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Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalms 46

Luke 23:33-43

Colossians 1:11-20

## *The Festival of Christ the Cosmic Ruler*

**<sup>11</sup>May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup>He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>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.**

*“The Festival of Christ the Cosmic Ruler”* is a relatively new terminology for this day. It is found in our Disciples “Chalice Worship” book. “This day is observed on the last Sunday of the Christian year just prior to Advent to celebrate the anticipation of Christ’s completion of God’s work for reconciliation of all things in heaven and on earth.” It is called “Reign of Christ” or “Christ the King” Sunday in most traditions. In the German tradition, since it is the last Sunday of the church year it is called “Eternity Sunday” or “Sunday of the Dead”.

But here the reference to Christ and his Reign or him as King, is troubling. Our Disciples tradition has struggled for years to be as clear and concise as possible with reference to our contemporary situation, and these terms are difficult for many. For US Americans, those two terms, Reign and King ~ when thinking of Earthly figures, this brings about impressively negative associations of power that constraints human development. And as theology progresses over the years, our understanding of Christ has grown. Christ ~ as part of God ~ is not one of a manipulative force, but is more of a constant support of our own empowerment for compassion, to do justice and mercy. And the concept of God in Kingly terms takes us away from some of the more feminine aspects of God. So the Disciples came up with the words Cosmic Ruler instead ~ and then turned it into a festival! A celebration!

This is a day months in the making! A year actually! Because all that we have done in this past church year has led up to this day of celebration! We started talking about the Hope Partnership about a year ago at this time, and by January we had decided to pray and work for hope, and to make efforts to turn this church around in hope! Looking over the year we have done so much! We filled out forms, had the assessment, attended the house meetings, worked and prayed to be instruments of God’s power here in Hyattstown! And we are now at the culmination of our efforts! The best is yet to come!

Last year's Advent/Christmas/ Epiphany season was when we focused on the foundation of this life and our faith; then came the Lent/Easter weeks when we focused on how this life of Christ found its profound truth through suffering and overcoming all life's obstacles and why Jesus' life is so vital to our understanding of the complex aspect of God; with Pentecost and Trinity Sunday highlighting the other parts of our rich tradition. Then came 26 weeks of Regular time - where we focus on why and how this Faith is vital to every aspect of our lives and of this planet. And now this Day is the culmination of it all. BOOM!!! COSMIC is the only word that can really cover it all today!

So, as is off my habit of seeking the Dictionary for insight, I found this definition of Cosmic:

1. Of or relating to the regions of the universe distinct from the Earth.

2. Infinitely or inconceivably extended; vast

Yup ~ that is our faith! Vast! Beyond our Earth - heavenly - and yet, when we throw Eternity Sunday back in the mix for good measure - we come to realize that this cosmic aspect is in each one of us. We are literally and figuratively part of the cosmos. After all, we ARE made of Stardust!

From the sermon text: "<sup>11</sup>May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." This is not referring to after death - this means now! We are given this right, and we can experience - and most likely already HAVE experienced - this magnificent sense of wonder with God! This is what keeps us returning to the truth that God is real in spite of the attempts by those trying to pull us away.

We feel this Cosmic pull from God and we know that we can trust it. It IS reconciling, it IS empowering, it IS inspiring and educational and cosmic - taking us beyond our small selves into the truth of the universe and we are, therefore, better able to live with the challenges of our small selves on this planet. And this gives us hope, for now and for the future.

Recently I saw a video of parents being interviewed about their visions of the future, and then they were filmed watching their children talk about THEIR visions and hopes for the future. The parents were so critical and negative about the survival of this planet, and the children - excited. The video ended with the plea to parents to listen to their children. With this in mind - I recall Christ's words to let the children come to him, and that the kingdom of heaven is for those who believe as a child does . . . Eternity-cosmic-festival celebrations are for those who know that God is all powerful and will not worry about the future but live this moment as loving, hopeful children!

So this is the day we allow ourselves to believe in a future of this planet and to celebrate the faith that we have! Our Faith has ancient ties, but is ever ready to evolve. Our faith encompasses humanity and eternity! Our faith shows us that there is a life after death and we need not fear anything! Our Faith is Mystical and Scientific. Our Faith is calling each of us to recognize our Stardust and live each day becoming that part of God that we are designed to be!