

Christ the King – a reflection with images

Sermon on Sunday 22 November 2020

by Geoff Oates, Lay Reader

A year can be a very long time, and this has been a year like few others. The calendar year has five weeks to run, and it is still too early to guess how it will end. But for the Christian Church we mark the end of our liturgical year today. Next Sunday, Advent Sunday, we celebrate our New Year, but today is the crowning of the old year, and the festival of Christ the King.



*With thanks
to Cherry Laithang*

As we have travelled through the cycle of this year, again and again we have met Jesus.

We have heard him foretold in the voices of ancient prophets, calling out in the darkness – and there has been so much darkness in this past year - and promising light: foretelling a descendant of the great King David.



*Tanner, Henry Ossawa, 1859-1937. Annunciation, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.*

But we meet Him first in the anxious excitement of a young mother-to-be, and in the social embarrassment of an unexpected pregnancy. A tiny child, vulnerable and helpless, entrusted into the keeping of a human mum and dad. Not in a royal palace, but in a labourer's home in an obscure backcountry village.



*Honthorst, Gerrit van, 1590-1656. Nativity Scene, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.*

We have shared the magic of the moment of his birth and lived again through the complex mixture of nostalgia and hope, of sentimentality and profound theology, that make up our Christmas festival. This Child, we now proclaim as our King.



Ferenczy, Károly,
1862-1917. Sermon
on the Mount, from
**Art in the Christian
Tradition**, a project of
the Vanderbilt Divinity
Library, Nashville, TN.

We have met a charismatic young man. A public speaker, a storyteller, a man who speaks our language. A man who holds our attention, a man whose teaching makes sense, and subtly breaks down our prejudices, challenges our selfishness and our want of courage. This man we now proclaim as our King.



*JESUS MAFA. Healing
of the Daughter of
Jairus from **Art in the
Christian Tradition**, a
project of the Vanderbilt
Divinity Library,
Nashville, TN.*

We have met a counsellor. A man who has the right word for us in our time of fear and crisis. Who understands our need for healing in so many different ways, and who whispers closely in the ear of the needy, 'Don't be afraid'; 'Your faith has made you well'; 'Go home, your daughter is alive'; 'Your sins are forgiven'. A man who declares himself sovereign over sickness, over evil spirits, and over sin. This man, we proclaim as our King.



*Cecco del Caravaggio:
Christ driving the
money-changers from
the Temple*

We have met an angry young man. A man who backs his words with deeds and will not hold back from direct action when places of prayer are made home to the tables of the moneychangers. A man who will break the most sacred of rules if he sees they are used for the oppression of God's people and not for their protection. This rebel, we now proclaim as our King.



Ghislaine Howard:
The washing of the feet
*from the Methodist
Modern Art Collection*
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artcollection](http://www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection)

We have met a visionary. A man who does not hesitate to name injustice, to offend the self-righteous and hypocritical, the powerful and the greedy. A man whose love of justice demands change, who proclaims a new Kingdom where those who quietly serve the needs of the lowest will be celebrated and held in honour, and where pride and self-regard will have no place.



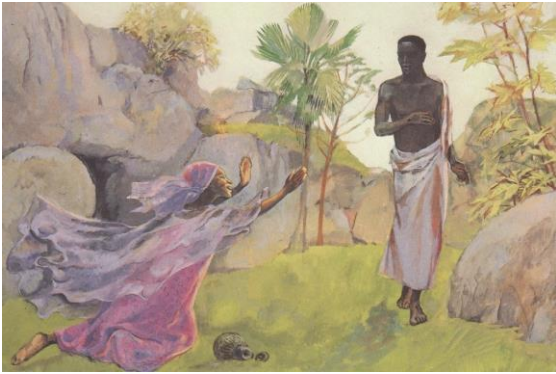
*JESUS MAFA. The Lord's Supper, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.*

We have met a man sharing bread and wine with his followers. A man offering his very self to be their sacred food and drink. A man who invites each one of us to share in that mysterious feast as we share his gifts together week by week at his table.



*Moyers, Mike. The Days Are Surely Coming, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.*

A day later we meet the same man, again turning his words into deeds and dying in agony on the cross of calvary. His body broken for us, his blood shed for us. A crown, not of gold but of thorns. This man, even in his deepest hour of humiliation, we acknowledge as our King.



*JESUS MAFA. Easter - Christ appears to Mary, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville. TN.*

Then, in a garden on a Sunday morning, we met a man we had not expected to meet again. A man who is changed, and yet who is that same man we saw hanging dead on the cross. For the man who was sovereign over sickness and sin, is sovereign also over death. This man, we proclaim as our King.



John Brokenshire: Untitled
from the *Methodist Modern Art Collection* © TMCP, used with permission.
www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

We bade farewell to a man who was taken from our sight in a cloud, but soon after we welcomed a new being into our lives, a Spirit that is not Jesus, but is of Jesus, and is inseparable from him. And in the power of that Spirit, we proclaim to the world that Jesus in our King.



*Landowski, Paul
Maximilien, 1875-1961,
Leonida, Gheorghe
1892/93–1942. Christ
the Redeemer, from **Art
in the Christian
Tradition**, a project of
the Vanderbilt Divinity
Library, Nashville, TN.*

We have met a man who reigns in everlasting Glory with the Father. One in whom the saints, the faithful of today and of all ages past and yet to come, are brought together in union.

We have met a man who will return again and make his Kingdom complete.

We pray: Heavenly Father, as we acknowledge the kingship of your Son with our lips, grant us strength, courage and patience to live our lives as his loving and obedient subjects, that through us the whole world may come to see His glory, and share with us the everlasting peace of His Kingdom.

In the name of that same Jesus Christ we pray, Amen