

**A Revelation of Hope, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr.** 25061126  
**John 18:33-37 and Revelation 1:4b-8**  
**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 26 November, 2006**

In my family, Thanksgiving means a family reunion. It means travel, re-connecting with relatives, a huge turkey dinner, and watching the Detroit Lions get beaten. Sue, Margaret, and I traveled to Chicago, where I left them. On Thanksgiving afternoon we gathered at Mike and Heidi's with their three boys, aged twenty-one months to twelve years and Heidi's sister Holly's six children, including seven-year-old Conner.

As we passed the football in the back yard, Conner jumped on his older brother's back, pummeling him. Then, he knocked down his bigger cousin Evin, holding his face into the ground. "Oh, that Conner. Nothing fazes him."

"He is the toughest kid I know."

The boys rough-housed, hitting each other and wrestling. Our daughter and son-in-law, who await the birth of their first child in April, looked upon all of this dumbfounded. They wondered whether, if they had boys, they would have to put up with such noise and violence.

Why do we allow such noise and violence? Why do we remark, "Boys will be boys."? Why is football such a huge national pastime? We support professional, collegiate, high school, and middle school football. It is even in the elementary schools with Pop Warner football. This past week, a college was in the news for signing up a high school freshman to come to that college to play football in four years.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons reports, "Each year, there are more than four hundred forty-eight thousand football-related injuries to youths under age fifteen that are treated in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, ambulatory surgery centers and hospital emergency rooms. The total cost of these football-related injuries was more than \$6.89 billion in 1999." (This cost includes medical, legal and liability, work loss and pain and suffering costs.)<sup>1</sup>

Why is boxing a sport? This is an activity where men and now women are encouraged to punch, hit, and knock down an opponent.

Why does a president and his advisors imagine that we can change a regime in another country by going to war? We see the results of such violence in Baghdad with people blowing themselves and innocent by-standers up. Shiites and Sunni's are killing each other. The body count in Iraq is listed between a minimum of 47,781 and a maximum of 53,014.<sup>2</sup>

What are we proving here? This is *our* world, a world where "boys will be boys," a world of violence, power, and solving problems by seeing who has the greatest strength.

Jesus faced Pilate and said, "My kingdom is not from this world."<sup>3</sup>

We recognize Jesus as Lord. He is a ruler— a king. Today is "Christ the King" Sunday, according to the Christian calendar. It is the end of the church year. Next week is the First Sunday in Advent, the beginning of a new church year. Everything in Jesus' life has come to this moment: that all of creation recognizes Jesus as Lord.

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<sup>1</sup>American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons website, [www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org)

<sup>2</sup>[www.iraqbodycount.org](http://www.iraqbodycount.org)

<sup>3</sup>John 18:36

Pilate was not the only one confused by Jesus' statement. Where *is* Jesus' kingdom? Our ready answer is, "Jesus' kingdom is in heaven." Is Jesus the ruler of a kingdom far away in time and place? Or are we willing to make Jesus *our* Lord in *this* time and in *this* place? Ten minutes ago we prayed, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." If that is our prayer, then we anticipate Jesus' lordship being right here and right now.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews." Jesus did not want his followers fighting. In Luke, he told Peter to put his sword down.<sup>4</sup> This is the Jesus who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus' kingdom was not from this world. It was from God's world. Jesus came into our world to show us what God's world was like.

The scripture from Revelation begins with the words, "Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come."<sup>6</sup> Jesus freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus gave up his life peacefully, showing us a different way of living, a way of peace, freeing us from the sin of violence. This is not simply a personal salvation for private benefit. This is a salvation of creation.

We, you and I, are a kingdom of priests. This is the priesthood of all believers. A priest is a mediator between God and humans. We have a job to do. It is our duty to teach others what God is like. The God revealed by Jesus Christ is a God who loves this creation and every creature in it. This is a God who weeps when Muslims, Jews and Christians kill each other. This is a God who, like a caring parent, wants to see its children acting in love and care towards each other.

We can teach our children not to rough-house, not to pummel, and not to fight. We can and we must.

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<sup>4</sup>Luke 22:51

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 5:9

<sup>6</sup>Revelation 1:4b

<sup>7</sup>Revelation 1:5b-6