

Canada Votes - Our Response

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] My original plan for this morning was to preach on Romans chapter 4 and to speak about how what Paul says there ties into the story of Abraham. But as I watched the outcome of the election early on at the beginning of the week and started to see how various groups of people were responding to this, there was something that was just stirred within me that felt, I need to address this.

Um, my main concern is simply where do we as Christians fit in this larger story of what's happening in our country today? And what has God said in his word that we can really anchor ourselves to as we look at the outcome of this and the government that we now have.

So this morning's message is a pastoral message. But my heart is that we would hear from God as we look at his word and what pertains to what's happened in this past week as well.

I don't think that it's any secret who most of us voted for on Monday in the federal election. And I know that the outcome was disappointing to many of us. Many feel as though we cast our vote and it had little impact, uh, that it brought little change on the overall picture of government that we have in our country.

And it's certainly not just us here in the room who feel this way. Um, but there's many in our community and our province. And as we've seen in the news in neighboring provinces that feel the same way.

[1 : 29] But what really, I guess, caught me by surprise this week was, uh, some of the way that people have responded specifically to the results of the election.

Many in Alberta and even in our own province are talking about Wexit and sharing posts about starting our own Western Republic of Canada.

Talking about separating and forming our own country. As I watched one of the live broadcasts online this week from a political figure, I was shocked at just how many are posting and making comments like this.

Not only that, but along with those comments, making, uh, statements of, of anger and animosity and hatred and racism towards other people, especially those who are different or think different.

There are many right now who are looking for someone to blame in the midst of all this. And the fingers being pointed at different people all over the place. And in some cases, what's being said to those people is downright nasty and evil.

[2 : 48] This is the moment when we as Christians should be shining brightly. Beacons of light in the darkness. We are in the darkness. We are in the darkness. We are in the darkness.

We are in the darkness. Unshaken in our hope and confidence and joy, no matter what changes take place in the government. And yet it seems as though the church has fallen into one of two pitfalls.

We either completely avoid and abstain from participating in our democracy. We kind of abdicate our responsibility and just allow our world to make the decisions.

Or we participate to some degree, more or less, but we place far too much of our hope and our joy and our confidence in the people and the party that we voted for and hoped we'll win.

And so this morning I just want to remind us all of how our faith in Christ connects to the results that we've seen in this past week. The first thing that I want to remind us of is that our hope and our confidence and our joy should not be placed in the government of the day or the government that we want to see voted in.

[4 : 08] As Christians, our hope and our confidence and our joy is in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But perhaps we've lost sight a little bit of what that means.

The gospel, that word means good news, literally. The good news of Jesus Christ. And Christ means more, but not less, than King.

The good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus the King. Is where our hope and confidence and joy should be based.

And what is the good news of Jesus the King? We're usually pretty quick to go to the cross and the empty tomb, and those are wonderful truths to go to.

But this morning I want to remind us all that the good news of the gospel is about, includes more than just those things. I want you to point your attention to how the good news is described by Matthew and Luke and even by Jesus himself.

[5 : 18] My slideshow thing is not working here, David, but if you want to click through for me, that would be awesome. Matthew 4.23.

Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of what? Of the kingdom.

Luke 4.43. Jesus said, I must proclaim the good news of what? Of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.

Matthew 24.14. And this gospel, this good news of what? Of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

And then the end will come. Acts 8.12. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of what? Of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[6 : 32] And so what is the good news that we, as the people of Christ, have to tell? Jesus, in his own words, said it this way in Mark 1.15.

He said, the time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent. And believe the good news.

Do you hear what Jesus is saying here? What the writers of the gospels are saying? The message that Jesus brought and called people to believe in and trust is the good news that the kingdom of God is near.

The kingdom from heaven. In the days that Jesus walked the earth, they were looking for a political figure. They were looking for someone who would overturn the Roman government of the day.

Jesus told them that there was good news. God's kingdom. The kingdom from heaven is near.

[7 : 45] And this is the gospel. This is the good news that should be part of our main message. This should be the anchor point of our faith and hope and the basis of our joy.

Those of us who have received Jesus as our king and belong to him. We belong to the greatest kingdom that this world will ever know.

Listen to what Paul said as he encouraged the Philippians who lived in that prominent city of Philippi. He said, Those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ, their mind is set on earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there. The Lord Jesus Christ or King.

He goes on in verse 21 to talk about how he has the power to bring everything under his control. And so our hope and our joy and our confidence is not to be in the government of the day.

[8 : 51] Or as some of the one of the political leaders said in the government in waiting. The government that we hoped would win. Our confidence in the midst of all this is in the unseen kingdom.

Which is coming in its fullness from heaven to earth. When Jesus the king returns in glory. As I said earlier, many are looking for someone to blame for the results of the election.

Someone to point the finger at. And in the worst of cases, someone to make pay for the way that things went. But at the end of the day, the problem that's led to this outcome is much deeper than perhaps we've thought.

The people that were chosen to represent our country in Ottawa. At the end of the day, they're a reflection of the people who voted for them. And the problem here, it transcends location.

And occupation. And status. And cultural heritage. And ethnic background. And class. The problem runs much deeper than all these things.

[10 : 07] And it's the same problem that is driving the deeply self-interested outpouring of anger and racism and hatred online today.

The problem is sin. We are all sinners here in Canada. We're all bent towards our own selfish ambitions.

And that's why when our interests and desires are not met, we get angry. And we spew racist and hateful comments and call names and insult people.

But listen. Your heart will never be satisfied with the government of the day or the government in waiting.

Because at the end of the day, these governments are made up of sinners like you and me. They can never be the government that we hope for, that we long for, because of their origin.

[11 : 13] Their makeup is, by nature, hostile to God. To borrow from the words of the Apostle Paul. And even if we did get a party that was composed 100% of strong, faithful Christian people representing strong Christian values, we should not be surprised if the majority of people in our nation don't vote for them.

This is the reality of the world that we live in, according to God's word. And this is exactly why our confidence and joy and hope should not be in the earthly and human governments of our day.

No, we need a different government. A government that has a different origin. We need a government that comes from God. And thanks be to God, he has promised us just such a government.

Listen to these wonderful words about Jesus, spoken by Isaiah long ago. For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given.

And the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father.

[12 : 40] Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace. There will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. The good news is that this child has been born.

This son has been given. And according to his own word, his kingdom is near. He's the only one who can establish the kind of good government that we all hope for and long for.

And he will do it when he returns. We as his people should not be looking to the governments of the day.

The governments of earth. To do what they cannot do. Or to be what they cannot be. Only God's king. Only God's son.

[13 : 58] Can bring peace. And justice. And righteousness. That lasts forever. Forever. And the last thing that our world needs to see when they look at us is people who claim the name of Christ, this king.

And yet are bitterly disappointed and angry because our hope was in the people and the party that we voted for. Are we disappointed?

Yes. Are we saddened by where many seem to be steering our country? Yes. But what else is new under the sun?

Are we going to let that eclipse the glorious good news of the kingdom that we will inherit when Jesus, our king, returns?

Listen to some of the words that the apostles gave us as they described what our outlook as Christians should be. 1 Corinthians 1 verse 7.

[15 : 11] There Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they should be eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Titus 2 verse 13.

He reminds Titus that we should be looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Peter in his letter talks about how according to the Lord's promise, we should be looking for a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

All of these passages push us towards the question, is that our attitude? Is that our perspective?

Are we eagerly awaiting the return of the king? Or are we looking to human governments to fix the problems? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we stood out as the people of Christ, despite the result of the election?

[16 : 21] Because we're joyful. Because we're confident. We're hopeful because of where those things are anchored in these promises that we have from the Lord himself.

Now, all of this, of course, doesn't mean that we should just take a back seat when it comes to our democracy and let the unbelieving world make all the decisions for us.

But we still have an obligation to pray for and serve and love and influence for Christ however we can in our country. The words that came to my mind as I was thinking about this this week are from Jeremiah.

The words that the Lord spoke to the exiles. He said, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.

Pray to the Lord for it. Because if it prospers, you too will prosper. This is just one of many passages like this where it talks about how we are to seek the welfare and the prosperity of the place that the Lord has put us.

[17 : 37] The people that live around us. And in our country, in our day, we have tremendous opportunity to help others see people of good character and qualities.

People with God's kinds of ideas about how we should live and what kind of laws we should make. We have the opportunity to shine the spotlight on those kinds of people as Christians.

To participate in the decision of who will lead our country. As Christians, do we not want to be known and seen as those who stand up for what is good and right according to what the Lord has revealed?

And so when we see candidates, when we see people who are saying, yes, this is how we should live. This is what kind of country we should have. Do we not want to be people that are known for getting behind those people and supporting them?

There is no shame in knocking on doors or making phone calls for good men and women. People who are people of character and who stand for Christian values.

[18 : 47] And we can be up front with people. Our hope is not in the system. It is not in the outcome of the election. It is not even in the candidate that we may support. Rather, it is our faith in Christ that leads us to participate in helping our country and our province select the best people to lead.

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. That word peace really jumped out at me as I was meditating on these words.

Seek the peace of the city. How might that apply to us today as we think of our country? Peace.

I'm reminded of those words that Jesus said, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. As the children of God, what should we be known for?

We should be known for making peace, helping to bring peace between people who are in conflict with one another. That's the exact opposite of those who are saying nasty and hurtful things right now because of the results of the election.

[20 : 11] We're to be known for people who help others reconcile with their differences and their problems, their conflicts.

That's the exact opposite of those who are saying we should just separate and leave Canada and go start our own country. If there's anyone out there who should be saying we have some issues, yes, but let's come to the table and work through them.

Let's find a solution that works for all of us here in Canada so that we can live together in peace and prosperity. Should it not be the people of Christ that are first saying that?

We should be setting the example in these kinds of conversations. Showing people what it means to speak respectfully to other people. To listen well to other people.

To take a genuine interest in the desires and needs and wants of other people. We're called to be people who, like Christ, do not merely consider our own interests, but also consider the interests of others.

[21 : 21] Which includes the people of eastern Canada. People of other ethnic backgrounds. People who are different from us. Peacemakers are those who bring people who are at odds with each other together.

Not people who participate in further driving a wedge between them. And now, this doesn't mean that we'll always agree with everyone.

With their point of view. Of course it doesn't. But will we patiently work towards peace and cooperation with our neighbors? Yes.

This kind of Christian attitude and conduct is a powerful testimony to the people who live in our world around us.

And they're watching us closely. They know that we claim the name of Christ. And they're watching us to see if we will live the kind of love that Jesus commanded us to live towards our neighbor.

[22 : 26] Or will we just live to please ourselves? And so when we react no differently than our world. And talk no differently than our world.

We dishonor the Lord. And we send the message that we're the same as everybody else. This morning, I want to remind us of some of the words that God has given when it comes to our relationship with government.

We have a... We have a... I won't say new government because some of it's the same. But we have a different government than we had a couple weeks ago.

And so how should we think about our relationship as Christians to the government? And the first passage that I really want to draw your attention to is 1 Timothy chapter 2.

This is what Paul said. He said, He goes on down in verse 8 to say, Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

[23 : 58] Peter writes to the churches and says this. He says, Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

He says, Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority, or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

For it is God's will that by doing good, you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.

Live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God.

Honor the emperor. To the church at Rome, Paul said this. He said, Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.

[25 : 12] The authorities that exist have been established by God. He goes on and down in verse, I think, six and seven. He says, This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants who give their full time to governing.

Give to everyone what you owe them. If you owe taxes, pay taxes. If revenue, then revenue. If respect, then respect.

If honor, then honor. Now, our government today looks a little different than the Roman government of the day back then. Whether it was better or worse is not what we're going to evaluate this morning.

But the principles that are here apply to us today just the same. We may not like those who are in authority over us, but we are charged just the same by God to submit to their authority and to show them respect, to treat them with honor, those who hold those positions.

Justin Trudeau, who's probably been the brunt of most of the verbal abuse that I've heard from Christians, he is one of our many Canadian neighbors.

[26 : 31] Jesus said, Love your neighbor as yourself. Even if you consider him an enemy, you still don't get a pass because Jesus said, Love your enemy. And pray for them too.

And so I want to challenge and encourage us all this morning to pray for our government regularly. To pray for Justin Trudeau, our Prime Minister. To pray for the members of Parliament.

To pray for those who hold cabinet positions. To pray for those who take a second look over things in the Senate. To pray for our MLAs here in Saskatchewan as well. Pray that God would bring good men and women into these representative roles as a gift of grace to our country.

We've been given not just an opportunity, but an obligation by God as his people to be channels and conduits through which his grace and mercy flows to our neighbors, to our country, to people who, who, who just like us, don't deserve it.

Now, I know that some of these changes in government have real impact on our lives or the lack of change in government. One example that hits close to home here for us is the agricultural community.

[27 : 54] People are actually affected by our country's foreign policy and foreign relations and how things have gone in the past four years with the government we have and how things will go in the next four years with the government we have.

Our ability to develop our natural resources is affected by the government of the day. How much we pay in tax and what we receive for that in Saskatchewan is affected by the government of the day.

But as real as these challenges are and some of the difficulties that can come from these policies are, let's not forget the words of Jesus.

In Luke chapter 12, he said this. He said, And how should I tell you? Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear.

For life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens. They do not sow or reap.

[28 : 58] They have no storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds.

Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider how the wildflowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon, in all his splendor, was dressed like one of these.

If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow, was thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith?

And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink. Do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things.

[30 : 01] And your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom. There it is again. Seek his kingdom. And these things will be given to you as well.

Do not be afraid, little flock. For your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor.

Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. A treasure in heaven that will never fail. Where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I love these words of Jesus. Don't worry about your life. God will take care of his people. He always has.

And he always will. Rather, seek his kingdom. Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom that we've been talking about.

[31 : 07] And what a great and glorious kingdom it is and will be when Jesus, the Lord, comes to establish it in full. The reaction of many in our neck of the woods to the election has been to grumble and to complain over what happened.

But may it not be so among us. As Paul said in his letter to the Philippians, do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure.

Children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

The Lord Jesus, our King, has promised that he will return soon and that when he does, he will make all things new.

He will make all things right. He will bring peace. Things will be the way we long for them to be. But in the words of Habakkuk, what's been revealed to us about that future awaits an appointed time.

[32 : 31] It speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we confess even just this past week what's been revealed in our own hearts.

We confess that we have put our faith in some cases too much in people, too much in human government. We've longed for what only you can bring to come other ways and we're sorry.

We admit that to you. We ask that you would forgive us. We ask that you would just fill our hearts again with the joy that we can have because of what you are going to do when you come back.

Help us to live in light of that. Help us to be peacemakers as we go into our week, as we bump shoulders with other people at work, here in town, as conversations happen, Lord, give us the words to say to really represent you and the kind of love that you've called us to.

[33 : 57] We ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.