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Elves, Dwarves, and Church Unity

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For The King - Rocky Ramsey

Can the relationship between Legolas and Gimli in the Lord of the Rings trilogy shine light on church unity among protestants? We hope that this discussion helps the church think about church unity and loving your brother.

Key Text:

* John 13:35

Parallel Christian Economy

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Transcript

Hello, For The King listeners. I am not your host, Rocky Ramsey. My name is Will Drzimsky, a brother-in-Christ and friend of Raku's, whom he has generously invited onto the show in order to verbally showcase my artwork to you in 50 seconds.

As an artist, I strive to accurately reflect the glory of God and everything that I paint, and through that process, I hope to flood as much of the earth as possible with paintings, which accurately proclaim the undeniable fact that Jesus is Lord and the creation which he made commands us to worship him. So if you would like to join with me in distributing clean, refreshing artwork showcasing the creativity of the God who made us, I would be overjoyed to have your help. I run my own website called Reflected Works, where I showcase the artwork I've done in the past, sell original paintings and prints, and take requests for unique commissions.

Once again, that's ReflectedWorks.com, all one word, and I'm looking forward to helping you further the Kingdom of God right now here on this earth by putting some of your free wall space to productive use. Thank you very much for your kind attention, and now, enjoy the show. With a rod of iron! And I'll not apologize for this God of the Bible.

Hello friends, welcome to the For the King podcast. This is your host, Rocky Ramsey. On this podcast, we proclaim the edicts of the King, namely and chiefly, that Yahweh reigns.

We have been on a short hiatus with these Sunday episodes with Bryce. So we're back at it. Bryce, what's up? How you doing? How you feeling? What's going on? Doing good.

Yeah, doing good. Bryce just got a new abode. You got a new place to rest your head.

I'm abiding in the southern parts of the southern region of Anderson. He's sitting nice on some acreage now. The Lord has provided.

So that's what's to do with Bryce. Good job. Way to go.

It was all me. All you, baby. So what are we discussing this evening? The topic of today's podcast, we're going to bring up scripture, but honestly, our main way that we want to frame this discussion is actually going to use Tolkien.

So a lot of us are probably familiar with Lord of the Rings. You've probably seen the

movies. You read the books even better.

I would prefer the books, honestly, myself. And what we want to center on is this interdenominational effort among Christians portrayed in the relationship between dwarves and elves in Tolkien's world and Middle Earth. So when the council is convened in Rivendell with all the races, the different races of Middle Earth, to determine what to do with the reign now that it's in their hands in the Fellowship of the Ring, initially, there's a lot of banter and discussion on how it ought to be used.

Boromir thinks that Minas Tirith and Gondor specifically are at the front lines really fighting this battle. So they deserve to take it back. So they're on the front lines.

All their men are really dying for all the other lands. We ought to be the ones to use the Ring. Boromir is kind of vying for this.

And obviously, there's some disagreement there. It turns into a lot of bickering. And you know, Tolkien does something beautiful and has this humble small hobbit step up, one that's more resilient to the Ring's temptations.

And it's more of a rallying call for all of these different kinds of people and races to come together to surround Frodo in the Fellowship of the Ring to fight the enemy and to take on the task. And specifically, elves and dwarves, Legolas and Gimli's friendship throughout the whole trilogy, right? They're just slowly growing in their friendship. Eventually, it gets to a point where they're doing battle together in the two towers at Helms Deep.

And they're talking about their feats of battle. And Gimli is saying how he wants to take Legolas down into the minds of the deep parts of what the dwarves do. And Legolas, he wouldn't want to be there initially, but he sees the beauty of that.

And basically, they strike up a friendship and they both concede that they want to see the parts of each other's land and the beauty of each other's culture, that kind of thing. Anything you want to add there, Bryce? That's basically the backdrop. Yeah, that's good.

That's good. Yeah, that's good. Okay, so basically, there's the strain and hardship between that relationship, and they can come together for the common purpose of fighting Sauron and to destroy Mordor and the Ring.

Okay. And we want to import that into where we're at in terms of Christendom and church history. Okay, so after the Protestant Reformation, let's just be honest, it did enable a lot of schismatic, not so much the reformers, mainly the radical Reformation created an environment for this kind of schismatic Christianity where everybody kind of wants to think that they're in their own fight and they don't want to really do things with other Christians, per se.

Okay, so do you think that's fair, Bryce, that out of the Protestant Reformation, with some of the church polities, specifically like congregationalism, you kind of have this individualistic, isolationist denominationalism where you do not want to do interdenominational efforts for the kingdom? Well, I think it's not fair. I think it's actually more fair to say the Reformation also spurned that on, too. About what? Even within the Reformation, I think you see a divide of interdenominational effort for the kingdom.

Okay, sure, yeah. You see that with the reformers, such as Theodore Beza, meeting together at the Caloquia of Mount Bel Air against Andreas, there's this huge Lutheran reform divide. And then you have the further divide of Dutch reform versus English reform versus whatever.

So, I mean, I still see a fruit of Reformation. Some of the Reformation theology actually ended up being super schismatic and not because of the intense zeal for the truth, which was good. I mean, you cannot blame these people for having the false worship for so long now recovering the true worship and actually trying to further that along.

You can't blame them. But a fruit of some of their endeavors was being schismatic. Now, they definitely wrote against a lot of radical movements, like you talked about, the radical Reformation with the Anabaptists and so on.

But even within the Reformation, you saw the Lutherans and the reformers not even know at all. That's what you saw with Zwingli and Luther. Luther not wanting to even shake his hands because of a dispute about the Lord's Supper, whether Christ's physical body was present or not.

So these are all defects and a lack of maturity with the Christian Church. Yes. Yeah, I agree.

That was more of a, that ought to have been viewed more of a Gimli and Legolas situation where they should band together for a common purpose. Yeah. But that banding together didn't really persist.

Exactly. Now, the reformers wanted that historically. The reformers wanted to be joined with it.

They did. But, yeah. But yeah.

They did. I guess I was trying to drive that, you know, the radical Reformation definitely is even more so. Yeah, you're right.

You're right. It's schismatic. It is.

But yes, the reformers definitely had that. Like you said, that zeal for the truth, which is good, but there was, there was, the fruit of it was disunifying in some, some respect. So

where did Bryce and I, how do we want to import that to our day and age? So obviously we're reformed.

We carry on the torch that the reformers had, but we want to not make any of the same errors that they made in their day and age. So how do we press forward in the Western Protestant church in a proper way to basically defeat Sauron and destroy the ring, right? How do we, how do we, how do we get Gimli's and Legolas's to go together and battle and to enjoy it together? So what Bryce and I want to propose on this episode is basically just a Protestant ecumenicalism. We would not advocate linking arms with a progressive heretical church.

We're not advocating for that, but the conservative parts of every mainline denomination is definitely up for grabs in what we're saying, where we need to be able to in the ministry efforts of the gospel and specifically and an acts of mercy to the community for the widow, the orphan, the needy, those kinds of things. We need to have conservative Methodists and conservative Pentecostals and conservative assemblies of God and conservative, uh, reformed Baptists, reformed Presbyterian, reformed Anglican, um, Episcopalians. Like we need to get all of these conservative mainline denominations on board with one another to do the ministry of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Um, we're in an all hands on deck situation right now in the West and we want to advocate for that very hardcore. Yeah, this is kind of the heart of even what you see in CS Lewis's book mere Christianity. He writes about, uh, he calls, he says that there is God's house and in God's house, quote, it's a hall out of which doors are opened into several rooms.

And these several in his mind are Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic. Um, now, obviously we disagree with him there. Uh, we don't think that we're in the same hall as the Orthodox and Catholics.

Um, but like Rocky said, we're advocating for a Protestant ecumenicalism that we want to see all the Protestant denominations gathering together and, uh, being unified, uh, under the gospel. Um, and I found that quote Rocky I'm going to read it real quick. I think this is what we'll think about the failure of the Protestant church is to view herself as a glass pane fractured into several pieces rather than viewing herself as several stained glass windows and a cathedral, all of which tell the same story.

So we need to start viewing ourselves again as telling the same story of the gospel, though we all might have different functions in the world. Uh, you know, Anglicans are typically a lot more elitist and focused on institutions. Baptists are focused more on the local congregation and impacting local communities, just like Pentecostals.

But at the same time, we need to recognize that the dark hoard of Mordor is at our doorstep. Yeah. And the Bible says, Jesus says a house divided against itself, not stand.

Exactly. So if we're divided with ourselves, we're done. Yeah.

The Christian church is going to fail, but we know it's not going to because of our King, but what does our command us to do? Do not be divided. Yeah. Our strength comes from our unity with one another.

And that's exactly what you see with Tolkien, um, with the fellowship of the ring. It is so many people that you would never have expected to link arms together. A hobbit who recluses himself into, um, uh, holes that are not wet, but pleasant to be in.

Um, and then dwarves, which live in mountains and are mining and then elves who are constantly reading books and up in their ivory towers. And then men like all these people joined together who are, would never have been linked. Yeah.

So that's kind of like the old vision there. Like when you have this dark hoard coming against you, there is no other way to win. No other way to fight it, fight it off except by union.

Exactly. And it's such a, it's such a, Jesus said, you will know that they are my disciples by their love for one another. Okay.

If, um, is an Anglican your brother? Yes. Yes. Yes.

Is a Methodist your brother is even a Pentecostal, somebody's a goddess, your brother. Yeah. Yes.

That's your brother. That is your brother in Christ. If you cannot sit down or go out and minister with somebody like that, then you're an immature Christian.

You're immature. If you cannot, um, that was a sign of maturity of the fellowship of the ring throughout, um, the entire story arc of the fellowship. And even when they were separated and not doing ministry together, they weren't fighting together, you know, Pippin and Mary get taken away.

Um, the fellowship, um, there's that, there's that scene where, oh, the fellowships broken Mary and Pippin have been taken Frodo and Sam are gone. And then Eric Warren comes up to Gimli and Legolas says like, no, like the fellowship is not broken. We are going to go find Mary and Pippin.

We're not going to, we're not going to leave them to the, to the, um, or okay. And then they go out and get them. So the fellowship, even if you're not physically present, the fellowship cannot be broken.

It cannot be broken. And we need to view ourselves as that. Even, even if Anglicans and Methodists, we have, we have different distinctives, different churches, but just because we're not in the same local church does not mean the fellowship is broken.

The fellowship is still there. We're still fighting the same battle. So we can, we can link together and do acts of mercy to the community.

We can go out preaching the gospel together. It's fine to not maybe want to, you know, go in a local church together. Cause we are going to worship in different ways, but that's fine.

That's fine. Just in the same sense, I have my family and Bryce has his family. We don't have to do family together 24 seven.

We can have our own family, right? But Bryce and I can still have, do things together with our family, right? It doesn't mean that we're disconnected and the fellowship is broken. So I, this is the vision we kind of want to cast is we need to proclaim the gospel and link together with people that may have different secondary convictions on the scriptures than us. And we're so bad at that right now in the West and Protestantism, we need to repent of that and move forward.

So I don't know what was the thoughts there, Bryce? Yeah. And like that's when the fellowship joins together, they don't all of a sudden become one race of people. Yeah, exactly.

You know, Frodo is still a hobbit. Gimli is still a dwarf. Legolas is still an elf.

Aragorn is still a man. And they're not required to leave beside their cultures either. So precisely because of their cultures that they're actually strengthened because they all come together having varying gifts and abilities.

Exactly. It does make them stronger. So when we have that in mind, too, recognizing like, okay, like, this person's still a brother, but they just might do things differently.

And they have strengths, you know, they have strengths where we are weak. And, you know, we have strengths where they are weak. Exactly.

What's very important recognize these different things. And this is what you saw in the first and second Great Awakenings in America to use all Methodist Anglicans, Presbyterians and Baptists uniting together. And America boomed because of it.

There was so much evangelism and discipleship that went on. You had Baptists preaching at Presbyterian churches and Presbyterian ministers preaching at Baptist churches, doing ordinations, sermons for one another. Like this rich arm of cooperation with one another.

And the fruit of that is a booming of the kingdom of God. Exactly. Yeah, I mean, kind of going back to the strengths of each denomination.

If Anglicans, they excel at building institutions in the elitism. And we need that. We do

need that.

That's not a bad function. Okay, so let's let them, you know, continue that expertise and other Christian traditions can maybe support those institutions financially. Have you ever thought about that? Or the way the Methodists, they got that name because they were very methodical in the way they would go about meeting together to do acts of mercy to the poor and needy specifically, they've been always known for that kind of ministry.

Presbyterians are known for theology, known for really a strong will and understanding of God's word theology. Not that the others aren't, but that's just what they're known for. And then obviously, the assemblies of God, Pentecostal types are known for just being very charismatic.

And not just charismatic in terms of their understanding of the gifts, but they're just usually very joyful people. Okay. They're not somber and stick in the eye.

They're usually great evangelists and God do the work of the ministry in that way. So we need to all we can all learn something from each other, and we can become a stronger church by doing ministry together, but still remaining with our distinctives. We don't have to try to get dry back here.

Yeah, we definitely need to do a better job of doing interdenominational efforts and joining together, sharing the gospel, spreading the word, maybe pulling funds together for specific things. Yeah, getting back into the political arena. All denominations historically have done that.

Maybe with the exception of Baptists, but we just need to get back into doing stuff like that, so that we can actually affect change in the world. Disciplining the laity, discipling your average common man, and also discipling the nations, because they do have an effect on the worship of God, whether people like it, like to admit it or not. Yep.

No, amen. I think we pretty much made all of our points. I guess one other thing to add before we kind of close out here, just the big divide, specifically in Protestantism, would just be the covenantal pedobaptism versus creative baptism.

And Protestant, I definitely advocate for continued unity, even in the midst of that issue. That could be a very dicey issue. About half of the Protestant church just not baptized babies, and the other half of the church, that should not be a cause for disunity.

There's obviously going to be disagreements there, but at the practical level, when we're talking about church life, and when people are changing convictions or may find themselves in a position where they might be under different teaching, there should just be much grace there and unity in the midst of it, because it is a secondary issue. Nobody says the other side's not Christian, but we almost treat it like it's a primary issue sometimes, specifically when we deal with just our at the base level in terms of local

church membership. You're not allowed to be a member at this church because you differ on a secondary issue.

And that's actually a pretty sad sight to see. Bryce has helped me understand every local church is just a small outpost of the kingdom of God. It's a local church in the midst of the whole invisible church.

And if your local church is more restrictive on membership into the keys of the kingdom, per se, being a part of the kingdom, if it's more restrictive than the king himself, then you have an issue. We do think that is an issue. That is a problem.

So we need some, in terms of specifically church membership, we need some open arms in the midst of Protestantism right now. What do you think, Bryce? Sound reasonable? Yeah, I think that sounds reasonable. It just goes back to the same Protestant issue of who's the head of the church.

Yeah. Bryce is the head of the church. That same head, you know, regular to principle, he orders how the church should be conducted.

So we should be taking our cues from him, seeing who he accepts and who he denies. And we should accept and deny the same sort of people. Exactly.

So we believe in the communion of the saints. That's the Reformed doctrine, not the communion of the validly and properly baptized. Yeah, exactly.

Yep. Yep, that's good. Well, this is our call.

This is our exhortation to you to maybe think about this more and figure out how that impacts maybe your local church, how we can be more unified. Bryce and I are trying to create a community like this in Indianapolis. We'd love to see Indianapolis continue to grow together as the saints in Indianapolis, the saints in Indiana, you know, where we're at, our local context.

We'd love to see this cross denominational cooperation for the sake of the kingdom of God, because we love our king and we all have the same king. So let's all serve him together and not be a fractured church that looks like Satan's kingdom that's divided and bites. We don't want to bite and devour one another.

That is rescue for disaster. So that's my final thought. Do you have any final thought, Bryce? That's good.

Okay. Well, thanks for listening, guys. We hope that was encouraging and gave you something to think about.

Please go check out the website for the king. I think, what is it? FortheKing.substack.com or For the King podcast. I forget right now.

I'm sorry. But go check that out. I've actually beefed up that website a little bit.

The last episode I just released, or maybe two when I released this one, was a Christian winery. And I highly advise you guys to go and check out that winery called Rejoicing by. Really great work that they're doing.

And I really appreciate that, brother. Just to say it, this is an example of what you tried to live out what we just talked about, because that brother goes to a different church than I would go to. But me and him are getting together.

We're doing ministry together. He's doing it through his local business that he owns this winery. But we're not totally completely the same kind of Christian.

But me, I went and sat down with him and he's doing good work. You can see that in the interview. In the interview, he says things that I know you would have definitely disagreed with.

But you weren't like, oh, hey, let's stop and argue about that. You were like, okay, I'm interviewing him about his business. Let's just keep talking.

You're interested in stopping and arguing and bickering. Exactly. Exactly.

I'm trying to have a heart like that, guys. That's me actually trying to display what we're talking about and not be a hypocrite. Because like I said, there were things where I was like, I could've jumped on that.

But I'm not talking to him about those things. I'm talking to him about being a Christian man with his business. And we need to treat each Christian like that.

You can't expect them to all think the same way you do. Christians are going to be different. So go check out that brother.

And if you live in the Indianapolis area, you can go and shop at that winery and go check out what they're doing. It's awesome. Oh, and then last other thing, update, I became an every life ambassador.

This is a Christian company, Christian-owned business called Every Life. If you use the promo code that's going to be in the show notes, or you can go to the website for the King's Substack website and go to the parallel Christian Economy tab, you can see my promo code for Every Life. They're a Christian-owned conservative company for baby products.

So they have diapers and wipes that are toxin-free and organic and solid and not bad for your baby. Candice and I use these products, and you're welcome to use my promo code and support the podcast that way and support a Christian business. So I'm trying to continue to expand the Christian businesses.

I'm partnering with the podcast, so go support them because we want to build up the kingdom. And that's what we're trying to do. So that's everything I got for you guys.

Thanks so much for listening to the King of the Ages. All of this is all going to be God and an honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

So we, they out.