

Editorial: What Trump and ‘Last Supper’ have in common

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Two things happened last Friday that share something in common, despite the differences in detail.

As you’re likely well-aware, thanks to social media, the Paris Olympics opened with [an extremely controversial scene](#) Friday night.

The scene has appeared enough on social media and in the news that it’s not necessary to describe it in detail here. It’s enough to know the arrangement of the drag show performers looked similar to Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci’s “Last Supper” and more so like “[Feast of the Gods](#)” by Dutch artist Jan van Bijlert.

Whether the scene was a parody of the Last Supper or an homage to Greek gods, we can be sure it wasn’t merely a drag show.

You also may be aware former president and current candidate [Donald Trump told Christians](#) on Friday they won’t have to vote again in four years if they vote for him in 2024.

Complaining that “my beautiful Christians” don’t vote enough, he told them to “get out and vote, just this time. You won’t have to do it anymore. ... In four years, you don’t have to vote again. We’ll have it fixed so good, you’re not gonna have to vote.” It’s not certain if he was being honest or facetious.

Clearly, the details of each situation are markedly different. Even so, they share something in common. They both tempt Christians to imitate the world instead of Jesus.

Common denominator

Those who designed the Olympics' opening ceremony are aware of Christianity, da Vinci's "Last Supper" and the Catholic Church's estimation of religious iconography. Philippe Katerine, [the blue man](#) in the center of the scene, told CNN he "was brought up as a Christian." Despite their objections, they had to know what they were doing and how it could—would—offend.

Though we may not know precisely what Trump meant by "we'll have it fixed so good, you're not gonna have to vote," Trump had to know what he was doing and how his words would be received by supporters and opponents.

The two situations are not alike in the details. In fact, [Trump blasted](#) the Olympics' opening ceremony as a "disgrace." One thing they have in common is the awareness of the actors. In a world as interconnected and sophisticated as ours, I can't believe they acted innocently, without knowing the effects of their words and actions.

But they have something else in common we ought to give closer attention. Both tempt Christians to imitate the world instead of Jesus.

Pagan temptation

The Olympics are a pagan event, however secular the Games have become. What can we expect from a pagan event? Certainly not special reverence for Jesus.

When we think Jesus is being mocked, rushing to his defense—as if he needs it—is to forget the humiliation and mockery he took on himself. When the people hurled insults and spit at him, Jesus returned none of it.

Christians confronted with pagan displays may criticize them, but we do well not to lash out against them, remembering our forebears in the early church had no power to lash out at the pagans surrounding them. Instead, they imitated Jesus' love and kindness to the degree they drew pagans to Jesus.

Our forebears' Christ-imitating love—even in the midst of persecution—was world-changing.

Jesus doesn't need us to climb the water tower to defend his honor. Even if the controversial scene was intended to mock Jesus, like a slur against your sister spray painted on the town water tower, lashing out at those involved doesn't honor Jesus or his name.

We must resist imitating the world's reaction to offense.

Political temptation

We also must resist imitating the world's hope in politics.

Rhetoric like Trump's comments quoted above is like a siren song to Christians to place too much hope in the world's politicians and their promises. This isn't a temptation unique to Trump supporters.

It seems reasonable to put at least some hope in politicians, though. What's the point in voting for them if we don't have some hope in them? And I do vote and will as often as the law allows.

It's the reasonableness, though, that makes it tempting to buy the promise everything will be fixed so good you won't have to vote again. It's the reasonableness that blinds to how old this temptation is and how often political promises haven't been kept. Things have never been fixed that good—except for one time, and it wasn't by a politician.

Politics is a worldly endeavor, however many religious principles, however much religious language it incorporates. As thankful as I am that Judeo-Christian principles are part of our government, as thankful as I am for committed Christians being involved in politics and serving their communities well, neither is sufficient to warrant placing too much hope in them.

As often as we make a choice between one politician and another, between one policy and another, we must not lose sight of the proper object of our hope—Jesus. We also must make sure we're responding to the right promises—God's promises.

It's easy to imitate the world instead of Jesus. It's easy to imitate worldly ways instead of Jesus' way. We always must guard against this temptation—especially when it's disguised so well.

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