

Being Salt and Light

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning I was scheduled to continue our sermon series in the book of Ecclesiastes. But in light of the upcoming referendum and some of the issues and questions that have been raised, especially in the last week, I thought I would use this Sunday to open God's Word and seek to give us some context and some perspective for this referendum.

So if you have your Bibles, please turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, and we will start in verse 13.

Those of you who have been following the news concerning this referendum would probably be aware that the church is divided on it. It's very clear the church leaders are divided on it and obviously church members as well.

One church leader, Bishop Neil Ellis, at a recent press conference with various heads of denominations last week, who support the Bills and are encouraging people to vote, a blanket yes to all of them.

He said these words, To deny anybody rights in our country is unacceptable and unchristlike.

[1 : 37] Now, while I take issue with the entire statement that he made this morning, I want to just address part of it. My question to you this morning is this.

Is voting no to any or all of the referendum bills unchristlike? If a citizen chooses to vote no to one or all of the bills, is it unchristlike to do so?

And perhaps more closely, because it's a very careless statement in the sense that not everybody in our country is a Christian. But would it be unchristlike for a Christian to vote no to one or all of these bills?

I'm going to address that question towards the end of the message. But I believe that a question like that should cause us to think about what it means to be Christlike.

What it means to follow Christ. What Christianity is all about. And if I had to choose a single passage of scripture that provides us with a clear standard to measure Christianity and true followers of Christ, that section of scripture would be the Sermon on the Mount.

[3 : 16] And that's where we are turning to this morning in a particular section. And I think it is this section more than the rest of it that really zeroes in on what it means to be a Christian in this world.

So please follow along as I read. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand.

And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[4 : 31] Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful this morning for the privilege of being able to gather. We thank you, Lord, that we gather on the ground for the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Lord, thank you that you have, in mercy and grace, sought us and called us and saved us.

And Lord, you have gathered your people in this place this morning. And Lord, even those who this morning stand outside of Jesus Christ, we trust that you are at work in their lives to do the same for them that you have done for us.

We thank you for your word this morning. And Father, we ask that you would use your word to build your church. Use your word to sanctify your people.

We ask you, O Lord, that you would give us ears to hear and give us hearts to obey. And Father, once again, I acknowledge my deep dependence, my utter dependence on you this morning.

[5 : 47] Would you come by your spirit and power and enable me to faithfully proclaim your word to your people. Who are gathered this morning.

Lord, we ask that you would do that. We trust you to do it. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. When I consider these words of Jesus, here's what I believe they tell us.

Followers of Christ are called to be a preserving... Sorry. Followers of Christ are called to have a preserving, illuminating effect in a decadent and dark world.

I think when we summarize Matthew 5, 13 through 16, that would be the essence of what Jesus says. Followers of Christ are called to have a preserving, illuminating effect in a decadent and dark world.

These words of Jesus, in which he describes the function of followers in the world, his followers in the world, they're pregnant with implications for all of us who profess Christ.

[7 : 08] But they're also pregnant with implications for us as a church as well. And this duty that we've been called to be salt in life is lived out in a personal and also in a corporate way.

And I believe that we will have the opportunity to do that in a particular way as this referendum approaches, both as individuals and also as a local church.

One of the ways that we can in particular do that as individuals is how we engage the process and how we engage others who may have a different view from us.

When Jesus described his followers as salt of the earth and light of the world, he uses a figure of speech called metaphor.

And a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something or someone which is not literally the case. So when Jesus uses these metaphors in verses 2 and 4, salt of the earth and light of the world, it's not literally the case, but he is using a figure of speech to communicate to us a stronger message.

[8 : 26] And in our time this morning, our remaining time, I want to take each of these metaphors and try to help us to think through the implications of what they mean for us, both individually and as a local church.

Let's consider the first one, the salt of the earth. When Jesus spoke these words, his initial audience did not need an explanation for what he said.

In ancient Palestine, the people that Jesus spoke to did not have refrigeration as we do.

Salt was a preservative and a seasoning, but primarily it was a preservative for them. So essentially what Jesus is saying to his followers is, as salt is to meat, so are you to the world in which you live.

And in these words, Jesus actually is speaking to the nature of the fallen world in which we live.

What he is really helping us to see is that the natural course of this world is towards corruption and decay.

[9 : 41] And only salt, with its preserving influence, can arrest the corruption. And only light, with its illuminating influence, can dispel the darkness.

And I think as we consider these words of Jesus, we should realize that salt does not automatically have a preserving effect. Salt only works on contact.

Salt has to be applied. Unapplied salt has no benefit. But salt affects what it contacts. And for example, when salt is applied to meat, the meat becomes salty.

The salt does not become meaty. When salt is added to water, the water becomes salty. Instead, we never say that the salt becomes watery.

So salt has this powerful ability to affect whatever it is applied to. But salt is also used as an important seasoning.

[10 : 49] It had a function as a seasoning as well. And without it, some foods just are unpleasant to eat, or even in some cases impossible to eat. So the followers of Christ, who are truly living in the world as salt, living as the salt of the earth, they have the same positive influencing, preserving, seasoning effect in the societies in which they live.

And this is the outworking of the kingdom of God in the lives of the people of God. But notice in verse 13 that Jesus gives a warning. Jesus does not take for granted that this would happen just automatically.

Jesus gives this warning and he warns that in the same way that salt can become ineffective and useless, his followers can become ineffective and useless as well.

And so he alerts his initial disciples and by extension all disciples to this problem by talking about salt that loses its saltiness. He asks the question, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness

be restored?

Now I'm told that strictly speaking, salt does not automatically lose its saltiness. So the point that Jesus is making really has to be considered very closely.

[12:23] What I'm told is that sodium chloride, which is a chemical, the chemical name for salt, it is a very stable compound and is resistant to nearly every attack.

But when it becomes contaminated, mixed with other impurities, it can become useless and even dangerous.

I understand that in Jesus' day there was something called salt that was not really salt, it was fake salt. It looked like salt, but it was not salt. It was a white powder that contained sodium chloride, but it also contained a lot of other impurities.

And since in those days they did not have the technology to refine salt and separate the impurities, they were stuck with this fake salt. And since the sodium chloride was the most soluble component in the fake salt, it was the one that was washed away and the residue was just this white powder that was still referred to as salt because it looked like salt.

But it didn't taste like salt and it didn't act like salt. And so the warning that Jesus is giving in that particular context really becomes very vivid.

[13:43] Jesus warns about his people losing their saltiness in the world because of contamination, because of being mixed instead of being pure.

And we know that in this world there's no such thing as absolute purity, but the point that Jesus makes is this whole idea of contamination. And I believe that properly understood the contamination that most greatly affects us as God's people in this world is the contamination of worldliness.

Worldliness is very subtle, but it is also very real. Listen to how British pastor and theologian Ian Murray defines worldliness in his book *Evangelicalism Divided*.

He says, worldliness is departing from God. It is a man-centered way of thinking. It proposes objectives that demand no radical breach with man's fallen nature.

It judges the importance of things by the present and material results. It weighs success by numbers. Worldliness covets human esteem and wants no unpopularity.

[15:07] It knows no truth for which it is worth suffering. It declines to be a fool for Christ's sake. Worldliness is the mindset of the unregenerate.

It adopts idols and it is at war with God. Brothers and sisters, worldliness causes us to lose our saltiness and our ability to bring the saltiness of the kingdom to bear in our society and in the world around us.

And when we lose our saltiness, we are marginalized and we are trampled upon by those we are to be salting. When we retain our saltiness, when we are faithful to follow Christ and we refuse to be contaminated by this world, then we can have that salting effect that Jesus said we are to have.

There are many churches today and Christians who misunderstand the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9.22 when he said, I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some.

They take this to mean that they are to compromise to reach unbelievers and so there is much talk about being relevant and embracing the culture to reach the culture. But Paul was not advocating that at all.

[16:34] He was not advocating compromise. Instead, he was advocating self-sacrifice for the sake of sharing the gospel. This deceased theologian Martin Lloyd-Jones recognized the necessity of believers being different from the world and he said this, the glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.

It is then that the world is made to listen to her message though it may hate it at first. Pastor Mark Delver put it even more pointedly when referring to followers of Christ.

He said, we have become so much like the world. They have no questions they want to ask us. It appears we have no hope that's any better than theirs.

We have no hope of a better, a more humane, a more God-honoring life to hold out to them. When the world is in the church, the church begins to disappear in the world.

And brothers and sisters, our lives should be so distinct from those who do not know Christ that questions should be raised and asked about us in their minds.

[18:09] They should consider why it is that we, as Peter says, do not engage in a lot of the sin that they indulge in. And here, I'm not talking about moralism.

I'm not talking about this moralistic kind of view that what it means to be a Christian is that you do all the right things and you don't do all the wrong things.

I'm not talking about that at all. But here's what I am saying and here's what is true. Those who are followers of Christ do live moral lives that are very different from the world and that's very obvious to the world.

You see, you could be moral without being a Christian but you cannot be a Christian without being moral. And I think, brothers and sisters, if we were to dishonestly assess as best as we are able to see, you'd agree that the church in this society in particular, since it's where we live, has become contaminated by the world.

many ways we have lost our saltiness and therefore the church is being marginalized and the church is being ridiculed.

[19 : 35] Some time ago I was in the barber shop and at the barber I go to, sometimes I meet different people there and conversations are always happening and it is somewhat regular that the conversation goes to Christianity and talking about pastors and on this one occasion they were just berating pastors and my barber just allowed them to talk and then he said, you know, that's a pastor, you know.

And then the guy looked at me and he said, man, he said, when I was growing up, all the boys in the neighborhood wanted to be a drug dealer. He said, but today all the boys want to be a pastor. And it's because of the lifestyle that is flaunted by so many who are to be the leaders of the people of God in a dark world.

Now as powerful as this metaphor, the salt of the earth is, it doesn't fully communicate how followers of Christ are to function in a fallen world.

So Jesus uses yet another metaphor to describe his followers and it is the light of the world.

Starting in verse 14, he says, you are the light of the world.

[21 : 03] Now while the metaphor salt of the earth speaks to the issue of decay, the metaphor light of the world speaks to the issue of darkness. And again, in order to appreciate these words of Jesus, we have to appreciate the fact that people in that day didn't have electricity.

They got up when the sun rose and they went to bed when the sun set. But today we can have electricity 24-7, so our activity really is unhindered in any way.

But similar to salt, light also must be applied in order for it to dispel darkness.

So for example, if I were to take a flashlight and turn it on, it really wouldn't be of much value or benefit in this room. but if the electricity went off and someone was to turn on a cell phone with a flashlight or just turn another flashlight on, we'd appreciate the light that it brings to us in the darkness.

Jesus is saying to his followers, you are light in a dark place. You are the light of the world. You are to light the world is what he is saying.

[22 : 24] And notice that in a similar way to what he did with saying that we are the salt of the earth, he gives a warning to us about being the light of the world and not functioning as the light of the world.

Notice what he says in verse 15. He says, Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. So Jesus points us to the reality of the need to be light in the world, functioning light in the world, so that we would give the same benefit to the people around us that light gives to people in the house.

And I think we all know that there's this old saying that says that the light burns brightest at home. It burns brightest at its source of origin.

And this tells us that we have a responsibility to be light in our respective worlds, in our respective spheres, wherever we find ourselves in our everyday life.

[23 : 51] life. So I ask you this morning as you consider these words of Jesus, how are you living? Are you through your daily living, shining the light of the gospel and the truth of God's word?

Or is it being hidden under a basket as it were? So the people around you are deprived of the light that should be coming from your life as ordained by the Lord.

And here I'm not advocating going around and barking scriptures at people, especially when you're supposed to be working. But I'm talking about just living a life that reflects that we belong to Jesus

Christ.

That reflects that there are people around us who are in darkness and they are in need of that light. In verse 16, Jesus says to us that in the same way we have to let our light shine before others so that they may see our good work and give glory to the Father who is in heaven.

There's something interesting about what Jesus says in the sense that Jesus says to us you are the light of the world, but concerning himself in John 8, 12, he also says I am the light of the world.

[25 : 18] And I think when we read in context what Jesus says in verse 16, it helps us to see that our light is not an original light.

Jesus is the light. He is the original light. The light that we get really is his light in us so that when that light is seen it doesn't reflect on us, it points to God.

And so Jesus says when people around you see light, it's going to cause them to glorify God. It's not going to draw attention to ourselves, but it's going to in the end bring glory to God.

And when we think about the fact that God could have chosen any number of ways to bear his light in the world, the fact that he has chosen redeemed sinners to do that is very humbling.

And we should allow that to motivate us and to encourage us to function as light in the world. One of the realities about both salt and light is that in order to fulfill their purpose, they must expend themselves.

[26 : 36] They sacrifice themselves in terms of functioning. So take for example, the light bulbs in this room, they are expending themselves as they give light and over time they will actually die out.

And truthfully, so it is with followers of Christ. We must give of ourselves to be salt and light. There is a degree of sacrifice that comes with being salt and light in this world.

Now the outside of the message I pointed out that this week Bishop Neal Ellis made this statement that to deny anybody rights in our country is unacceptable and un-Christlike.

And he was saying that in the context of a number of denominational heads urging the nation to vote a blanket yes to all of the questions.

I just want to say in the clearest terms that I'm able to say for a number of reasons we should not listen to those words and in particular the person who said them.

[27 : 59] And I say that because I think many of you would know there was a viral message that went on maybe two weeks ago. I got it by phone other people had it and here you have the same man who's telling members in his church to bring him money from gambling for what he wants to do because money doesn't have anything on it that says it's from gambling it's just money and they ought to bring it.

Those are not the words of a shepherd of God's people who would care for God's people who understand the destructive nature the exploitative nature of gambling to encourage people in that direction and no amount of saying I don't support it but I know you do it so bring it to me justifies it. That is totally unacceptable and it reveals part of the reason that we struggled in this country to be salt and to be light and to try to make a better future for our country by voting noted to that gambling referendum and it was people like him who encouraged our prime minister to go against the will of the people and to do otherwise and it's wrong.

But second let me say that this referendum and how we vote has absolutely nothing to do with being Christ like or un-Christ like.

This is a citizenship exercise or I should say a voter exercise and there's nothing morally right or wrong about the four bills including the fourth bill and I'll talk about that in a second.

[29 : 53] But for now let me just say this the only problem with the fourth bill is the fourth bill is just carelessly and deceptively worded but on its face and on its heart there's nothing wrong with it.

Now I want to take a couple of minutes this morning and I won't be long because I want to get us out early. I want to run you through in a nutshell these four bills that we're going to be called to vote upon.

The first bill should be projected for you. It's kind of small. Can you guys see that? What's that? Oh, okay. Should be up there. Abby? No? Okay.

Can you see that? Okay. So the purpose of the first bill. The first bill seeks voters' approval to amend the constitution to give Bahamian citizenship at birth to children born abroad to Bahamian women married to foreign men.

[31 : 13] That's what the first bill seeks to do. Now here's the current situation. The current situation is a child born abroad in wedlock whose father is Bahamian and who was born on the soil

here in the Bahamas is Bahamian by birth.

If the father was not born on the soil here, he can't transfer citizenship. A child born abroad to a Bahamian woman married to a foreign man is not Bahamian at birth, but that child, he or she has a constitutional right to apply for citizenship at age 18, but before turning 21, but that child is required to renounce any other citizenship that he or she has.

So this is only for the mother now. This is not for fathers. So in the case of Linden and his girls, for example, they were born outside the country, but they're Bahamians.

They got it at birth. They didn't have to renounce anything. But in the case of, say, my nephew Schneider, he was born in the States, and my sister Rose was married to a foreigner, so Rose could not give him citizenship, but he could apply at age 18, but he would have to renounce his American citizenship to be a Bahamian, unless you know crooked people who don't let you renounce.

But generally, you're supposed to renounce. But there are some who have both, still have them. That's the Bahamas. We shouldn't laugh at that.

[32 : 58] That's sad, but it's true. Now, here's something that is interesting that we should bear in mind. A Bahamian man who has a foreign wife, she can get citizenship through him, but she doesn't have to renounce any other citizenship.

But a child who's born abroad, to be a Bahamian, has to renounce his citizenship. So you could tell that there was some funny business in the minds of those who framed that years ago.

But there's another feature as well for this child who's born abroad to a Bahamian mother married to a foreign man. The government also passed a new provision where that mother is able to apply immediately once the child is born for the child to be registered as a Bahamian citizen.

You pay \$100 and wait for four years. Only because it's inefficient and I think people want bribes. So, this is a citizenship issue.

A yes vote is not morally right. A no vote is not morally wrong and vice versa. There's nothing Christ-like or un-Christ-like about voting yes or no.

[34 : 24] all we need to do is think about it and vote in accordance with our conscience. In the case of Bill 2, in the case of Bill 2, the purpose of Bill 2 is to seek voters approval to amend the Constitution to give the foreign husbands of Bahamian women a right to acquire citizenship after satisfying some requirements so that they would have the same right that Bahamian men currently enjoy.

So, the current situation is when a Bahamian man, as I indicated before, marries a foreign woman, he's able to secure citizenship for her. Again, that woman doesn't have to renounce to become a Bahamian citizen.

A Bahamian woman who marries a foreign man, cannot secure access to citizenship for him. Now, the issues with this that people have talked about, and some have said, well, you know, you can take it from the men, and everybody will be equal, or you can give it to the women, as is currently being done, and everybody will be equal, and people differ on that, and it's okay to differ on that. There's no right-wrong in that, and there's no Christ-like, un-Christ-like in that. We simply need to consider the issue, and then vote our conscience. In the case of the third bill, the third bill seeks voter approval to give Bahamian men the right upon proving paternity to pass citizenship to their children born to foreign women out of wedlock.

Now, this one is a little complex, and the way the government is doing it is very deceptive, and I'll try to explain. Here's the current situation.

[36 : 26] A child born to an unmarried Bahamian woman is Bahamian at birth, and that's because our constitution reflects what I would consider a wise morality.

In marriage, the husband is presumed to be the father of all the children born in that union.

However, this is not the case when a man has a child out of wedlock.

As it relates to citizenship, in the case of children born outside of marriage, our constitution does not recognize the man who fathered the child and any reference in the constitution in that citizenship section to father means mother.

So, when children are born out of wedlock, they get their citizenship through their mother because the constitution does not recognize father. And that's really a very simple and practical reason why it was done like that 43 years ago.

When a woman has a child out of wedlock, you do not know who the child's father is. But when a child is born in a marriage, you automatically assume it's the father's child.

[37 : 47] So, the constitution basically says, look, I'm not going to debate and argue who is the father, ma'am, your mother and father. That's basically what it says. So, our constitution protects and cares for all children born to Bahamian women out of marriage to make sure that they will never be without Bahamian citizenship.

That's the way that was done. So, really, what Bill 3 is about, is Bill 3 is about Bahamian men who have children out of wedlock with foreign women being able to give those children citizenship. Because if it's a child out of wedlock with a Bahamian woman, she automatically gives the child citizenship. Does that make sense? Yeah.

You automatically get it. Once the woman is a Bahamian and she is single, the child is going to get Bahamian citizenship. There's no need for a father to prove his paternity to give that child citizenship.

He's wasting his paternity money. And by the time the paternity results come back, the child is already registered as a Bahamian. It doesn't make sense. But this is to cover those cases where the child is born to a foreign woman out of wedlock because the foreign woman cannot give the child Bahamian citizenship.

[39 : 10] And the Bahamian father can't give the child citizenship because the constitution doesn't recognize him. It only recognizes married fathers.

Now, the government is not explaining that to voters. And let me show you how deceptive it is. This is the explanation that you will see when you go to vote.

This is what's going to be on the ballot sheet. This is taken from the actual referendum question. It says, under this proposed change, meaning the change that Bill 3 will bring about to the constitution, under this proposed change to the constitution, a Bahamian father of a person born out of wedlock, after coming into operation of this amendment, would be able to pass his citizenship to that person subject to legal proof that he is the father.

This only operates for foreign women, but it says nothing about foreign women, so it gives the impression that he is going to be able to give his citizenship to all of his children born out of wedlock, when in fact the child born out of wedlock is going to, if the mother's Bahamian, will get citizenship through the mother.

But it is my belief that they did this because they wanted to mask it so that people don't realize that this is really covering a narrow group of children rather than the broad group of children who were born outside of wedlock.

[40 : 45] And I think that's deceptive and they certainly should clear that up. There are some other practical issues which time does not allow, but again, this is a citizenship issue.

It's not morally right to vote yes or morally wrong to vote no and vice versa. We simply need to consider the issue and people think about it in different ways for different reasons and simply vote. Now the fourth bill seeks voters approval to provide constitutional protection against discrimination based on sex with sex being defined as being male or female.

Our constitution currently prohibits discrimination based on five grounds. Race, place of origin, political opinions, color, and creed, meaning your religion, which you believe or don't believe. And through Bill 4, the government seeks to add an additional prohibited ground, which is sex. Now currently the Employment Act prohibits discrimination based on sex in all aspects of employment.

[42 : 08] And one of the challenges on this particular piece of this amendment is that people who are promoting it in the government are hard pressed to help us to see what discrimination it's seeking to cure or to protect against when the largest one is in the area of employment and we already have a law for many years covering that.

Now immediately you should see that Bill 4 is different from Bills 1, 2, and 3. Bills 1, 2, and 3 are about citizenship. Bill 4 is not. Now I have no doubt that every single person in this room believes in the equality between males and females.

And I have no doubt that in the Bahamas the overwhelming if not the unanimous thinking population literate population in the country believes in equality between males and females.

and actually I think that when we consider this particular bill it is a noble bill because it really reflects the creation order of God in that he created men and women in his image and in his likeness and he created them equal in dignity and in worth.

Now roles and functions are different but in terms of dignity and worth he created them equal so this particular bill is noble in the sense that it's reflecting that males and females should not be discriminated against they should be treated equally under the law.

[43 : 55] But here's the problem with bill 4. The problem with bill 4 is this little word sex. In the world in which we live sex doesn't mean just whether you're male or female it also means sexual orientation and many other aspects of transsexuality and homosexuality and all of that and if you're halfway keeping up with what's going on in the United States you would know that this is not an academic issue.

This is a very live issue. So when bill 4 was being discussed by the constitutional commission in their public hearings people expressed concern that this could open the door to same sex marriage. So what the constitutional commission did was they recommended to the government another amendment. They said in addition to amending the constitution to add sex as a ground for discrimination alongside race and place of origin and political opinion color and creed.

They said amend the constitution in another place to ensure that it would be clear, that the position is clear that same sex marriage is not allowed under our constitution and current laws.

They made that recommendation in their report under recommendation 25. If you want to remember it in your head, this is 25 Chesapeake Road. It's recommendation 25.

[45 : 35] What did the government do? They rejected it. People screamed and said, you need to put it in. If you put it in, we'll support it. They continued to reject it.

So it left people to say, well, why are they rejecting it? The constitutional commission says, if you put it in, it will make the position clear that same-sex marriage is not permitted under our constitutional current laws.

Obviously, if you leave it out, the position is not clear. And then you leave it for judges in a faraway place who live in a faraway world to decide upon.

So, when we think about Bill 4, while we accept that on the face of it, it is noble and it is consistent with what we believe, it is, in my opinion, difficult, and I would even add, irresponsible, to support it in its current form when you have a government that is willingly rejecting recommendation 25, that the commission said if you put this in, it will stave off all legal challenges.

No one can take it to court, but they rejected it. And so, there is a shared belief by many that this is very intentional and it is designed to get us to vote for one thing, apparently, while we are voting for something else.

[47 : 13] But here's what I would say on Bill 4. If you believe there's nothing morally dangerous about Bill 4, if you believe that it is innocent and this is noble and you have absolutely no concern that there's a sinister motive to try to open the door to same-sex marriage and giving homosexuals and transsexuals fictitious rights that the rest of us don't have, you are perfectly in your right to vote yes.

There's nothing wrong with voting yes if that is your true conviction. But if you have doubts or if you believe that this is morally dangerous as it is, then I would say it would be morally wrong to vote yes under those circumstances.

But again, this comes down to how we understand it. It comes down to our convictions and our conscience. And although I would say to people, this is the most complex one, and I would say to people, you know, few people go wrong saying no to things they don't understand.

But we generally get in trouble when we say yes to things we don't understand. So I would say, look, just vote no. I would urge us to vote no. But I would not in any way try to use my position, try to use my influence to coerce you to vote no on this bill, which I feel strongest about, or any of the other bills.

You can vote your conscience on it, and you can be fully assured in your heart that it doesn't matter who stands up and says, it is unchrist like to vote no.

[49 : 04] You can ignore that person. You are perfectly within your right to vote yes or no on all of these bills. And let me just say this about this thing about denying people rights.

You read the Constitution, the Constitution deny all kind of people all kind of rights. That's just the nature of it. If I may use Lyndon for an example, a very good example, his girls.

His girls were born in Canada. If Bill 4 passes, not Bill 4, sorry, Bill 1, if Bill 1 passes, and children born abroad, once one of their parents is Bahamian, that child would be Bahamian at birth.

But in the case of Lyndon's girls, the Constitution discriminates against people who were born abroad and got their citizenship.

it doesn't allow them to give citizenship to their children born abroad. Their children have to be born on the soil to be a citizen. That's a denial of particular right to them that you're not giving to other people.

[50 : 17] So only Bahamians who were born on the soil can give citizenship to their children born on the soil. And currently, in the case of men, if your children are born abroad and you're married, you can give them citizenship.

Should that change with Bill 1, that would be extended to women as well. And men and women born on the soil who have children abroad would be able to pass citizenship to their children. Only if they're married, if Bill 3 doesn't pass, if Bill 3 passes, it would be to anybody married or unmarried.

I trust it was helpful and I trust it informs you in terms of how you can approach this referendum to try to understand it and how to vote.

Well, today at 2.30pm, as you heard Lyndon share and what's in the bulletin, we're going to be launching Think Bahamas and I know that many of you would not be able to come and that's understandable.

[51 : 34] Who is able to come, you're welcome, would be great to see you. Whether this afternoon or in the coming days, you're going to see Think Bahamas unveiled, a website and other particular activities and it's quite impressive and I think you'll be thinking, boy, that must be a lot of money.

Kingdom Life is not funding that. Largely what you will see has been done by me and Jan Cox and I want to say, I must say publicly, Jan has been amazing in her work and in her creativity.

What you will see is her handiwork and frankly what I'm doing would not have been possible. if it wasn't for her help, couldn't pay for it.

And so I'm grateful to Jan that we have this opportunity as a church to serve our nation in this particular way. I know some of you would have noticed that I'm not a part of Save Our Bahamas with two pastors in particular who I've worked with for many years things.

And I will just say, one, I worked very hard with them trying to see how we might find common ground to work together, but it just wasn't possible.

[53 : 05] And second, I'm able to see that this is really of the Lord. He's providentially led and orchestrated things in this way. If you desire a more detailed account of that, I'd be happy to share with you in more detail why we aren't working together.

We're friends. There's no rift between us. We just felt it would be better to just work separately. And this is just by way of a brief announcement.

Tomorrow, I don't even know what time it comes on. But on cable 12, there's a program called In Focus with Jeff Lloyd. He has me on that.

I taped for it this week. If you're able to listen, please do. I don't have cable, so I have to go to someone's house with cable. But I didn't know what time it comes on, so I have to find out.

All right. May God help us to function as salt and light, both in this context of the referendum and in the larger context of our lives.

[54 : 16] That's pretty. Thank you.