



**A Sermon for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 7, 2024**



**Pete Iole
Guest Lay Preacher**

New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH

Click Here for today's Readings:

[Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Preamble: Come Holy Spirit come, come as the wind that blows, come as the fire that burns, come to guide the meditations of my mind, the feelings of my heart and the words from my lips as I attempt to understand God's holy word and deliver that message for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Amen.

This past Thursday we celebrated the 248th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence from England and Sovereign rule. It was also the catalyst that created the Episcopal Church in America. Like countless revolutions, before and since, it required tremendous sacrifice to rise against the ruling power. In our case, Britain was the preeminent world superpower of that age, with a standing army and professional navy. Our first reading picks up the story of David when he is crowned first King of Judah and subsequently as the King of all Israel. David was chosen by God and anointed by the people to make Israel the superpower of that time. To accomplish this David would raise great armies. Throughout history, all Emperors, Regents, and Kings raised powerful armies for the express purpose of protecting and extending their dominions.

I think everyone already knows that I am one of the members here with prior military service. Many may also know that while I'm not embarrassed by my time in the Army, I don't regard it as anything particularly special. I thought I would take this opportunity to explain. In any army under the rule of a king, the generals, officers, and soldiers serve a central authority rather than the populace. The American military has a different origin. The United States has always ascribed to the concept of the citizen soldier. Roughly stated, "civilians have the obligation to arm themselves to defend their communities or nations from foreign invaders and domestic tyrants". The founders of our country recognized the value of a militia, which is codified in the 2nd Amendment. Before ever becoming a country, we called upon this civic responsibility to

mount the Revolutionary War. This is also the reason that each of the 50 States has some form of State sponsored militia, collectively referred to as the National Guard. The theory is that farmers, workers, artists, and professionals alike will arm themselves and respond to threats foreign and domestic, until that threat is removed. Once peace is reestablished, the militia would disband, and members could return to their civilian vocations. While generally effective, we learned very early that what this construct lacked was any sort of regulation or training. This was solved with Congress establishing a small standing army with the responsibility of providing a Cadre of professionals for the voluntary militiamen. This system worked well enough until 1940 when the President convinced Congress to establish the Selective Service Act or Draft. The draft conscripted citizens into military service, sometimes against their will, and lasted until 1973, when Congress reverted us back to an all-volunteer military. This move coincided with the end of the war in Viet Nam, which was not generally supported by the citizen base. Thus showing that the will of the people can prevail over that of a central authority.

I was in high school at this time and just missed the requirement to register. I did however still feel the urge to serve so I joined ROTC when I went to college, thereby incurring an eight-year service obligation. By 1992 I had fulfilled my commitment with ten years of active-duty service. During this decade the armed forces experienced many changes and growing pains. First, trying to find sufficient volunteers, then getting adequate funding to maintain standards all while trying to fight what some call a "Cold War". However, during the Reagan years military salaries and benefits reached competitive levels and the military end strength grew to an almost unimaginable number until the First Gulf War. At the conclusion of Operation Desert Storm, which lasted less than 6 months, the President and Congress agreed they should

reduce the force to a more moderate level or professional cadre. I took this opportunity to establish life as a civilian, but remained in the Individual Ready Reserve, to be called if needed. Eleven years later, in 2003, during the Global War on Terror, I received a letter requesting that I return to service. With my son in a Navy pre-commissioning program, I felt obligated to respond so I re-entered service through the Army Reserves. I was then mobilized to active duty for deployment. When my mobilization was complete, I returned to the reserves and ultimately back to the IRR. My personal story is not special or unique. I volunteered for service and was justly compensated. I returned to my plowshare when my service was no longer required.

My point in relating this is that our military responds to the need of our elected officials and not to the whim of any one individual or King. Those who know their American history will recall that after the Revolution, and during the establishment of the United States, it was suggested that George Washington be made King. He declined, either having faith in the social experiment, or a knowledge that those who bestow power are often fickle. People throughout time seem to revere successful generals. We even elected several as President, Jackson, Grant, and Eisenhower. This should give us some perspective of why the Israelites wanted to elevate David to the role of King. History is replete with stories about the rise and fall of mortal kings and emperors. We seem to crave the stability they offer at first and then find, often within the span of a lifetime or less that the concentration of power gets corrupted. I believe that this is one reason that Jesus never proclaims himself as King of the Jews but rather tells us that his kingdom is not of this world.

Consider our Gospel reading today, where Jesus is beginning to build his following, but he is not well received in his hometown. The members of his

synagogue question the source of his wisdom, seeing him only as a lowly carpenter. Jesus proclaims, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house". In response to the skepticism of his neighbors, Jesus took his ministry to other villages. He sent his disciples out in teams of two, giving them authority over unclean spirits and instruction to take nothing else except a staff. This demonstrated a reliance on the Holy Spirit and the power of their message about God's word. Jesus' comment about prophets not getting due respect from those most familiar with them is also reflective of our human nature.

History has many examples but let me relate one from our Revolutionary War. Casimir Pulaski was the second son of a Polish Catholic Advocatus (like feudal lord or minor nobleman). He served in the Polish Cavalry but was generally undervalued and achieved limited success. In 1771, hoping to establish a more democratic government, he was involved in an unsuccessful mission to kidnap and remove the sitting King of Poland. Accused of trying to assassinate the King, which was never the intent, he escaped into exile. Constantly on the run, he was put into debtor's prison while in France until he was ransomed. He was then introduced to Ben Franklin who persuaded him to offer his services to the Continental Army. Initially denied a commission on his arrival Pulaski took a lower position under George Washington. He soon proved his value during the battle of Brandywine when he mounted a counterattack against the British. Washington saw Pulaski's potential and promoted him to Brigadier General. Pulaski was given authority over all cavalry and ultimately his own command. After a string of campaigns, Pulaski was fatally wounded near the end of the war, during the siege of Savannah. To this day General Casimir Pulaski is regarded as the father of the US Cavalry but little remembered at home.

There were other foreign generals of that war that demonstrated their vision of a world without kings: Lafayette from France, Von Steuben of Germany, and Kosciuszko, also of Poland. These are only a few examples where we can see that a person does not need to be respected or honored [especially at home] to be useful to God. Likewise, each of us has a mission. Perhaps we carry more than one cloak, a staff, and a pair of sandals but at whatever level we are able, the Holy Spirit will aid us in our responsibility to spread the word of God.

Amen