. “Follow the road on the other side of the river, and you will have no trouble.”

“I do want rest,” the worried Xeno replied, “but I am afraid of the water, and I do not want to go alone.”

“Do not fear, my friend. No steps are ever taken alone. The High King walked this path long before us, and we can walk with you now. And though the waters may

seem fierce, that shall soon change. Our High King has called you here, and you will need to trust us that the waters will not harm you. They looked like death to us, as well, when we first saw them, and we feared as you do now. But through them is the way to life and peace. Still, you need only to cross if you want to cross.”

After a few moments of thought, the traveler decided he would cross. He looked at the two kings in turn and said with an unrecognized confidence, “I want to cross.”

One of the kings then called out with a loud voice, “King Aeon bids him come!” Immediately the earth began to shake. Two large walls rose out of the waters, taming the rushing river into a small pool of calm water. The two kings stood on the walls and invited the traveler to pass through the waters without harm.

His long journey had left him dirty and sweaty, but after passing through the pool, he now felt clean and refreshed. A crisp breeze was blowing, and he took a deep breath. It was as if he was breathing for the first time, and a renewed vigor came over him. He surprised himself when he heard his own voice exclaiming, “I could walk all the way to those far away mountains without stopping, even if it took days!” The two men laughed in understanding but told Xeno it was a short journey to their kingdom.

The road there was flat and straight, and beauty was everywhere. The grass was greener than any he had seen. The wind continued to blow and showed the fullness of the leaved trees. It was as if the leaves were applauding in gratitude for all that gave them life. When he mentioned the trees to his companions, one of them said that the seeds for trees were among the smallest they had ever seen, but they grew beyond what any thought possible.

“Even the birds are curious about them,” one said. “We have seen strange birds not native to this part of the world come and make their homes in these trees.”

The wonder of it all led to several silent but joyful steps. Xeno’s fortunes had changed so quickly he began mentally retracing his steps and remembered how his new friends introduced themselves as kings. He stopped walking as confusion set in. His armored friends stopped and asked if something was wrong.

“No, not really,” Xeno said. “But there is something I don’t understand. When you two introduced yourselves to me, you mentioned you were both kings. You have also mentioned a High King. How is that possible? How many kings are there in your kingdom?”

“All who dwell in our kingdom are kings and queens,” one of them said. “Our High King has declared it so.”

“And,” Xeno continued, “you look like warriors but carry no sword. Why?”

“Our kingdom is one of peace. If trouble arises, we trust our High King will deal with it,” they answered.

Xeno was still confused, but the confidence and joy in their responses made him not want to press them any further. None of it really made sense, but he thought he could ask more questions later. Plus, the quiet gave him the luxury of looking around and rejoicing in the scenery.

The road ultimately led to a massive gate the two kings called The Welcoming Gate. Two thick wooden doors stood wide open, and the pillars they were attached to had a message written on each. On the left pillar, it read, “You who are thirsty, drink.” On the right, “Come, with no money, and eat.”

When they arrived in the town, the two kings found someone who could give lodging to the weary traveler.

He was given a change of clothes. Before he was given the chance to rest, the kings told him that there would be a great dinner that night, and he was invited to join. Xeno was not exactly excited to be in a crowd of strangers, but since these two had done so much for him, he did not want to deny their offer. Nervousness crept upon him as he thought about being in a large crowd of people he was unfamiliar with. Though he was more than grateful for being in this place, he did worry about how he would fit in with royalty. He was a nobody and knew almost no one. Staring out of his window, he saw kings walking on the streets laughing with friends. They obviously belonged here; he was not sure he ever could.

When it was time for the dinner, he tried to make his way unnoticed to the Great Hall. Many others were talking in the streets and heading to the same place. While he was dressed in new clothes, he still felt underdressed compared to the rest, as all the kings and queens in attendance wore their royal attire. He kept his head down and walked with purpose to the Hall.

Stepping into the Great Hall, Xeno looked up and, in amazement, stopped walking. Its glory was more than he could have imagined. The walls were lined with paintings of what he assumed were important people from the past. Gold and silver were everywhere. The tables were set with the finest dinnerware. All the more, he felt he did not belong. Not even the best houses in his home land were this nice, and he did not even grow up in the best of houses.

In order to avoid the crowd of people coming in, he decided to look for a seat. There was a head table, smaller than the others, at the front of the room. Many larger tables were neatly arranged around the room. The seats

at the head table all looked like thrones. The seats at the larger tables, while not throne-like, were still beautiful and ornate. He decided he would sit in the corner, as far away from the head table as possible. Maybe there he could eat unnoticed.

Soon others began to make their way to their seats. As people were sitting, the conversations quieted. Last of all, slowly making his way to his seat, was an old man walking with a staff in hand. Catching Xeno off guard, they all stood when he entered the room. Xeno slowly followed their lead. Gazing around and trying to figure out what was happening, Xeno noticed the radiant looks people were giving to the old man. He heard people whispering and calling him the “Beloved Leader” or “Great Leader.” They all sat when the old man sat.

After all the meals were placed in front of all sitting and the drinks were poured, those who served sat at the head table with the Great Leader. The old man stood and said a word of thanksgiving, and, upon finishing, everyone began to eat. There was food in abundance, and the bread and wine were always replaced or refilled as needed. Happiness filled the tables.

After all were finished eating, those at the head table left their seats to clear the tables. The serving and clearing seemed odd to Xeno. He had never seen people of prominence so willing to serve. This was certainly not how things worked in his homeland.

With the food and plates gone and the servers returned to their seats, everyone in the room again became suddenly quiet. The Great Leader slowly stood, relying heavily on his staff for balance and strength. Xeno noticed the excitement building on the faces of the people as he finally began to speak.

“Ours is a great kingdom,” he said with an aged but powerful voice. “With this meal, we are again reminded of the gifts given to us by our High King. We long for his return, but he has given us work to do while we wait. We have an opportunity tonight to continue a great tradition. I have learned we have a guest with us tonight, one whose name is Xeno. Will you please come forward, my son?”

Xeno had felt out of place all evening, and now his worst fear came true: all attention was on him. His first reaction was to slink down in his seat and disappear under the table, but he knew that would not solve the problem. Standing slowly, he made his way to the head table. When he arrived, he kept his eyes on the floor, nerves preventing him from looking in any other direction.

The old man moved close to Xeno and, with a gentle voice, said, “My son, look at me.” Xeno took a deep breath and obeyed. “You have nothing to fear. You came to us weary, and we found you resting on our walls. You were invited to rest in our land, and I do hope you are beginning to find the rest you sought. I know that you have lost your home, but you are not alone. And if you wish, you may make your new home among us.”

Xeno was stunned. He looked into the eyes of the old man and saw genuine love. He looked around the room and saw smiles on the faces and hearts brimming with excitement, awaiting his response. He could not speak, as the joy in his heart overwhelmed him. He merely nodded his head to accept the offer. Loud applause followed. The servants at the head table brought a robe to him, royal in appearance and similar to those worn by the others in the room — which he later learned, like all the other robes,

came from the High King's closet — and placed it around his shoulders. A crown was also placed on his head. He was a king like the rest.

The dinner adjourned, and all the people welcomed Xeno to the kingdom as they left the Hall. When the last person left, the old man led Xeno to his new home. “This kingdom is now yours as much as it is mine or anyone else's. We all serve the same High King, and he has given this kingdom as a gift to us all. Welcome, child.” With that, the old man left.

In the days and years that followed, Xeno found himself more comfortable living in his new home. He was a former farmer and loved working in orchards, vineyards, and the fields. As there were always more hands needed for that type of work in this kingdom, he joined in. The land was large and fertile but in places full of stones. Farmers worked sections of land, clearing stones and planting trees for the kingdom's use. Some trees were for eating, others for simply making the land beautiful.

Over time, he began to learn the songs and the stories of the Kingdom's past. The songs were new to him, but he sensed they reached back to the beginning of time. The stories were simple but full of wisdom. The songs and stories made the world come more alive, so much so that, at times, it seemed that the mountains and the skies responded in song. He was at home among them.

Eventually, he even went outside the walls to find and invite other weary travelers inside the kingdom. It was as much his and anyone else's, he remembered the Great Leader saying. In receiving a gift so great, he simply wanted to share it with others.

And so he lived in peace throughout his years as he and his fellow kings and queens looked forward to the return of the High King.