

Culture Shock - Part 6

Christian Politics & The Presidential Election

Colossians 4:5-6

Memory Verses: Philippians 3:20

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Our world, our culture, is shocking! But we shouldn't be shocked. When the world gets crazy we are called to do three things; don't be led astray, don't be alarmed, and don't be ashamed. So far in this series we've talked about a myriad of cultural issues and how to address them from a Biblical Christian perspective. For example, as a believer, how should I respond to the quarantines, lockdowns, and restrictions placed on me by my government during the Covid Pandemic? Or as a Christian how should I respond to the anger that wells up inside me every time I turn on the news or look at facebook? Or how am I to react to the riots and the racial divide that we see in our country? Or how am I to get my head around the transgender issue? All of these are great questions to the biggest issues of our day, and we've done our best to answer them over the course of the past 5 weeks. If you've missed any one of those talks you can easily watch or listen to them by going to our website or our facebook page.

This week we are going to tackle another pressing cultural issue that is near and dear to all of our hearts right now. Politics. We are weeks away from a very important election to see who will be the president of the United States and the leader of the free world for the next four years. It is a big deal. And I know all of you already have some idea of who you may be voting for our what issues are important to you. There are few things we hold tighter to as a nation than our political beliefs. And that is why this issue is so important to tackle from a Biblical perspective. Because while nothing unites us more than our religious beliefs, nothing divides us as much as our political beliefs. We must tackle politics from a Christian perspective.

Let me say that again, we must tackle politics from a Christian perspective. Now, I know as soon as I said that I made some of you a little uncomfortable. Why? Because saying that makes me uncomfortable. For the past four years as your pastor you know that I have tried very hard to separate the church from my political leanings and even during political holidays I have tried my hardest to keep Christ as the center of our worship rather than patriotic pride. And, I don't apologize for that by the way. There is something sacred about gathering as believers to worship Jesus Christ, and that can easily be polluted by putting anything in His place that does not deserve his place. That is

idolatry and we cannot allow it to creep into our culture here at Stone Creek Church. However, the way we view politics as a church and as individual Christians reflect our beliefs in our God and his Word... and so it must be addressed.

The word **politics**, in its most basic form, means; **"the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in a group, or other forms of power relations between individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status."** So politics exist in every area of our lives. There is a political structure to our families, our communities, and yes, even our churches. **We cannot avoid politics in the church because as Christians we are called to be engaged in the lives of others.** If politics is the way we make decisions or determine relations between others, then as followers of Christ we are called to engage in politics, because we are called, more so than any other people in the world, to see people transformed for God's glory and the good of all people. **Colossians 4:5-6 says, "walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."**

When you love your neighbor as yourself you are engaging in politics. When you bear with one another in love you are engaging in politics. When you depend on Christ to reach the world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed... you are engaging in politics. You can't avoid politics... and to try would be disobedient toward God. **The great Martin Luther King wrote a famous letter, while sitting in the Birmingham, Alabama jail, which addressed this very subject. He said; "In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, 'Those are social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern.'"** Let me be clear this morning, there are no social issues with which the Gospel has no real concern. All people matter to God. He has given them equal worth, equal ability, and equal love. They are created sacred in His image. Therefore, he desires equal justice for all of them, and that demands our political attention.

But we must understand this as well. Christian's don't live just for the welfare of mankind. We live for the Glory of God. And so our politics are going to be a lot different than the world's. This morning I want us to understand that while we must engage in politics to some degree we are not fighting for an earthly kingdom. **While American Politics Seek to Establish One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom.**

So, this morning I want us to look at four biblical directives that Christians should recognize as they think about politics and casting their vote in the next few weeks.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first directive that we should recognize is this... **Christians Should Beware of Making American Politics An Idol**. As believers, God is our King. We worship God and trust him in all things. We depend on him in all things. He is our Lord, our master, our creator, our sustainer, and our savior. Therefore we put our trust in him, love him, and obey him. The Bible shows us that he desires our love. In the Shema in **Deuteronomy 6:5** we see that he desires that we love him with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The Bible also tells us how to obey him. In the ten commandments in **Exodus 20:3** we see that we are to have no other god's before him. Put all of this together and it is clear that... **for Americans there may be no higher authority than the constitution, but for Christians there is no higher authority than God.**

God is our king and thus his kingdom is our nation. **Philippians 3:20** tells us that we are citizens of heaven; a spiritual kingdom, a future kingdom, and above all a different kingdom than the kingdoms of earth. We may be citizens of America here on earth but our allegiance is to the kingdom of God, the nation of heaven first. We follow God's law first, we serve God as king first, we recruit for God's kingdom first. It's okay to be patriotic, but we must beware that American Pride can distract us from our allegiance to God. American pride can make us forget about God's provision in our nation. The more blessed we are, the less we need God. American pride can make us forget about God's providence in the world. The more we focus on our country the less we see how God is working in every country. And, American pride can make us forget about God's passion for all people. We can become so focused on what God's doing here, that we forget we are called to make disciples of all nations.

So, it's okay, in fact, it's a good thing, to gladly support America and participate in the politics of our country, but we must be very careful not to make it an idol. And so let me ask us a few question to evaluate whether or not we may be in danger of political idolatry.

Do you ever find your hope tied to the success of a particular politician or political party? Do you ever see a politician or political party you support as practically perfect? Do you ever struggle to stop, hear, and understand why your political opponent holds his or her position? Do you ever struggle to admit when your political opponent is right? Do you ever side with your political party without thinking through that issue from a biblical perspective? Do politics capture an irresponsible amount of your thoughts or emotions? Do politics ever steal your joy? Is your political speech more kind and honorable, or more harsh and hostile? Are your hidden political thoughts more kind and honorable, or more harsh and hostile? Do you ever hate sin in those you oppose politically but excuse sin in those you support politically? Do you ever hate sin in

those you oppose politically but excuse sin in yourself? Do you ever forget that those you oppose (and support) politically are sinners in need of a Savior? Do you ever neglect to pray for them and share the gospel with them accordingly? Do you ever experience disunity with Christian brothers and sisters over secondary political issues?

Of course these aren't all of the questions we should ask ourselves concerning our obsession with American politics, but we can obviously recognize by the way we answer these few questions whether or not we may have a sin problem that needs to be addressed. I pray, if need be, we would address that today. **While American Politics Seek to Establish One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom.**

The second Biblical directive that we should recognize is this... **Christian Politics Should Be United In The Gospel & Separate From the World**. As we've said multiple times during this series, we are to be in the world but not of the world. We know that we should be holy, sanctified, set apart from the ways of this world and be set apart for the ways of God. But when observing any local church, it is clear to see that Christians disagree about what it means to be "not of the world." How much "not of the world" should we be exactly? Do we dress in orange robes to distinguish ourselves from the world? Do we shave our heads? This is what Buddhist monks do to distinguish themselves. Or perhaps we refuse to use electricity or drive cars. This is what the Amish do. Or perhaps we don't allow women to wear pants like the fundamentalist baptists, or maybe we should speak in tongues like our charismatic friends, or maybe we should abstain from alcohol, dancing, card playing, and R-rated movies. Maybe we shouldn't drink, smoke, or chew, or go with girls who do. Some of this seems silly to some of you. Some of this seems not strict enough to some of you. And, so, of course this is why we have divisions, disunity, and denominations in the church today. How can we be united in the church with so many different thoughts on what it means to be a Christ follower?

By recognizing what is a primary issue and what is a secondary issue. All believers should be able to find unity in a few primary things while agreeing to disagree over a multitude of secondary things. A primary issue is that which is clearly defined in the Bible as to pertaining to what is essential to be a follower of Christ. Christians must agree on primary biblical issues such as; Jesus as Messiah, the Resurrection, Jesus as Lord and Savior, and salvation through faith in Jesus alone. It should go without saying, if one doesn't believe in these then one is not a Christian.

Therefore it would make sense that Christians should find unity and agree on primary political issues. Issues that are essential to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. Christians (Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus) must unite or divide over political positions of primary magnitude that are clear in Scripture and essential to Christianity, and for

those who don't share these political positions, it is questionable if they are Christians and is likely cause for church excommunication. Now that is very strong language, and it is meant as such. If there are political issues of such grave magnitude that it reveals clearly if one is a Christian or not, then we must not compromise on these issues but strongly oppose them and break political fellowship with those who hold them. In the past some of these issues would be the promotion of slavery, participation with the Nazi party, or membership in groups like the KKK. Current issues would include the promotion of abortion, the promotion of the LGBTQ agenda, and participation and or promotion of radical groups like Antifa, BLM, or the Neo Nazis. We as believers know that by supporting these groups and these issues one would have to reject the bible and thus the Gospel, and so these are not only issues we must take into consideration when voting, but these are issues we must take into account when deciding whether one is a brother or sister in Christ. **There are primary political issues which Christians should take a Biblical stand on that will divide us from the world.**

But there is one more thing to consider here. And this may add some confusion to the issue, but I hope it allows you to think deeper and have more freedom in how you vote or allow others to vote. How rigid or flexible should we be when voting on these issues? For example; one may ask, "How could anyone be a Christian and vote for these things?" You may say, "if anyone votes for a candidate that is pro-abortion then that person is clearly not a Christian." Well I want you to think about a few things. What about instances of competing injustices? Let's say one candidate is for injustice A and against injustice B while the other candidate is against injustice A but for injustice B. How do you determine which injustice is worse. Is racist policies worse or better than pro-choice policies? What about people who are willing to make compromises; sacrificing one issue for another. Which issues would you be willing to sacrifice for another? Or what about the realities of actual policies? Meaning, one candidate may be against an injustice, but in reality, the possibility of anything being done against that injustice may be slim to none. We may be against abortion, and we should be, but if the actual possibility of Roe v Wade being overturned is almost nil, then how important is voting for a candidate solely based on that issue? Perhaps the other candidate may be for that injustice but against another injustice which actually has a chance of seeing real policy change? So, when taking into account the above scenarios it is imperative that there is more to it than what most of us have considered, and we must also recognize that God has not specifically told us how to handle the issue of voting. So what do we do? We ask for wisdom; **James 1:5**. We give grace to those who are more flexible than we are; **Ephesians 4:32**. And, in all things seek Christ's glory. **While American Politics Seek to Establish**

One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom.

The third biblical directive we need to recognize here is... **Christian Politics Should Not Divide The Church Over Ancillary Issues**. So this makes sense right? If we are to unite or divide over primary issues, then we must not divide over secondary issues. **Romans 14:1** tells us to no not quarrel over opinions, things which are not clearly defined as sin in the word of God. These are secondary issues. Issues which are not essential to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. We may disagree over these issues but we don't break fellowship over these issues. Some examples of secondary political issues would be; governmental structures such as socialism, marxism, democracy, democratic republic, differing policies such as how to handle criminal justice reform, or restrictions on freedoms such as gun laws or monopoly laws. Some gun laws may be good. Some may be bad. Some monopoly laws may be good, some may be bad. Regardless, the Bible doesn't tell us how to vote on these issues, and so, when God's word does not speak clearly and essentially about an issue do what you believe best honors Jesus. Look at **Romans 14:5-8**. We must make our own decisions on these things while respecting the decisions of others... because we trust that each of us are doing it to honor Christ.

And yes, this includes which candidates and political parties we vote for. It would be hard to find a clear argument made in scripture against voting for a specific candidate or party. Yes, one party may align with more primary biblical issues than the other, but assuredly there is no party that is aligning with all of the primary biblical issues and there is no one party that is fighting for all the right areas of justice or against all of the right areas of injustice. There are no biblical, God endorsed political parties. So, if you know that your brother or sister is a believer and that they care about the glory of Christ and the supremacy of God's kingdom and they vote in a different way then you do... then you should respect their right to vote, pray for their wisdom, and according to **Romans 14:15**, show grace & love. On secondary, non primary issues, **we may disagree on our politics but we don't dissolve our friendships**. **While American Politics Seek to Establish One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom**

Application

And finally, we need to recognize that... **Christians Prioritize The Church, Not A Political Party**. Jesus doesn't tie himself to a party; not the pharisees, zealots, esscenes, etc... Rather, he ties himself to the church. Therefore, the most important thing we can do as Christians is to not be political activist but to be the church. We must preach Christ first, and we must obey the Word second. We must be unified. Look at **John 17:20-23**,

Jesus died for it, and our unity affects the spread of the Gospel. If you decide to break fellowship with a believer because of which party they support then you have lost an opportunity for discipleship. If you burn a bridge with a non-believer because of who they vote for then you have lost an opportunity to evangelize. Be careful that your political zeal doesn't destroy opportunities for the Gospel. I know it seems silly, but something as non-threatening and non-sinful as wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat could have eternal implications in who you can reach with the Gospel.

As believers we must live in diverse community with one another; across political lines, generational lines, and racial lines. We must acknowledge and appreciate our differences, we must address our disagreements, we must listen and learn from one another, and we must love and submit to one another. We cannot allow American politics to overshadow at best and destroy at worst what God wants to do in the church. **While American Politics Seek to Establish One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom**

Conclusion

As we finish up I just want to ask you some rhetorical questions to help us think about all of this today. Is America a Christian nation? Think about it. Here's some questions to help you think about it. Did many of the founders of the United States "generally" believe the Bible? Yes. Did Christian beliefs provide the foundation for many of the cultural values still held by many citizens of the United States today? Yes. Is Christianity of various sorts (broadly defined) the largest religion in the United States? Yes. But, Does the United States government promote Christianity as the national religion? Does a person have to profess Christian faith in order to become a citizen or have the rights of a citizen of the United States? No. Are a majority of people in the United States Bible-believing, gospel-embracing followers of Jesus (i.e., Christians)? No. Is belief in Christian values the dominant perspective promoted by the government, the media, and universities in the United States today? No. So maybe America isn't as Christian a nation as it once was. Perhaps the only Christian nation in America is the church.

Or what about this one? Did God call Trump to be President of the USA?" Here's two qualifying questions. Is God ultimately sovereign over any leader who governs any nation? Yes. But, Does God personally endorse every leader who governs every nation? No. So perhaps Trump or Biden or whoever is no different than Clinton, or Obama, or whoever. God is in control and sovereign over our leaders but he hasn't endorsed any of them. We must be careful what we label as Christian.

Our Nation is Heaven, not America. Our King is Jesus, not Trump. Our allegiance is to the church, not a political party. Our

scripture is the Bible, not the constitution. Our anthem is Jesus Saves, not the Star Spangled Banner. And, the only vote that really matters is whether or not to surrender your life to Jesus Christ as Lord

Don't make politics an idol, don't reject the primary doctrinal issues of the Gospel, don't divide over secondary political issues, and by all means prioritize the church over political parties.

So, who should you vote for on November 3rd? If you are a believer, and after looking at the platforms and policies of each candidate, which includes third party candidates by the way, and after much prayer and seeking after God, whoever you feel like God is telling you to vote for. Keep the kingdom in view and you'll be just fine. It's that simple. **While American Politics Seek to Establish One's Party, A Christian's Politics Seeks To Establish God's Kingdom**