

Bible Thinking And Politics

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Date: 03 July 2016

Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Down to verse 21. Let's pray.

Father God, for us this morning, we take this word in hand with complete confidence that it is exactly what we call it.

Your word, your inspired word, entirely reliable, trustworthy, and the truth. And it has been given to us that we who are your children may live lives that are marked by the glory of the cross and profitable.

[3:31] That the man of God may be completely equipped for every task and appointment that you have placed before him. We want to be a people this morning that are confident in the word.

We want to be a people that are governed and motivated by the word. And we want to be a people that when unbelievers look at our lives, what they see is the sweetness and the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because the word of Christ dwells in us richly. And we ask for the enabling of the Holy Spirit this morning, both in my preaching your word with faithfulness and clarity and passion.

And in the reception of the word of God in the lives of your people, that it would produce fruit. That causes glory to your name and joy to the believer.

And salvation to those who need Christ. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me begin by marking the fact that over the years there are several different things that I have preached on on a consistent basis.

[4:39] And around this time of the year when our nation celebrates its birthday, I have seen that as an appropriate time to speak to the subject of being a citizen in the United States of America.

And I appreciate the spirit with which we go about celebrating our nation's birthday. For most of you here, this is the only place that you've ever lived or ever really been part of a culture.

And so you would imagine that patriotism looks like this. And it is directly connected to this flag over here and the song that you associate with our national anthem.

I want to tell you that about seven or eight years ago, I remember being in India. I went with Mark Furman before he passed away. And I was actually in Bangalore at the time of the calendar when India celebrates its independence.

And so here we are. We were having Bible classes. Mark Furman was actually teaching that morning. And one of the things that we did was we stopped and sang the Indian National Anthem.

[5:47] And I got to tell you, about 70 different pastors were in that room. And they just blasted out the National Anthem with enthusiasm and fervency. And guess what?

I could sing it. I like that. I can't remember what all the words mean. But I could sing it because I grew up singing that from childhood.

And we loved the day of independence when India was liberated or was given their freedom from the British Raj. And, you know, we did the same thing over there that you do here.

Fireworks were all part of it. And, you know, holiday. And it was a great time. And so over the years, I've taken time to kind of address the issue of what does it mean to be a citizen of the United States, but also a citizen of eternity and a person who is marked by our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I find myself this morning and actually this year at a very interesting point. So I would like to take time to kind of assess the moment and think about it in relationship to where we are presently and kind of put it together with not only this moment but where the church is in terms of the larger issue of church history.

[7:02] I'm almost 68. And I have to tell you that I cannot think of a time in the election cycles that I have endured and lived through that I have seen a higher level of division and political rancor than where we are today.

The issues that are out front and center are matters that are of deep concern to all people in our culture. And it goes without saying that you cannot have a conversation with individuals that touch on the subject of politics without ending up having a little bit of tension and a little bit of earnestness in that conversation.

You listen to the news. You pick up on the radio. You read an article on the Internet. Wherever it is, you'll find that politics is at a high level of intensity and it really is something that is on everyone's mind.

Last week, actually, I think you're aware that Donald Trump held a conference. You may not be aware of it, but I'm telling you that he held a conference with about 1,000 evangelicals who sat down with the presumed GOP nominee and they asked him a variety of questions.

Trump's meeting with these perceived evangelical heavyweights was really followed by a number of gushy reports. Do you know what a gushy report is? It's where people are just over themselves with enthusiasm for how things came out.

[8:27] And there were comments on the fact that he actually has a newfound faith and that he has taken on a more magisterial tone. And I want you to know that I kind of listen to all of that and kind of look at the options out there and I find myself wondering, wow, where are we at really in our country?

In addition to what that represents, I got to tell you, I've never found a higher degree of interest and curiosity on the subject of who you vote for.

I mean, in the past, it's been fairly easy to figure it out and I don't see that that way today. At the same time, I've had a number of people come up to me and ask me, so, Pastor, who are you going to vote for and why are you going to vote for them?

Well, I want to tell you right now, I'm not going to tell you who I'm going to vote for. I haven't decided for one. And I find the subject to be something that is demanding to my attention and to yours as well.

And I think it's important for us to recognize that we are at a point that deserves careful, deliberate thinking on the part of believers. We're at a significant and divisive time in our nation.

[9:43] I can't remember a time in my thinking in history that I have not seen a higher level of division, of argument, of belligerence on the part of all parties.

And I've got to tell you, it's a messy environment that we live in. So, the elections are on November 16th or on November in this coming year or this year. And I want you to think with me just for a moment beyond that in a larger picture and recognize that while it may seem to us that politics is really way up there as a significant challenge, I want you to understand that the place we're sitting in and the environment we are in is really no different than the environment and the significant setting that the church has been in throughout history.

Over and over again, the church has been challenged to kind of think very carefully about where it falls on the matter of politics. And it's impossible for the church in the culture.

Remember the statement in 1 Corinthians, be in the world but not of the world? You find the church in the midst of this. And we recognize we live in a day and age that things in our community and culture are different than maybe even 10 years ago.

I remember going to seminary and the things that I was cautioned would be significant challenges for my ministry.

[11:14] Nobody ever imagined when I was sitting in seminary back in the 70s that the issue of homosexuality and lesbianism and bisexual bathrooms, nobody ever thought that that was going to be an issue.

Never crossed the mind. People were worried primarily about very, very different subjects and never even broached the subject of the environment that we live in today.

And we are living in a time when the church is coming under increased attack and under increased pressure for faith. I have no doubt that should the Lord tarry and I live a little longer, I anticipate that the day is going to come when churches lose their tax benefit as a non-tax agency.

I believe that we're going to see persecution on a growing basis. It's a fact that in California today, there is legislation that is looking to strip all Christian colleges of their tax, what's it called?

Tax exemption, right. And all agencies that will not abide by the homosexual agenda are under attack. And the proposal is that if they're not going to allow homosexuality to be approved and accepted, and they're not going to go along with the state's proposed legislation, that they are not allowed to be a tax-exempt organization.

[12:44] It's a matter of record that in Oregon, a Christian baker has been under tremendous fine, 180-some thousand, I think, because he refused to bake a cake for the wedding of a lesbian couple.

And yet, you hear that on that side and you recognize what's coming on, but all you have to do is turn on some of the right-wing radio and guess what you hear? You hear as much faction and attitude and militancy on that side as you hear on that side.

And so, you find yourself in this messy, messy environment, and you look around and say, well, really, what should a pastor do and what should God's people do? I want you to understand that where we are today is not substantially different than most times that the church has endured. And it is critical in the midst of this not to lose sight of our Savior and His purposes. And I want you to lock that in. It is important to stay focused. The songs that we sang this morning were first theological, and they have bearing on us politically.

Do you understand that? For me to live is Christ. At the heart of what you and I are engaged in is that we are here as His representatives with a reminder that the one thing that can turn a person's life around and bring hope and life into a broken and ruined existence is the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel.

[14:19] Nothing else will do that. And so, it's important for us in the midst of this not to lose sight of why Jesus came and why He left us here. So, with that in mind, I want you to recognize that this passage here is a passage that really helps us frame the issue of what we are to be engaged in and how we're to go about doing it.

Let me quote a little thing that I picked up from D.A. Carson before we get into the text itself. D.A. Carson, a preeminent theologian and a great thinker, said this, If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, He would have sent an economist.

If He'd perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, He would have sent us a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability, He would have sent us a politician.

If He'd perceived our greatest need was health, He would have sent us a doctor. Now, but God perceived that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from Him, our profound rebellion, our death, and He sent us a Savior.

And it's important for us to have that fixed in our mind in the midst of the environment that we are, that we don't lose sight of the most important thing that we have is our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:41] And we keep that front and center and communicate it to other people. Now, look at the passage in 1 Corinthians 10. I'm sorry, 1. I'll say it again.

And I want you just to kind of put your finger on verse 1. We're going to move forward from that. But in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 10, here is Paul addressing the church in Corinth. And he begins there by kind of cautioning them about where they had gone as a church.

They had been distracted from their central ministry of gospel living and gospel focus by getting kind of broken up and following different leaders.

Now, I want you to understand that Corinth is a classic illustration of a perfect pagan city. It was godless. It was immoral. It was a place that abuse kind of abounded.

It was a messy, messy environment. And so here is Paul writing to the church in that kind of structure. And he starts out by saying this, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you.

[16:47] What had happened is that the church had broken down into little parties and little factions. There were those who said, well, I'm a Paul. I am a follower of the preeminent theologian of the New Testament, and I completely trust in following his example and model.

I'm all about Paul. Others came along and said, well, I'm of Apollos. You know, he is far more eloquent than Paul. He is a crafted rhetorician. He's the guy I'm following.

And then there were others that said, oh, no, no, I'm of Cephas. I am a follower of Peter. And then there were the hyper-spiritual. Guess what they said? They said, well, I'm of Jesus. You know, I'm

better than all of you.

And the church was kind of broken up into these little packages. We find that Paul makes the appeal. He said, listen, guys, that's not why I was sent. That's not what my mission was. There in verse 17, it says, For Christ did not send me to baptize, get caught up in this factionalism, but to preach the gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom, but lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

[17 : 55] And so you find here is Paul addressing the way in which the culture had broken the church up into these little different packages and little groups. And he says, listen, guys, let's come back together again around the central thing that we are to be focused on.

And so I guess I play that out practically when a person says to me, well, what party are you for? I am for the party that is gospel focused.

And that's my primary focus is staying focused on the gospel. And I think it's important for us. We have a golden opportunity in the present environment to keep pointing people back to Jesus. There will be no remedy in Washington. There will be no radical improvement of our culture after November apart from God bringing revival first in the church and then bringing salvation on unbelieving nation and world.

And we need to remember that. So here is Paul reminding the believers there in Corinth. He says, listen, don't get caught up in these factions. Stay focused on the things that are really important.

[19 : 05] So I want to think with you about this business of choosing what is most important. And I put it this way in very, very simple terms. An unrelenting focus on the gospel is the thing that brings transformation, first of all, in the life of the person who is affected by the gospel testimony and then in the life of those who are affected by gospel living.

So if you want to think with me just for a moment, recognize that Corinth was an absolute petri dish in which gospel truth could show its power and bring about transformation.

It was a country or as a city actually that was a trade center. And it was a port. And it was a place that was so grossly immoral that the term Corinthianized was used as a substitute for the word fornication.

Now, some Bible scholars have kind of played that forward to say that Corinth was the worst city. And I would tell you that probably, no, that's not the case. It's probably no different than many of the other ports in the ancient world.

And for that matter, it's a little bit like saying Las Vegas is the worst city in the world. Is that true?

No, no, no, no. It's not. You could probably add New York City to that. You could add Chicago.

[20 : 23] You could add L.A. You could add Columbus for that matter. I mean, guess what?

Godlessness seems to do well in every single environment. And so here is Paul writing to the church there in Corinth.

And he says, listen, guys, let's not get carried away with this factionalism. Let's recognize that we have one particular responsibility. And that is this of preaching the gospel.

Now, you look at the passage there in chapter 1, verse 17. He says, Why am I here?

Why are you here? What is your job? What is my job? At the heart of it, we are under assignment in a fashion similar to the apostles in that we are to be an example of the gospel and a person who proclaims the gospel.

Isn't that right? Now, I don't mean that you go around saying to everybody in your neighborhood, Guess what? I'm a pastor in a Baptist church. And that is what I am. It was funny. Our neighbors had a big blowout.

[21 : 45] They must have had 60 people in their home and around their house and all over the driveway and all over everywhere else. It was quite an interesting evening. And I remember my neighbor decided that he would introduce me.

What's he going to introduce me as? This is Reverend Tim Knoyer. He is a pastor of a Baptist church. He's like, ah! You don't have to go that far, right?

The truth of the matter is, is that forget that label. Well, the day is coming when I am not going to be on staff. And I will continue to be his neighbor.

And whether or not I have the official title of being a Baptist pastor, what I am, just like you, I am a preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that right? It's the gospel that wraps me into the purpose that I have in life and wraps you into that purpose.

You look at this passage and here is Paul saying, hey, listen, I was sent to preach the gospel. I was sent to preach it, not with this eloquence and well-crafted statements.

[22 : 51] I was sent to preach it in simplicity and purity for this reason, so that the cross would be the thing that has power. And as you look at this passage, you recognize that here is Paul saying, my life and my energy is focused on that one thing.

And I have to ask you, is that what you're all about? When people talk to you, when people think about you, would they say that the thing that characterizes your life in their view is that you have this very, very central focus on the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ and your satisfaction in Him causes you to speak about Him freely and joyfully at every hand and every opportunity you have. Now look at the passage also, if you will, there in verse 21. Here's what Paul says. He says, For since in the wisdom of God, in other words, this is God's plan, the world did not know God through wisdom.

So get this locked into your mind. The unbelieving world is not going to get gospel truth just because they do the math and figure it out intuitively.

How many of you got that already understood? It's not like, oh yeah, yeah. It's just undeniable logic and it's just very simple. A, B, whatever, you get it and there it is.

[24 : 10] It's all figured out. No, it's not. It is the work of God that brings people to understand, first of all, their need for Christ because of their sin and then recognize that God sent His Son to be the satisfaction for sin by dying on the cross in their place.

Paul says that in the wisdom of God, the world didn't figure it out because it pleased God. How? Through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Now recognize that what Paul is saying is this, is that God's plan, that which pleases Him, is to bring salvation to people through the preaching of the gospel of the cross, the work of Christ. God, recognizing our need, willingly sent His Son to be the sacrifice for our sin. And so I want you to recognize that as you look at this situation that you and I live in, in this country that is in complete turmoil and uncertainty over politics, guess what the overarching message we have is?

It is not that if so-and-so wins, the world is going to become a happier place. That's not the case. Remember what Jesus said?

[25 : 38] He said, The implication is this, is that in the absence of personal relationship with Christ, no matter who you are, what you've accomplished, where you've been, how much you have, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans because when it's all over, you will stand before the judge and be condemned for all eternity as a sinner that's unrepentant.

And I want you to understand that God, realizing our desperate needs, sent His Son into the world to be the sacrifice for our sin. He died in your place. He died in my place.

And He died to satisfy the judgment of God against my own personal sin. Secondly, God ordained salvation through Christ before the foundation of the world.

He planned it out, recognizing that I cannot save myself, nor can you. It was necessary for Him to do something for me that I couldn't do myself. Why is it that salvation is so difficult for the unbeliever to receive, for one, because it's hidden from Him apart from grace, but another thing is that at the heart of the message of the cross is that we do not save ourselves, and we'd like credit for doing that.

When you talk to a lot of people about, so how are you going to get to heaven, the standard answer is what? Well, I'm doing the best I can. I am trying very hard.

[27 : 12] I love the people that say to me, well, I'm keeping the Ten Commandments. That always just, really? So I'm a pretty good person. Really? You know, here is the apostle saying, let me tell you something.

It pleased God through the folly. It just seems so ignorant. I mean, why would God do something like that? Send His Son to die for your skanky, ugly life, that you can have salvation entirely by grace and free?

That's what God did. And so God in His wisdom ordained salvation through Christ, and God in His justice saw to it that Christ satisfied the judgment that I deserved.

He paid the penalty for me. So I guess I tell you this. When you think about what is most needed, we don't need better roads. That'd be nice. We don't need better health care.

That'd be nice, too. We really don't need better citizens in the nation as much as we need people who've come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and whose lives are transformed by the power of the

cross.

[28:24] The fact of the matter is, is that the thing that needs to change in our culture the most is not the political system, but the hearts of people. As you think back into the Old Testament, stop and recognize just for a moment, most of the prophets, when they preached, and they lived in an ugly time, as bad as the time we live in, their focus was not on redeeming the community through changing the political system, but it was in calling people to repentance and bringing them to the place of coming to grips with their sin and their need before a holy God.

And so I want you to understand that when we recognize this morning the task that we have in the world that we live in, we have to come to grips with the fact that the gospel is God's plan for transforming human life.

Let me have that fixed in your mind. The gospel is God's plan for transforming human life. That's it. Focus on it. Have it clear. Understand.

And when it comes down to the central issues of your life, I am persuaded that nothing can change a human life apart from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That being a fact, I want you to recognize that Jesus has sent me and Jesus sent you in exactly the same fashion in which Jesus himself was sent, with the same message and the same purpose.

[29:52] I want you to look at two different passages, and you would have to guess that they would come from John. John 17, verse 18. Here is Jesus.

John 17, verse 18. As you sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. That little word, as, is saying in the same manner, for the same purpose, with the same intention.

And so I want you to recognize that Jesus here understood that his Father had sent him into the world for a particular task. That's why he was there.

The truth of the matter is, is that same purpose is the one he sent you with. Why are you alive? For the same reason Jesus came.

Why are you working where you're working? For the same reason that Jesus was sent. Why is it that you are in the neighborhood where you are? I trust that you recognize that you are in that neighborhood for the same gospel reason that Jesus was sent into this world.

[31:14] For the same purpose. Have you look at one other passage in relationship to that. John chapter 20, verse 21. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you.

I wonder this morning, as you think about this issue, whether you recognize or not, that at the end of the day, the purpose that you have in life is this, it's gospel. You are here, you draw breath, for the reason of lifting up the testimony in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, guess what this evening is going to be? It's a gospel evening. When you leave this place, it's a gospel opportunity. It's an opportunity for you to display your confidence and your joy in the Lord Jesus Christ and lift up the sufficiency of the cross and recognize that nothing else can change the world that we live in.

So, let's put it into practical terms as we kind of bring this down to a close here. I want you to think about what is it to live in the here and now? So, how do we go about live, living?

How do we go about voting? And how should we treat others that don't agree with us that we kind of bump into? For one, live by making the main thing the plain thing and keep the gospel first.

[32:38] I want you to focus on that. Live by making the plain thing the main thing. By making the main thing the plain thing. You say it either way and it works, but here's the point. It's worth remembering that at the heart of what you are here for is to make the gospel clear and to make it plain in the life that you live and in the conversations that you have.

Christ's ministry took place in a tyranny and a corruption that would make our present day look like kindergarten.

Do you understand that? And in the midst of all of that, you can read through all four gospels. You can read the apostles and all the epistles and whatever else.

You will not find a great deal of focus on the political scene. You will find a consistent focus on the greatest need is people to come to grips with their need for the Lord Jesus as their personal savior.

I want you to recognize that in every place where the gospel has had its effect and people have been drawn to the cross that the outcome is this, is that the community has had a change as a result of that.

[33 : 46] You who are here, who have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, later in your life, guess what you will tell me over and over again? Here's what I hear the people tell me. I am not the same person I used to be.

Christ has changed me and I live a different life, different ambitions, different interests. I have been changed by conversion. And so I want you to recognize that we who know Christ are to live by making the plain thing the main thing.

Secondly, I encourage you here, vote your own conscience and be informed. You know, I've had people say, well, tell me who to vote for. I'm not going to do that. I am still trolling through the information and not real happy with any of the choices.

But I encourage you to vote according to your own informed conscience. I've done a lot of reading, probably more this election cycle than any that I can remember.

And I got to tell you, one of the things that I have been affected by is how many godly, conscientious Christians are on two different sides in this subject. I would like to tell you that everybody who loves Jesus is over here.

[34 : 56] Do you understand that? That's not the way it is. And so I would encourage you as conscientious, godly believers, you do your praying, you do your studying, and you make an informed decision.

You pray. You study. You exercise your conscience. Third, respect the sole liberty of those who do not agree with you in the body of Christ.

Can I tell you that? Respect the sole liberty of those in the body of Christ that do not agree with you. You're going to end up, this election cycle, I think you're going to see more people who are of different opinions.

I wish I could tell you that's not the way it's going to be, but that is probably where it's going to be. Let me close with this and have you focus on it. Keep the gospel first.

Keep the gospel first. It is no accident that we are where we are as a nation at this moment. Do you understand that?

[35 : 58] And in the midst of the turmoil of the moment, there is only one thing that I am absolutely confident of, and it is this.

It is that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I, Tim Knoyer, have been sent with the same purpose that Jesus was sent with, and I am going to focus on living my life for the testimony of the glory of Christ.

I call you to do the same. Let's close in prayer. Our Father God, this morning, as we think carefully of what it means to be a citizen in this great United States, we recognize that the blessings that we enjoy are from your hand.

We recognize also that the turmoil of the moment is something that is very sobering to us as we consider the blessings that our nation has enjoyed. And yet, in the midst of all of this, we are very thankful that the one thing that is preeminent and overshadows everything else is that Christ Jesus came into the world to be the Savior of the world.

And we who know Him live and breathe for the same purpose that you sent Jesus into the world. Help that to be the thing that drives us in the week that lies ahead, that makes today and the way in which we celebrate this day special.

[37 : 23] Make it the conversation of our lives and the testimony of the way we live that we, by our testimony and our work and actions, would draw people to seek Jesus as the only hope they have.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to ask that you stand together. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.