



The Cud...a little something to chew on.

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Politics, Presidents and Jesus

They say that laws are like sausages: It's better not to see how either is made.

By the looks of it, the making of an American President may be giving laws and sausages a run for their money.

You do have to give our country credit for being willing to put the whole messy affair on public display. Not to mention that the peaceful transfer of power is a remarkable achievement for any nation. But just because it's peaceful doesn't mean it's pretty. And sometimes I think that watching the electoral process is more painful than living with the elected product.

I'm inclined to agree with the old wag that defined redundancy as, "an airbag in a politician's car".

That said, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else on the planet. I'm proud, privileged and grateful to be an American.

But as a follower of Jesus Christ, I'm a dual citizen with mitigating obligations ("For our citizenship is in heaven" [Philippians 3:20]). And so I've assembled some notes to self. Biblical calibration points. Things to remember in an election year. Mental guard rails for observing a Presidential race.

1) I must remember that I have never met any of the candidates. I have not been to their homes or their offices. I have never had a single conversation with any of them. What I purport to know about them has come from a sound bite, an interview, or on rare occasions, an actual speech. Most of what I know is secondhand and hearsay.

With little, if any, first hand knowledge about these individuals, I must be extremely careful how I speak about them to others. Gossip and slander are sin. I should not say anything *about* a politician that I would not also say *to* that politician. I should never say anything to anyone that I could not

immediately follow with a comment about the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Imagine this transition, "I think your candidate is the anti-Christ and his policies are straight out of the pit of hell. Oh, and speaking of Christ, have you heard the good news of God's love and redemption?"

2) I must remember that modern media promotes the illusion of my being better informed than I am. I should recognize that most issues of public policy are complex, that I am only superficially informed, and I should therefore speak and opine with appropriate humility.

3) I must remember that, without exception, God has established all governments in existence. And that God identifies those who govern as His servants. I should honor those servants of God regardless of how I feel about them personally or professionally. Regardless of their morality or immorality. Their style or their substance. To dishonor those whom God appoints is to dishonor God Himself (1 Samuel 24:4-12; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

4) I must remember that there is no such thing as a "Christian" position on any public policy.

5) I must remember that there *is* a "Christian" position on how I treat those in public office. I must pray for them. Honor them. And submit to them. (1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13:1-7)

6) I must remember that Jesus Christ is not a Republican. He is not a Democrat. He is not even an American. Jesus Christ is a Middle Eastern Jew. He is a monarch. And He is preparing to bring the governments of the earth (America included), to their knees in submission to Him (Philippians 2:10, Revelation 19:11-21). His end game is to rule the nations, not to reform them.

7) I must remember that, unlike His would-be-rivals, Jesus Christ will establish His Kingdom without anyone's assistance. When it comes to conquering, Christ works alone. He does not enlist His followers in the subduing of the earth. The sword that will strike down the nations comes solely out of His mouth (Revelation 19:15).

8) I must remember that, as a follower of Jesus Christ, I have been sent on a diplomatic mission. I am not commanded to subjugate the unbelievers, but rather to entreat them. I am commanded to love and to plead with people on Christ's behalf. I have a non-violent mandate to implore people to be reconciled to God. "...and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:19b-20).

9) I must remember that the New Testament recognizes no secondary or alternative mission to that of sharing God's good news. Failure to perceive and conduct myself as an ambassador of Christ is to fail, period. Regardless of my sex, my vocation or my political leanings, all of my discussions and debates must be filtered through the question: "Will it advance the cause of the gospel?"

Paul became "all things to all men" and he "did all things for the sake of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:19). Not for the sake of a better empire. Or for the sake of universal health care. Or even for the sake of the unborn. He understood his mission and the mission of the Church as a ministry of reconciliation rather than social reform. Following Paul's lead, I should become a Republican to Republicans, a Democrat to Democrats and an environmentalist to those who are environmentalists, so that I might by all means win some (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

10) I must remember there is no political discussion or debate worth having if it will undermine my diplomatic mission or obfuscate the divine message.

The devil has made no secret of his agenda to obscure God's word (Genesis 3:1-7; John 8:44), and the world is uncanny in its ability to miss the meaning of the gospel - with or without the devil's deceit. Add to that the Church's almost insatiable desire for political clout and it's a wonder *anyone* hears the gospel of Jesus Christ anymore. Ever since Constantine gave it legitimacy, the Church has been eager to acquire and throw around its political weight. And whenever politics and the gospel are intermingled, the gospel will end up disfigured.

In 21st century America, many have been left with the false impression that being a Christian requires one to embrace a conservative political philosophy. To the degree we are responsible for the confusion, it is to our eternal shame. And it should be our highest priority to correct and clarify the message.

I'm not suggesting that believers should never engage in political discourse, political activities or hold a political office. But I do believe that Christians have a sober responsibility to put a noticeable distance between their political convictions and the biblical absolutes. Our clear obligation is to prioritize our diplomatic mission on behalf of Jesus Christ over any temporal civic agenda. We must proclaim and protect the message until the mission is complete.

I would love to see the Church of Jesus Christ undergo a PR makeover and become re-branded as the "tight-lipped voters". Let us be the voters no one can predict because we keep our civic opinions to ourselves. The voters who take their political concerns to God rather than to the street (because that's where the real influence lay anyway).

I know, I know, but a man can dream, can't he?

Here's the real irony: Regardless of who occupies the White House or who sits on the Hill, they will only serve to further prove the proposition that history is a record of man's inability to govern himself. Sinners electing sinners to govern sinners will always create problems faster than they can solve them.

On the positive side, whether or not America grows stronger or weaker in the short-term, eventually we will succumb to the King of Kings. And that's more than a campaign promise.

In the meantime, anyone in the mood for sausage?

For that day,

David

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