



Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora  
November 26 2023 - Reign of Christ  
Canon Paul Walker

This past Wednesday marked the 60 years ago since the deaths of President

John F. Kennedy, C.S. Lewis, and Aldous Huxley. These three public figures all died on the same day 60 years ago: a politician and two authors. Each of them had the powerful ability to reflect on and articulate a vision of humanity that was larger than what they saw or experienced, in the hopes that it would inspire others to embrace that vision.

Extraordinarily, their visions are all still spoken of and referenced 60 years later as something to pay attention to. Whether it be a vision of Narnia, a vision of a Brave New World, or a vision of a land where all are free, their ability to articulate those visions captured the hearts and imaginations of those who listened to them and read their material that we might live together in hope.

Today we conclude the year of the church calendar. Our year ends on a high note with the Feast of the Reign of Christ.

This reign of Christ the King is captured at St. John's in the stained glass window over the narthex doors. As if to suggest that everyone who comes through these doors, whether they know it or not, enters into a

new kingdom. It is a vision that is intended to capture our imagination. The window depicts an image of Christ the King sitting on the heavenly throne, wearing the royal purple robe, with a crown on his head, an orb in his hand, and offering a blessing with his other hand. Symbols of authority that point us to a reign of peace and mercy where all the enemies that threaten to consume us and overwhelm us are overcome. The placement of that window over the doors is strategic, that as we come and go from this place, we always remember where we belong and to whom we serve.

The readings suggest that the King of this kingdom is like no other. This is a King who has relinquished all power, been stripped of all authority, and willingly embraced the position of being the last and the least.

The King and his subjects are marked by the single characteristic of one who serves the lost, the forgotten, and the most vulnerable; the condemned, the lowly and the abandoned. Ironically, the King willingly occupies and inhabits the position of these people in order to restore hope.

It is the trajectory of the entire church year: from the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the flight to Egypt, and the teaching in Galilee that the meek, the mournful, and the persecuted are blessed. From the calling of the fishermen and tax collectors, to the great deeds of power - healing the blind, cleansing the leper and

raising the dead; then, turning his face towards Jerusalem; the rejection, condemnation and violent death as the powerless passover lamb, consumed and swallowed up, is finally brought through to the great and unexpected turning point of the resurrection and ascension. At every point the angels sing, the desert blooms, the lost are found and the condemned are freed, because this is the “year of the Lord’s favour.”

Today is an opportunity for us to stand back and reflect on the larger picture of the year, the whole arc of the incarnation, and be reminded that its goal and its end is to restore hope for those who have lost hope, to restore life for those who have only known death, and to restore light to those who only live in darkness. Its goal and end is to settle the lost in a home that is secure and stable for all people.

That is the vision of Narnia, a Brave New World, and a land of freedom. Those visionaries who died 60 years ago together embraced a horizon in all its fullness when they joined the communion of saints in light. When inherited this kingdom that they spoke about and wrote about, and inspired us to embrace, they rejoiced with all the angels, archangels and the great company of heaven as they saw that it was true and lasting, and was established for all peoples.

As we stand back and reflect on the larger picture of where all this is going, we are invited, as the apostle Paul says today, to have a spirit of wisdom and

revelation that our heart might be enlightened as we “come to know him.”

We are invited to know this King. We are invited into the banquet hall. We are invited to be in the company of this King that our vision might be broad and long.

That invitation is for our hope, but also for our exhortation. It is for our hope so that when we experience the depths of sorrow, grief, and alienation we might be consoled to know that when we are there, the King is with us - that is the whole promise of the Incarnation. I am with you.

But the invitation to know the King is also offered so that when we emerge out of the shadow of the valley of death, when we are seated at banquet tables, when we are forgiven our debts, we are also invited to have mercy on others and recognize Christ in the face of those who are not there yet: to feed the hungry, visit the sick, clothe the naked and be with the condemned.

In all of this, the primary task of this King, who undoes the powers of this world, is to always have mercy.

The King has offered us mercy, and as citizens of this kingdom we are invited to extend the offer of mercy to all of those who need it.

May that be our mark, our identity and our passport, that people who belong to this King, we might always be known for being a people of great mercy.