

Sermon: No Kings!

(Preached by the Rev. Paul Wu, at St. Giles Ottawa, Nov. 23, 2025)

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

“On October 18, more than 7 million of us rose up at more than 2,700 events in all 50 states, DC, and cities worldwide to say: American has no kings, and the power belongs to the people.” That’s the opening statement on the website www.nokings.org, a site dedicated to coordinating protest activities against the so-called ‘kings’, but really taking aim at the President of the United States Donald J. Trump, and his obvious authoritative tendency in discharging the power of his office like a king.

What started, this No Kings protest, as a mustering of various individuals and groups right after the inauguration of Trump only 11 months ago, has really grown to be a sizeable movement across the U.S. and the rest of the world. I suspect it will only continue to grow, so long as Trump remains in office and continues to wield the power of his office in an oppressive, over-the-top and quasi-legal way.

The list of his over-reaches of presidential authority is impressive: denying Harvard University from accepting foreign students; deploying masked ICE agents to terrorize people of colour; sending national guards into L.A, Chicago, Portland and other cities governed by Democrats; shutting down the Federal government; suing or threatening to sue news organizations; accepting money or a private jet from other countries; imposing tariffs against allied countries based on national security; threatening to attack or invade Greenland, Panama, Venezuela, Mexico, Nigeria; actually bombing Iran in conjunction with Israel. I am sure I’ve missed some; it has just been relentless, day after day, scandal after scandal.

Any one of those scandals would’ve triggered an impeachment proceeding had it occurred on the watch of any other president. But not Trump, as he continues to rule, like a dictator, unabated and unchecked. “No thrones, no crowns, and no kings”, shouted by protesters across U.S. to no avail, as they see their own beloved country descending further into chaos.

I could emphasize with the sentiment of ‘no kings’, as the United States was in fact founded on the protest against taxation without representation, against the rule of King George III back in 1765. And not just in the U.S., much of the western civilization has since then, by and large, got rid of monarchy as a system of governing a population. Many of the remaining monarchs, like in Great Britain and Canada, had their power much reduced and constrained by constitutions written by their subjects. Monarchy and kings (or queens) have pretty much gone out of style.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, today is the last Sunday in the Christian calendar. It is the Sunday for those of us faithful believers to embrace, hope, and celebrate the kingship of Jesus Christ. The thing is, I am not so sure if Jesus were to come again in glory, in the so-called Second Coming of Christ, those of us in the Church would be truly ready to embrace Christ as King.

One of my gripes against whoever constructed the Christian calendar lands particularly on this Sunday. I still recalled when I started preparation for ordained ministry roughly 20 years ago, this last Sunday was called ‘Christ this King’ Sunday. Now it has been rebranded as the ‘Reign of Christ’. Some of you might think it’s the same thing, and that I am just trying to pick bones, fuzzing over minor details. But I see the same dynamic at play in the rewording of hymns, as a number of traditional hymns have been rewritten with the specific intention of removing the language of kingship of Jesus Christ. I shudder to think if those in the Church could not even pay lip service of calling Jesus a king, how would we be able to embrace the eventual and actual kingship of Christ.

And that kingship, as taught by Apostle Paul in Colossians 1, our Scripture reading today, is all but terrifyingly encompassing, absolute and supreme:

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—
all things have been created through him and for him.
He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is
the head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have first place in everything.”*

Perhaps the best and most well-known depiction of Jesus as the absolute ruler of all comes from the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine art, of a specific iconographic arrangement commonly called 'Christ Pantocrator', or literally "Ruler of All" or "Almighty". On the cover of this week's bulletin, we see one such image, with his right hand raised in the shape of IC, the short-form of Jesus Christ in Greek, representing also a gesture of blessing. His left hand is holding a book, the Gospels, symbolizing his role as the Word of God and teacher of truth.

But that stern look on his face, always stern, never smiling, represents the divine judgement that inevitably comes with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as all powers and principalities will be subdued by Jesus. All peoples and nations will bow before him and worship him, for he is the Lord of all Lords and King of all Kings. Go ahead, look at him in that iconic image, look into his eyes, in a prayerful meditation, let it sink in. Are you ready to surrender your autonomy to him? Are you ready to give him your unquestionable loyalty? Are you ready to receive Jesus and proclaim him as your king? It's not easy, isn't it?

In considering this kingship of Jesus, we should also bear in mind the halo surrounding his head, in the shape of a cross, for this king is also the one who is willing to die for us, and was in fact crucified on the cross, for us. He did so bearing the sins of humanity, even before any of us was ready to repent. *"For he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5) This is the kind of king we have in Jesus.

Amazing love, how can it be,
that you my king should die for me?
Amazing love, I know it's true,
and it's my joy to honor you, in all I do, to honour you.

So we come to this king not in fear, but in humble repentance. Just like one of the two scoundrels who were crucified along with Jesus. We come to this king pleading,

"Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."
"Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."

And with joy, we hear his reply, his call, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)

Oh what a paradise it shall be. *“The wolf will romp with the lamb, the leopard sleep with the kid. Calf and lion will eat from the same trough, and a little child will tend them. Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on the holy mountain of God.”* (Isaiah 11:6)

Guns shall be turned into plowshares, tanks into pruning hooks. Nations shall not fire rockets against nation; neither shall they wage war any more. People will buy houses and live in them, mortgage payments will never go up, nor do rents. Grocery prices will be reasonable, farmers be well compensated. International trades will be fair but not free, all people will find satisfaction in their work.

Health care will be plentiful, no longer be rationed. No more babies dying in the cradle, or old people who don't enjoy a full lifetime. One-hundredth birthdays (like Kent Lister had couple of weeks ago) will be considered normal—anything less will seem like a cheat.

God will move into the neighbourhood, pitching tent with us. God will wipe away all tears from our eyes—mourning gone, crying gone, pain gone and death shall be no more. For behold! God is making all things new. (Revelation 21:3-5)

No kings! No problem. Just give me Jesus.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**