

“Christ the King”

New London UMC

Nov. 20 & 21, 2022

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 23:33-43; Colossians 1:11-20 NRSV

Rev. Joyce Rich

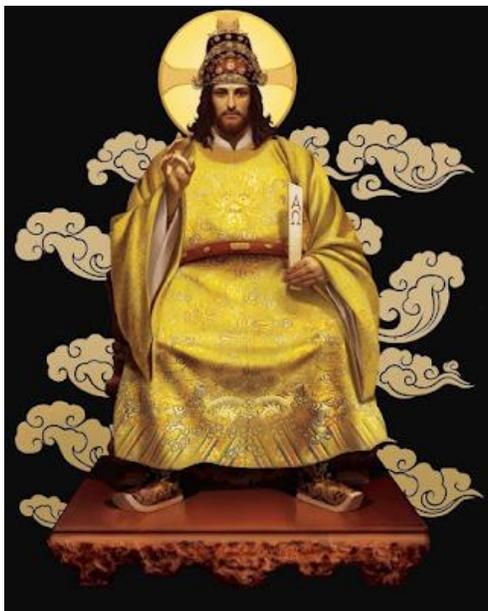
Christ the King, or the Reign of Christ, is the celebration that closes the liturgical year; and the “new” church year will begin next week with Advent. . . . Although we can’t really ignore the birth of Jesus when we talk about “Christ the King” – can we? Didn’t Jesus’ humble birth set the stage for people looking for a new born king – and not finding him where kings are usually found? And yet over the centuries there has been this desire to view Jesus, at all ages, as being more “kingly” – whether that took the shape of an

engraved golden nimbus behind his young head, and having gold encircle the neckline of his robe; or to have him wear a more elaborate robe, a jeweled crown upon his head, and a cross topped golden orb in his hand – that’s the Globos Cruciger, symbolizing that he is the Savior of the world and has triumphed over all,



with authority over all the world. Obviously we have not fully accepted the fact that the King of Kings was raised in a working class Jewish home.

Nor have we gotten over our tendency to want to say, “Our King is better than your king!” – because we don’t want Jesus to look bad in comparison to all the other kings in



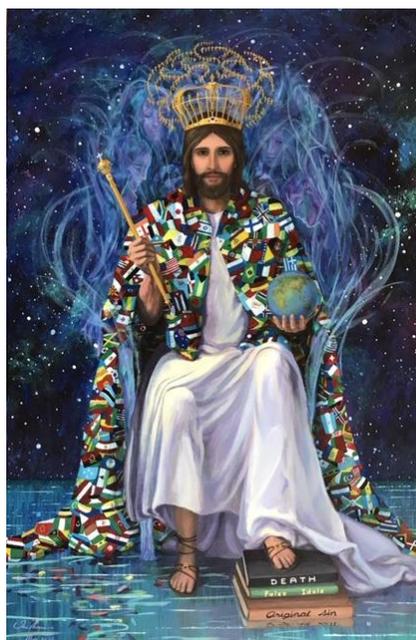
the world. We don’t want Jesus to be seen as some second-rate king! And if all the other kings and emperors and potentates in the world are going to wear sumptuous robes and have priceless crowns and scepters – then Jesus should have them too. Yes, even though we believe Jesus is far different from other



kings, in our heart of hearts we still want him to have everything all those other kings have: the crown, the robe, the scepter – for that full-on brilliant kingly presence. Sure, we know that Jesus didn't have all that on earth, but we certainly want him to have all of that – and more! – in heaven. That only seems fair since Jesus never really had the chance, or inclination, to “lord it over” anybody here on earth. So we do like to imagine how it will be to see Jesus as the Lord of All.



Have you seen this image of “Christ the King” by Ira Thomas (*used with the artist's permission*)? Let's look at some detail views of the painting.



Around his crown we see a host of gold figures trailing off into the universe. And he is seated on a throne of angels.



In his right hand is a golden scepter with a cross atop it. The scepter of righteous. The rod or staff of a shepherd.

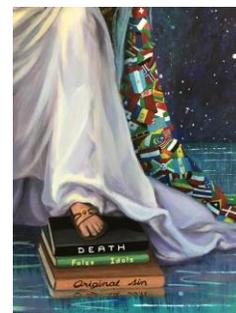


In his left hand he holds the world. And every flag of the nations of the world make up his robe – for he rules over all the nations: past, present, and future.



The sandal on his right foot bears the Greek letter ‘alpha’ . . .

and the sandal on his left foot bears the Greek letter ‘omega’ – to represent that he is the beginning and the end of everything. Under his foot, three books symbolize how original sin, false idols, and death are all subject to his rule.





All told, it makes a compelling image of Christ the King. . . . And yet, something seems to be missing.

This painting by William Shakespeare Burton is titled, “King of Sorrows.” Take a good, long look. Here is the King who experienced the very human pain and sorrow of rejection, trial, taunts, mockery, torment, public humiliation, and excruciating death on a

cross. The King who wears a crown of thorns, and in his rope bound hands he holds a reed as a scepter. A short sword pierces the ragged red cloth to hold it wrapped about him. At his feet are Roman spears, and a flail rests next to his shoulder. The inscription on the stones says he is “REX” or “king” of the Jews. This is the King who asked for forgiveness for all who did not know what they were doing. The King who was asked to remember one of the men crucified beside him. This is the King who replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”



This is Christ the King: the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; in whom all things in heaven and earth were created; in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell; and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

We celebrate that the reign of Christ will never end.
Amen.