

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

JESUS, THE ELECTION AND YOU (PART 2)

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Well, it's good to be with everyone today. Honestly, I'm just so glad you guys showed up. I had a nightmare last night that I was preaching to an empty room. So, grateful that you are here.

If you have a Bible, go ahead and find Romans, chapter 13. That's the passage that we are going to be in. If you did not grab communion on the way in, I want to encourage you to get your hands on this because that is how we are going to end our time together today across all of our locations, just in a time of communion.

Not long ago Phew Research Institute did a study where they asked Americans to come up with one word to describe how they feel about politics these days. And here is a graphic to show you the results.

It's about what you would expect. Roughly 80 percent of the responses were negative. Just two percent were positive, about 10 percent were neutral. The most noticeable words mentioned were words like: messy, embarrassing, crazy, bad, corrupt. It's no surprise that what makes the top of the list is the word divisive.

Another graphic reveals that the majority of Americans are always or often exhausted about 65 percent of the time, angry 55 percent of the time when thinking about politics. Additionally 56 percent rarely, if ever, feel hopeful, about 78 percent rarely, if ever, feel excited.

And I'm just going to go out on a limb and say that likely captures how you think and feel about the topic as well, regardless of your political views.

It's a sobering set of statistics, either way you cut it, especially considering how much this topic dominates the narrative of our media and our culture, especially in an election year.

It just feels like it's a never ending battle of disagreement, fear, and division where people are vying for a platform, shouting over and demonizing the other side. And it's beginning to feel like we can't win. Or, worse yet, that we're all set up to lose.

So, we're just taking a couple of weeks within our Church In The Wild message series that we've been in all summer long. We'll be in it another couple of months this fall. But we took last week and this week to talk about politics in the wild, if you will.



Actually that's not the title. The title I've given it is very intentional, Jesus, because that's where we want our focus and our allegiance to be, The Election, because it's looming, and You. How are you doing? What are your thoughts? How is your spirit?

I just want to go ahead and say what I told everybody last week, just so you know. It's not like I was really looking forward to doing these two weeks. There are a whole bunch of other topics I'd much rather preach on.

And I was kind of leaning toward talking myself out of addressing this. But then a trusted friend took me to dinner and he said, "Hey, why wouldn't you?" And I told him, "This is a minefield."

And he said, "Well, listen. Don't let the small percentage of people at the extremes of any issue rob the 90 percent of your people of a shepherd. And that's my heart."

Now, please know that I don't say that because I have all of the answers. I don't. I don't have any special knowledge. I don't. I don't have a direct connection to God any more than you do because the same Holy Spirit that lives in you lives in me.

I'm a pastor, not a pundit. What that means is that in our culturally divisive society I just don't feel the urge to create a social media post to every single thing that happens in culture. Now, there are times when I will after praying about it, seeking counsel, hoping to be somewhat discerning.

But my primary goal is to help shepherd our church through this political minefield and contentious presidential election in November, to be a people set apart, to be a people marked by grace, truth, and love in the midst of the crazy. And hopefully come out on the other side with a little bit of hope and our sanity intact.

And I just want you to know today that when you read through church history, you notice a trend that in times of cultural chaos and division, when the church, (because it doesn't always) the big C church moves toward unity and order, there it thrived.

When the church got wrapped up in the cultural climate of the day, then it was diluted. The word church itself means, those who are called out. It's a community that is living for the Kingdom of God and resides as a beacon of stability within the culture, to be in the wild but not of the wild.

And from the first century the church has existed in the margins of the host culture, living in an alternative but compelling and beautiful way that is winsome in the name of Jesus—an outpost of the kingdom of life within a culture of death.

So, when we, in the western world in America, begin to feel society pushing us to the margins, it's easy as independent Americans to sort of freak out and clamor for more power and a platform, often through politics. Or we can realize that the church has been in exile before, it started there and it actually thrives there.

Some of the biggest movements of God, even right now, today, are happening in places where there is not religious freedom—places like India and China.

And when the church gets pushed to the margins of society, she doesn't lose her identity, she actually discovers it. She doesn't fall asleep, she wakes up.

I think most of us, today, feel like we've been dragged into a fight that we don't want to have. It's stained and strained some of the relationships that you have with extended family and friends. There is somebody in your family right now you're not talking to because of politics.

Maybe you've gotten wrapped up in the back and forth conversation in the comments section on social media, what I call the devil's playground, because nothing good ever happens there.

Maybe you've become so consumed with your favorite political news channel that it is on all of the time. Now, there is nothing wrong with having a favorite political news channel, there is nothing wrong with watching it from time to time just to see what is going on, but to have it on in the background all of the time as a steady drip is not good for your soul. It's not made you very happy or holy.

And if you were to lay down your defenses, you'd have to admit that you are miserable right now. You're worked up into a lather of anxiety or anger and it's just beneath the surface ready to blow up on anybody who says the wrong thing. That is called misguided allegiance. And no political candidate or ideology is worthy of all of your allegiance, only Jesus and Him alone.

So, here's the question that we threw out last week to kind of frame our time together in this contentious talk. Here it is:

As followers of Jesus, how should we think about, participate in, and respond to the incredibly divisive political climate we find ourselves in?

As followers of Jesus, (this message is primarily geared to those who are followers, it doesn't mean that if you are not a follower you can't get something from this, I think you can, but it's primarily toward followers of Jesus) how should we think about, (so it begins in our minds) participate in (how should we live our lives, how should we vote—we're going to talk about civil disobedience here in just a minute, it's going to be fun) and respond to the incredibly divisive political climate we find ourselves in?

And last week I just said you might be tempted to think, "Well, in Jesus' day politics weren't really much of a thing, and it would have been a lot simpler, and they didn't have all of the divisions that we have today."

Think again. It was more complicated, more divisive—we could argue—because they didn't just have two or three political ideologies, they had a lease six if not more.



And these six ideologies all thought they were right and they wanted Jesus to advocate for their ideology. They wanted Jesus to put on their jersey, but Jesus refused. He urged them and us to put on His.

One of the things that we pointed out last week is that Jesus asked Simon and Matthew, guys who would have been totally the opposite side of the political aisle, to both join His small group and to be a part of His disciples. And they were political enemies. Yet, they learned to walk together as friends and brothers. They eventually died together proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

We said last week that early Christians didn't have a voice or a vote in Rome, but they turned the whole Roman world upside down. How? Not by going to the polls but by the way that they lived their lives, specifically living out five values or issues that were important to God, because people are behind these issues.

They are issues that our politics has a tendency to divide us today. We said you can be a single issue voter, but you can't be a single issue Christian. And those issues were: diversity, justice, sexual ethics, life, and peacemaking.

And the Roman world just sat back and said, "Man, how in the world? Where is this coming from? How are you living this kind of anti-cultural way?" Because they were living out the values of the Kingdom.

So, today we can be encouraged by that because we do have a voice and a vote, at least here in America, and yet we can, regardless of the vote, live out the values of God's Kingdom to a watching world.

God is not sweating the results of the election and we shouldn't either. He has worked through godly leaders and He is so sovereign He can work through godless leaders.

And He is not nearly as concerned about who sits in the Oval Office, as on the throne of your heart. That's where we left off last week.

So, we have to ask ourselves the question, "If that's the case, then why do we allow this to affect us so much as the body of Christ?"

Well, in the 1970s there was a seminal thinker on post-Christianity from the UK named Lesslie Newbigin, and he predicted that as the west is secularized (this is in 1970s) meaning that as we move farther and farther away from a Christian society or worldview, he said that religion would not go away, but that it would redirect to politics.

And we're seeing that prediction realized today. Right and left are no longer two opposing political points of view that keep each other in balance; they are rival religions gridlocked in a war screaming for your affection. And we've become so captured by our ideologies that they become idols.

So, we have to ask ourselves if we are a people who have become more loyal to a political party or candidate than we are to Jesus and His teaching.

And the reason we've become so agitated, if we were honest, the reason we've become so anxious and angry about politics is because they have become our functional savior.

So, politics start to feel like religion, and candidates begin to feel like saviors, campaigning begins to feel like evangelism, rallies and conventions begin to feel like worship services, and elections start to feel like either salvation or damnation.

Listen, man. I'm not saying don't be involved. I'm not saying don't vote. I'm not even saying don't care or be prayerful, I'm saying, as a follower of Jesus, don't get wrapped up. Be involved, don't get wrapped up.

Yes, it is important. It's just not the most important. Why? Because history and the Scriptures show us that God is not dependent upon any human leader or candidate to exact His purposes. He is not dependent upon any candidate, and He is not threatened by any candidate because He's God.

And if there is one thing that all of the political ideologies that were around in Jesus' day have in common, it's that they are not around anymore. They are gone. They were earthly, and we have to remember that. It just puts it into perspective for us today.

Long after the election, long after... We're not talking about Democrats, Republicans... It used to be, by the way, early on in our country that Democrats and Republicans meant different things. So, it's always changing. But the Kingdom of God never changes.

So, for our time today I us just to take note, to look at another letter that Paul writes to another church in the wild, the church in Rome. And specifically, I want to look at Romans 13.

Now Rome was the epicenter of everything going on in culture during the time. And the church that he writes to, get this, had experienced a massive cultural crisis that had disrupted their lives, creating a new normal, that led to an incredible amount of division.

Sound familiar? That is like us over the last four or five years. So, he writes to reorient them back to what is most important as residents of the Kingdom of God.

Now, if you're not familiar with the book of Romans, you owe it to yourself to read the book of Romans at least once in your lifetime. It is the Mount Everest of the New Testament. It is Paul at his absolute best. He is flexing all of his intellectual capacity to communicate what the gospel message is, and maybe more importantly what the gospel message is not.

In the first half of Romans, he is explaining what it is. In the second half of Romans, he's applying the gospel message to our everyday life—the way we that we live.

So, he says, "This is how the gospel applies to relationships, and to your money, and to your marriages, and to the word place.

In chapter 13, this is how the gospel applies to the way that you think about, relate to, and interact with governing authorities, who, by the way, have very different perspectives and priorities than you do.

Can I just say this? Buckle up. This is not going to be a fun passage. In fact this passage is probably going to feel a little bit like salt water in a wound, because we have a tendency today... We're going to read this passage and our view toward government institutions and anybody in authority, our trust in them is at an all-time low.

So, what Paul is going to say is going to sound very backwards to us. And we're going to have a bit of a resistance to it. With that in mind, let's look at verse 1 together. Paul says:

"Everyone,"

I always get nervous with this word everyone because it means nobody can sit this one out. It's like, "Hey, everyone, regardless of where you are, your political views, gender, socio economic level, "Everyone must," here's our favorite word, submit, don't you just love that word?

The reason why we don't like that word is because it's been misused and weaponized, tragically, within the church, and tragically, within Christian marriages. Actually, it should have never been handled that way. It's actually a beautiful word. We'll get to what it means here in just a minute. But he says:

"Everyone must submit to governing authorities." Romans 13:1a (NLT)

Hey, if you all could just hold your applause and your amens just keep it to a minimum. I don't want to be shouting over you all, making a racket because you're so excited about that verse.

That verse isn't going to be anybody's life verse, I can tell you that. But it's there. He goes on. It's going to get worse or better, depending on how you want to look at it. He says:

"For all authority comes from God," Hm. Who? God. Yeah. Hm. "...and those in positions of authority have been placed there by," who? "God." Romans 13:1b (NLT)

Yeah, some of you didn't believe that. Some of you are like, "What? Are you kidding me? In this cultural climate? In this political landscape?"

"Do you understand that if that political candidate gets into office, these policies are going to go through? They run directly counter to God's word. How in the world could God place that candidate with that character into office? How can He do that? Doesn't He care?"

As one lady commented on social media this last week, I'm sure she's a very wonderful person, but I'm going to clip when I said, "Hey, God's not nearly as concerned with who is in the Oval Office as who sits on the throne of your heart." And she commented. "I don't know why we have to take either or. God cares about our elected leaders." And I totally agree with her Yes He cares. He is just not dependent upon.

So, what we've got to understand is the word sovereignty of God has got to go not only over our political views but over this entire chapter. What that means is that God is in control. The sovereignty of God means that He rules with His feet up. He is not taken off guard with what happens in society.

And maybe a good majority of us would say that we believe in the sovereignty of God if for nothing else, we're in church and we think we probably should say that, but our thoughts, our actions, our words, our comments on social media betray us. Because the way that we are acting, the things that we are saying do not show that we believe in the sovereignty of God.

How could God place somebody in a position of authority whose policies, priorities, perspectives run counter to His word or their character runs counter to His word? Read the Old Testament. He did it all of the time: Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and Herod just to name a few.

They thought they were in control. But they had a temporary kingdom. Their kingdoms came and their kingdoms went, God's Kingdom reigns forever. It's like Chico in a video game you just can't keep God down. Verse 2:

"So," and here's this pesky word again, anyone, "who rebels,"

This word rebel is interesting because it doesn't necessarily say disagree, we can disagree. It doesn't say even like civil disobedience, we'll get into that in a minute, he's saying anybody who rebels "against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished." Romans 13:2 (NLT)

Man, that's a tough verse to swallow. Don't shoot me. I'm just delivering the mail. But once again it goes back to God is so powerful and sovereign that He can work through ungodly leaders so when we freak out in force over a candidate, think about it this way, that is an insult to the sovereignty of God.

God is going, "You think that my Kingdom is threatened by their candidacy?" Verse 3:

"For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong." Romans 13:3a (NLT)

What is he talking about? Well, understand, this is where we have to do a little bit of separation in our thinking. Hey, we've got to be okay with a little bit of nuance. For most

people, we are so influenced by the corruption of the laws, that maybe that's what we react to in this passage.

But Paul is talking about, not the abuse of the laws, but the laws themselves that ensure a civil society, of which we should all be thankful for.

I'm really, really grateful that we don't live in the wild, wild west anymore but we have laws and rules in society, rules for the road, rules where nobody can just break into your house and take what they want. I'm super, super grateful for that because I've got teen-aged daughters on the road. And he goes on and he says:

"Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you." Romans 13:3b (NLT)

And, once again we've got to differentiate here. He's talking about the upholding of the laws, not the misuse of them.

We have a number of people who work in government positions and in law enforcement in our church and the vast majority of them are good people who love God, and are trying to do a difficult job in a very difficult environment. And they don't hear thank you enough. So, we just want to thank you. We want to honor you and the position that you have stepped into.

As a pastor I know what it is like to be judged by the worst of my profession. So, we just want to honor you for the role that you are doing.

That's what Paul is driving at. He goes on and he says:

"The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you.

"They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment," here's a key term, "but also to keep a clear conscience." Romans 13:4-5 (NLT)

In other words, what he's essentially saying is, "Don't just go the speed limit to avoid getting a ticket, but go the speed limit to have a clear conscience before God. And I just want you to know that I wrote that for me. That's for me. I need to apply that. That's what he is essentially saying here.

Now, keep in mind that this isn't the only time Paul talks about submitting to authority in this way. In other applications of the gospel he would say to children, "Obey your parents." Not because mom and dad are perfect or have all of the answers but you obey them, "as unto the Lord."

In marriage he would say, "Husband and wife, you mutually submit to one another as a way of submitting to God."

Jesus, Himself, submitted to the will of God the Father and went to a cross for you and for me. And now he is applying the same thing to governing authorities. Verse 6:

“Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid.” Romans 13:6a (NLT)

Wow. Alright? I’ll just keep moving. I don’t even know what to do with that one.

“They are serving God in what they do. Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor,”

Hey, by the way, you can do that even if you disagree:

“...to those who are in authority.” Romans 13:6b-7 (NLT)

Man, this is a hard teaching. Because our minds often drift toward corruption or controversy within authority figures and governing institutions.

But the primary point that Paul is making here is that he says, “Hey, we just need to acknowledge that there are public services that we all benefit from.” Things like roads, bridges, emergency services, etc.

And for that reason we pay our taxes and are grateful for the services provided. And we respect you, we honor you, even if we disagree with you.

Now, some of you may be going, “What in the world is this doing in the book of Romans? What does this have to do with the gospel of grace?”

Remember I said that the back half of Romans is the application of the gospel. So, if you were to go back one chapter, chapter 12, verses 17 and 18, you can check it out for yourself later today, Paul writes this, “Live in such a way that everyone can see that you are honorable.” Live honorable lives.

“But you don’t understand who they are. You don’t understand their character. You don’t understand their policy.”

Verse 19:

“Don’t get revenge. Leave that to God.”

Chapter 13 is a very practical and very painful way of applying those verses. I don’t have a ton of time to unpack this but I do want to mention it because many scholars believe that part of the reason why Paul includes this in the book of Romans is because he knows full well that the Caesar in Rome at the time would likely intercept this letter, before it could get to the church, and read it.

So, Paul wants Caesar to know that his intentions were not to overthrow the government and take it by force. Certainly to influence and impact it, but not overthrow it. And he wanted Caesar to know this so he includes that in chapter 13.

Many religious philosophies of the world see this as their primary goal, to remove the existing government and replace it with a government of their own. Many Jews at the time of Paul would have thought that way. They believed God wanted them to overthrow Rome and establish a kingdom. They were called Zealots, of which Simon was one of.

But Jesus consistently made it clear that that was not His intention for the church. And I think that the disciples thought that it was. They thought Jesus was ushering in His Kingdom coming and that He was going to overthrow the Roman government and they were just waiting for the spark to get the fire going.

That's why the night before Jesus' crucifixion in the garden when the disciples are all together and the Roman soldiers show up, Peter goes, "Oh, man. This is where we go to war." And he draws a sword. And he cuts off the ear of a Roman soldier named Malchus, and he's probably expected Jesus to turn to him and go, "That was such a Braveheart move. Let's paint our faces. Let's go to war."

What does Jesus do? He goes, "Peter, put the sword away." And then He reaches down, grabs the ear of Malchus off of the ground, snaps it back on like a Lego block. What in the world do you think would have been going on in Malchus' mind?

Jesus says, "Hey, man. We've not come to take this world by force. My Kingdom is not of this world." I think it is important for us to understand that.

John Stott points out several different ways that a relationship between the church and the state or church and government can go. And there are four of them. I don't have time to unpack all four, but I want to give you two. The first would be what he would call:

Theocracy: The church controls the state

A theocracy means that the church controls the state. And it sounds kind of good on paper, but then when you see instances throughout history where this has happened, it usually just corrupts the church.

Complete power ends up corrupting the church. It never goes well because we take our eyes off of the mission that Jesus has given to us.

It's likely what Paul had in mind when he writes Romans 13, is something called partnership. John Stott mentions this. Here is his definition.

Partnership: Church and State recognize that each has distinct God-given responsibilities, and they encourage and collaborate with each other in fulfilling these roles within society.

Now, obviously we live in a very broken, sinful world and so that's the ideal, it doesn't mean that it happens. So, what this practically means is that when the state or the government understands what its roles and responsibilities are and the church understands what its roles and responsibilities are, then the community should thrive.

Meaning that the church probably shouldn't build roads, repair bridges, or issue driver's licenses. We wouldn't be any good at it.

What the church does is live for the Kingdom of God, point people to Jesus, meet the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, provide spiritual direction, provide a sense of community, and on and on we could go.

The government is in charge of providing our civil laws and systems to make sure that everybody is safe.

Now, oftentimes this phrase gets wielded against the church. As a pastor I hear it all of the time—separation of church and state. And so, oftentimes those words get weaponized toward the church, like, "Hey, you need to sit down and be quiet and not speak to the separation of church and state."

But when you begin to understand that the origin of the separation of church and state was to keep the state out of the church, and you understand that when the government moves beyond its lanes of issuing driver's licenses, repairing roads and bridges to redefining marriage, gender, and when life begins then the church speaks to that because the word of God speaks to that. That isn't us becoming political. The government has become theological.

So some of us would say, "Well, the politics of Rome, at the time, must not have been nearly as hostile toward the church. It must have been friendly toward the church for him to say that they should submit to governing authorities."

Think again. The Roman authorities, at best, were unfriendly and ignoring the church, at worst actively hostile in persecuting the church. Paul would not have approved or endorsed the vast majority of what the Roman government did, and if there would have been a democratic election, which there was not, he wouldn't have voted for any of them.

Now, you may feel like you're kind of caught like, "I don't really know who to vote for or choose because both don't seem like really good options." And you may have some unfavorable opinions about our political candidates today.

But in comparison to Caligula, who was the president of Rome at the time, and Claudius and Nero, they make our political candidates look like angels. And that's saying a lot.

I don't have time to go through the whole laundry list. So, let me just give you a sampling. The leaders in Rome, at the time, would often have family members killed to

ensure that they never challenged their power, they openly committed incest, they crossed dressed in public, they would take random people from the crowds and throw them in arenas to be torn apart by wild animals for entertainment like in the Coliseum.

One installed his favorite horse as a senator and then promoted him later to counsel. Could you imagine how those meetings went? All in favor say, "Aye." All opposed, "Neigh." Hey, that's the best I've got. It's a bad joke. It's the best I've got.

My point is this, nobody was chanting, "Four more years." They were all saying #notmycaesar. And it is within that context of a dumpster fire of government that Paul writes Romans 13: Submit to governing authorities and honor them.

Paul, why? Well notice that he doesn't use the Greek word obey he uses the Greek word submit. Those are different. I think that was intentional.

In other words, he's not saying, "Hey, I'm not telling you to be passive, I'm not telling you to roll over, I'm not telling you to blindly go along with anything that runs counter to God's word.

What he is saying is, "You cannot control what happens in the state or in the government. What you can do is make sure your own house is in order. You can conduct your behavior in a way that says, 'I believe that God is sovereign and in control regardless of the outcomes.'

"They may think that they are, but in the words of Joshua from last week, 'I serve the Commander of the Lord's army.' And so my response to their unjust leadership isn't to freak out, stir up fear, blow up in anger, or become so anxious that I get sick. I am not going to forfeit my witness for Jesus to a watching world. Human leaders have an expiration date, God never does."

I know you're asking this question. So, let me just go ahead and answer it, "Is there ever a time to disobey?" Very definitively, "Yes, there is." It's called civil disobedience. I like how Tim Keller defines it. He says:

"The Bible gives a very clear basis for civil disobedience;" key word, civil, "namely, if the state commands what God forbids, or if the state forbids what God commands, then civil disobedience is a Christian duty."

Well, what does that look like? Well, I don't know for sure. It depends upon the circumstance. I know what it doesn't look like. I doesn't look like fear, it doesn't look like anger, it doesn't look like explosive comments on social media, it's doesn't look like anxiety. It looks more like the fruit of the Spirit.

Well, how do you exercise civil disobedience? I don't know, let Daniel be your guide, He did it best in Babylon. There were moments when Daniel submitted to the ungodly

direction of Nebuchadnezzar and there were other moments when he calmly and respectfully defied.

I think you have to wonder if you read this if Paul was using this as a reference point, a discussion Jesus had with the Pharisees and the Herodians in Matthew 22. I referenced this last week.

They came to Him and they set their political differences aside because they both wanted to get rid of Jesus. So they came to Jesus with a political question. And they said, "Hey, Jesus. Should we pay taxes, or not?"

It's a trap. See, in those days taxes were paid to Rome. Rome had moved into Jerusalem. They occupied Jerusalem. They were very oppressive. And so the taxes that they collected were used to fund Caesar's lavish lifestyle and pay the salaries of the soldiers who oversaw the crucifixions.

So, it's a trap. And if Jesus says, "Yes, you should pay your taxes," They can accuse Him of approving of the oppression, at least indirectly making the Jewish Zealots angry and they'd want to kill Him. If He says, "No," then the Romans can say that He's inciting a rebellion and they could kill Him as well.

Jesus is in a real bind. So, what does He do? He Jesus jukes them. That's what He does. He crosses them over, breaks their ankles and He asked them a question. He says, "Hey, give me a coin. Whose image is on the coin?"

"Well, Caesar's."

"Okay, then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and you give to God what is God's."

And notice here what their response was. Both the Pharisees and the Herodians marveled. What does that mean? They knew the brilliance of that answer, because in that answer is the subtle teaching that applies to us today. It's a message that undermines the government's claim on our lives.

The coin has Caesar's image on it, but whose image is stamped on you? God's. So, yeah. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Give him the tax because his image is on the coin. But you give God your everything, because His image is stamped on you.

If I could summarize it into a statement that is a take away for us to apply to our lives:

Never obey "Caesar" in a way that makes you disobey God.

Never defy "Caesar" in a way that dishonors God.

Never obey "Caesar" and it's in quotes because you could put in our governing authorities today. Never obey the government in a way that makes you disobey God. But never defy "Caesar" in a way that makes you dishonor God.



Remember, you live your life for an audience of One. He is in control when things seem out of control. And you losing it and going off just reveals your lack of trust in the complete sovereignty of God.

And, by the way, it's usually the waitress or family members or friends who get hit by the shrapnel of your anger, or your anxiety, not the ones who are in Washington.

So, he goes on in verse 11 and he says, as he finishes up the passage:

"This is all the more urgent," he uses that word, "for you know how late it is; time is running out."

He's not talking about nighttime. He's talking about the return of Jesus. He says "Time is running out. It's urgent. And then he says:

"Wake up," that's been a big theme for us as a church over the last year. Awaken. Wake up.

"...for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

All that means is that we are one day closer to Jesus' return than we were yesterday.

"The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So," here's what you can do, "remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living. Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see." Romans 13:11-13a (NLT)

"What can I do when things seem so out of control?" Well, one of the things we can do is we can get our own house in order. We can repent before God. We can remove the dirty clothes. We can put on the shining armor of right living.

What that means is that policies might change the way you vote, but hearts will be changed by the way that you live. And then he finishes this up in verse 14:

"Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 13:14a (NLT)

In other words, when the subject comes up on Facebook in the family text chain or in the break room, even if you have a different opinion, people should see Jesus in you. They should see the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, patience, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control.

So in the remainder of our time I just want to get super practical. I wanted to do this two-week series not so close to November that we'd be so emotional that you couldn't hear what I said. Maybe, we're already there. I don't know. Or, not so far away that by the time we got to the election you'd forget everything that was said. So, hopefully the time is about right.

I want you to hold onto these five principles, these take aways. Write these down, pull out your phone, take a picture of the screen behind me to remember them. Talk about them with your small group. Really allow God to do a deep work within you.

Here's number one, I've just got five:

Remember your IDENTITY

Remember your identity. I Corinthians 7 says you've been bought with a price. You belong to Him. Remember who you represent. Jesus and His Kingdom coming. Jesus does not need you to defend Him. Jesus needs you to live for Him. Remember your identity.

Now two:

Behave with CIVILITY

Colossians, chapter 3 says, "Get rid of anger, rage, malice behavior, and slander." Think of it as taking out the trash. Just clean that stuff out as often as you can. It is possible to be convinced of something and to be kind toward the people you disagree with.

In fact, the Spirit of God mandates it. In Romans, chapter 14, Paul writes to a group of Christians who were divided about an issue that they couldn't see eye to eye on. For them it was, "Should we eat meat sacrificed to idols?" And people believed differently about it. Some didn't have any problem with it. Some, it violated their conscience. And they started attacking each other.

So, in chapter 14, Paul says this, "When you eat," and you could replace that word eat with vote, "be convinced in your mind and at the same time be kind."

It is easy to be convinced and not kind; it's also easy to be kind and not convinced. To be both convinced and kind requires maturity. And as Christians, we need to up our game in both.

Dallas Willard said it so well, "I think a mature Christian is someone who is very difficult to offend."

Number three:

Demonstrate HUMILITY

In Philippians it says, "Jesus humbled Himself to death on a cross." Some of us might be, "Well, this is unfair. And this is unjust." And Jesus could have said the same thing. But He humbled Himself to death on a cross and God elevated Him.

I think oftentimes we get that backwards because pride causes me to distrust God so I elevate myself before I can give God the opportunity to.

And listening requires humility. Listening means and humility means that I'm going to seek to understand not just be understood. To truly listen to another person's point of view means that I've got to set my ego and agenda aside and focus on the other person for a bit.

When you refuse to do that and you keep talking about you, and you keep talking about how you believe and how you see it and you just kind of assume that you already know what the other person is going to say—listen—that's pride. And pride leads us to label others. And it's a detriment to relationships and it's a detriment to influence and impact.

See, here's the deal. If I can label you, I can be done with you. I don't have to listen to you anymore. I can set you in a little box, I can assign you to a category, I've got you all figured out.

This is what we do in society, "Oh, you're one of those people. I already know how those people think, believe, and behave." "Oh, you're a Republican?" "Oh, well you're a Democrat." Or, "You're a liberal." Or, "You're a conservative." Or, "You're a left wing socialist."

Well, "You're a right leaning fundamentalist and all of your oppressive ideology is going to take us back to the stone age."

"Oh, yeah. Well you are a tree hugging, renola eating, hemp wearing wacko."

"Oh, yeah. Well, you're a conservative ignoramus."

"Well, I know you are, but what am I?"

"Well, you're rubber and I'm glue. Hmmm."

And Jesus doesn't call us to be done with people. Jesus calls us to love people, even the difficult ones and that requires humility.

Can I just say that the way that you argue drives people away from Jesus? You can technically be right, and still be wrong.

Number four:

Strive for UNITY

Psalm 133 says, "How good and pleasant when we dwell in unity. I said this last week, it doesn't mean uniformity. It does not mean that we all agree. It implies that we don't, on secondary issues.

Dallas Willard says one of the darkest sins is contempt where we are divided and so we see the other person that we're divided from as unworthy of respect. And no one's heart will change by trying to change their political view. That doesn't work. Nobody is waiting with baited breath for your comment.

And so, can I just say refrain from having your two cents on every social media comment section? You're not changing anybody's mind. Not every comment needs a rebuttal. Not every debate needs to be stepped into.

I've never seen on social media where somebody brings out a counter point and they go, "You know what? You bring a very, very valid point. I think you've changed my mind heart and soul."

No, even if they do bring out a good point, what do we do? We just dig our heels in because we don't want to be wrong. If you can't disagree in a way that isn't disagreeable, then don't debate. It's like the old saying: Wrestle with a pig, you both get muddy.

Number five. Here's the last one:

Be known for CHARITY (love)

Be known for charity or love. Jesus said, "Love your enemy's and pray for those who persecute you."

I want you to commit this verse to memory between now and the election. Keep it in front of you every time you panic, every time you get angry. Every time you get fearful. Every time you get that crazy text on the family text chain from somebody who has a totally different political view than you do. It simply says this:

...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

So, can I just ask you this today? How are you doing? Like really. How is your spirit? And is it defined more by fear and anger than it is power, love, and self-control? That's not the Holy Spirit. It's unholy spirits.

Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are My disciples." Not by how you vote, but by how you love. And how tragic would it be if your friends and family at the end of this life knew who you voted for but they never really knew who you lived for.

I think Paul was an athlete because he constantly uses athletics as an analogy. I don't know about you guys, but I've been totally fixated on the Olympics over the last two weeks. Every single night it's been amazing. Some incredible moments.

I think the best moment, though, came when Cole Hawker... Did you see this? He's a local, Indiana boy. He came from behind to win the race. Nobody was expecting him to. He used to train by running around Geist Reservoir and Fort Benjamin.

The runner from Great Britain and the runner from Norway were enemies. And they were so focused on each other... In fact the video big net before the race was all about the two of them and their rivalry. One of them was going to win. They didn't know who. And

the whole race they are duking it out. And then, right at the end Cole Hawker just kind of slides in and wins the race.

In the post-race interview I love what Cole Hawker said. He goes, “Well, I knew that those guys didn’t like each other, and they were so focused on beating the other that they forgot to run their race.”

And I thought that’s it. That’s it. Can I just say this to you Christ followers? Don’t be so focused on beating the other, run your race. Run a race which Christ Jesus died for you to have. You stay focused upon Jesus and His Kingdom coming. Don’t give your allegiance to anything or anyone else.

See, one day when Jesus returns we’re going to stand before His throne and we’re not going to be thinking, “Gee. I wonder who won the election.” No, we’re going to be totally focused upon Him. And we’re not going to sing the National Anthem. I love the National Anthem. But we’re going to sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.”

When we stand before Jesus we are not going to declare the greatness of America, and I love America, but we’re going to declare the greatness of the Kingdom of God and give glory to God the Father.

When we stand before Jesus on that day we are not going to debate a donkey or an elephant, we’re going to give glory to the Lamb of God, Jesus who was slain before the foundation of the world, who reconciles Himself to every tribe, tongue, and nation.

And when all of the other kingdoms crumble, and are no more—and they will crumble—Jesus and His Kingdom remain forever. As the old hymn says:

My hope is built on nothing less
Thank Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
All other ground [political] ground is sinking sand...
When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may in then him be found;
Dressed in his righteous alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

Run your race. He is in control. And He is sovereign over kings and kingdoms and nations.

So, right now I can't think of anything better to do than across all of our locations is for us to take this unifying Lord's supper together. Jesus would gather around His disciples the night before His crucifixion, individuals who had very different political beliefs. Jesus unified them around His broken body and blood. That's what we're going to do right now.

So, I want to ask you to take out your communion and right now I just want to ask you, I'm going to leads us together but here's what I just want to ask you as you're sitting there. If the Spirit of God is saying something to you, maybe I touched a nerve. Maybe you're upset. Maybe you're angry. That's fine.

Are you convicted? Is there something the Holy Spirit is causing you to let go of? Maybe for you the first thing you need to do after this is over is to text a family member or a friend and apologize for burning a bridge over politics.

Maybe what you need to do is to make a commitment that you're just going to fast from social media until the election is over. It is not doing your soul any good.

Maybe instead of having the political news channel on the whole time, you're going to turn it off and turn on worship music because it's better for your soul. Less of all of the talking heads and more of Jesus.

What do you need to repent of? What are you holding on to? If you are angry right now, why are you angry? If you are anxious, why are you anxious? You need to release that to God the Father who is sovereign and in control.



This could be the big C church's finest hour if we remember that the church has always thrived at the margins because God is in control, or it could be another black eye to the bride of Christ. She, unfortunately, has enough of those.

So, right now, let's take the cracker that represents Jesus' body and take it together. And Jesus poured the wine that represents His blood shed for you and me that covers over our sins. Let's take that together.

Across all of our locations if you would just stand to your feet right now. I just want to pray and dismiss us.

Father, we come together young and not so young, men and women, boys and girls, people of various ethnicities, people with different political beliefs all unified under the name of Jesus.

God, this is a minefield that we are walking through. We know the stakes are high. So, would You please convict us where we need to be convicted, comfort us where we need to be comforted, that things do not live or die by election results. That when You walked out of a grave, You gave us hope for all eternity.

So, would you help us to know how to think about this, how to participate in it, how to respond to it in ways that at times may defy Caesar, but always in a way that honors You?

We give You the glory that only You deserve. So we ask this right now in the power of Jesus' name. And the church, unified together says; Amen.

Love you guys. Have a great week. We'll see you back here next weekend.

