

Supreme Ruler, according to the truth of Proverbs 21:1,

**The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord;
he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.**

And in this great, hidden work of shaping history—of toppling arrogant rulers, or bringing them to power; of establishing just law or allowing it to be trampled—in all this, the Jesus who loves me is acting as Lord, strangely working all things together for the good of his people, those who love him.

Soon, what is hidden will be revealed; the invisible Hand that governs nations and peoples will become visible and everyone will know for sure what Nebuchadnezzar, that ancient despot, learned most painfully: **Heaven rules.**

I mean a great deal then, when I say as a Christian: Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is Lord of the nations.

—Ron Lutjens



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Credits.

Cover art: Pencil rubbing of a Celtic cross on a leather journal. The Celts were an ancient "barbarian" people that come onto the scene in Europe in the 6th century BCE, and are eventually suppressed by the Romans. Celtic culture survives though, in Ireland. Eventually many Celtic tribes there surrender to Christ under the preaching of St. Patrick in the 5th century AD.

Old Orchard Church

January 25, 2009 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

**Sing praises to the LORD, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.**

**For he who avenges blood remembers;
he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted.**

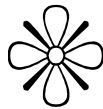
—Psalm 9:11-22—

Jesus Christ, Incarnate Son of God and Lord of the Nations

Jesus Christ is Lord—
Lord of the shapes of countries;
Lord of commerce and progress,
of the rise and fall of civilizations;
he is Lord over the nations and over this nation;
he presides over the endless stream of rulers
and governors of the states of the world.
Once subjected himself to the fickleness
of what we call history,
a pawn in the power struggle of little men,
he was, in his resurrection and ascension, confirmed
as the unseen Ruler over every historical contingency;
the One who decides all things
out of the richness of his mercy,
the power of his passion for justice,
and his patience with a broken world.

And blessed be his Name for this:
From all the nations in their broken glory
He gathers his very imperfect people,
Making them, by his own atoning sacrifice at the cross,
One people—the only Holy Nation in the world.

Alleluias and praise be to him who so loves the world!



Today's Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Daniel 4:28-37

Gospel Reading: John 18:33-40; 19:7-16

Sermon

“Pressing On to Know Christ the Lord—in Power and Pain”

Philippians 3:4-16

Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

A Meditation On Our Words

What do I mean when I say as a Christian: Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is Lord of the nations?

I mean, first, that Jesus is the hope of the nations; that people can only be reconciled with God through faith in him. Thus, *I mean that Jesus Christ and his message of saving grace and love must be taken by believers to the nations and then lived out there in humility and compassion.*

But when I say that Jesus is Lord of the nations *I mean, secondly, that in his mercy he gives a grace common to all human beings* in the fantastic richness and variety of created nature and cultural history and in the protection of just law and government, and that he calls on his people to live with courage and self-sacrifice, standing for what is just and good in the life of their nation.

But when I say I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord of the nations, *I also mean that in every historical moment, he supervises and governs the nations;* he rules their rulers. Christ causes the rise of governments and civilizations and takes credit in his Word for their downfall. He holds sway over congresses and parliaments and dictatorships; over their lies and cover-ups, over their navies and armies, mysteriously influencing all things. Yet he regards every human decision as fraught with significance and utterly accountable to him.

But let me not forget this, that when I say that Jesus Christ is Lord of the nations *I mean too, that when he returns he will sift the nations, punishing their evil but saving from their historical life whatever has been good, true, and beautiful, bestowing it all on the City of God,* according to the promise of Revelation 21:26,

The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into the city.

When I say Jesus Christ is Lord of the nations *I freely confess that he uses secondary causes,* orchestrating them all as Supreme Governor of the world. He will use war; he will use economic freefalls; he will use the political laziness of electorates or he will use their passion; he will use the treaties of nations and prayers and the propaganda of ideologues. But make no mistake: when I call Jesus Lord of the nations I mean to say he brought about the fall of atheistic Soviet communism in eastern Europe in the late 80's; that he humbles American pride as he sees fit; I mean that in his mercy he restrains the dark powers of secularism in Australia so that people are not crushed by the destructiveness of writing God out of their own worldviews; I mean that it is he, in his sovereign lordship, who has exalted men to be President of the United States, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama.

I say, then, a great deal when I confess that Jesus, the Son of God, is Lord of the nations. I say what ought to make me more bold and more confident as a disciple of him who loved me and gave himself up for me: I say that no elected official, no tyrant-usurper of political power, no fighter plane, no secret police, no popular vote anywhere can resist him when he determines to act. Though his rule and influence remain invisible to me, nevertheless, he is at work as