

God and Our World: How should we relate to the social/political issues of our day?

Intro:

Why people are hesitant to talk about Christianity and Politics

Social Reasons:

- Too controversial, can divide more than unite
- Fear from bad experiences where Christians got too political- religious right

Theological Reasons:

- Seemingly unimportant- Jesus is coming back
- The Bible asks us to not get involved

Practical Reasons:

- Unsure of the political issues, too much to study/think about.
- Not enough time. It doesn't really matter

Christians do need to somehow interact with the social issues of our day and talk about politics. Why? Our mandate as believers is to be light to the world and salt to the earth. (Matt 5:13-14)

Key things to understand before talking about God and the social/political issues of our day:

1. Sin

It affects everything, personal and social (Amos 1)

Easy to see in Nazi Germany,

2. God

- He reign over everything, including political nations (Acts 17:26, Rom 13:1-7).
- God came to correct the affects of sin. Not only is this personal in our hearts, but socially as well. In fact, one day God will be very political you could say because one day, everybody will be in submission to Jesus (Dan. 7:14, I Cor. 15:24-28, Phil 2:9-10, Rev. 22). Jesus will be the ruler and king, we will have a true theocracy here. And this makes sense as we think about everything in the Bible, especially the message of Jesus. Remember Jesus came and preached this basic message: the Kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15). The kingdom is "political" in the sense that it will be fulfilled one day.

In the Meantime, before this reign occurs politically...

3. Government

God has put this in place (Rom 13:1-2).

Called to promotes justice and goodness, punish evil in society (Rom. 13:4-7)

The question, then, is how should we live as Christians in our world today, with its social/political issues? How should we engage these issues, given our Matt 5:13-14 calling?

To find the answer to this, I want us to turn to 1 Peter 2:9-17. I'm going propose 2 answers to this question today:

- Be a community that exhibits what God would want
- Get involved, submit through participation (that's how democracies work).

Be a community that exhibits what God wants.

Now why would I say this in relation to social issues and politics? Well, we can see here in 1 Peter that government is talked about in v. 13-17. But note the context, what Peter says, before he talks about submitting to government. He first notes that Christians are a special community, they are a community of God. In fact, he uses sort of "national/political" language to describe God's people; he uses language used to describe the nation of Israel in the OT (v. 9-10) (see Ex. 19:6) So, as people who follow Jesus, we are a special community.

But notes what Peter says next. As this special community, we need live a life that shows for God's goodness to those around us (read v.11-12). It's pretty much a rehash of Matt. 5. Now, we tend to read this and think of moral issues like sex/pornography, lying, etc. etc. But note what Peter goes into first- submission to government! It goes to show that

we are talking about living lives that exhibit all of God's good and holy characteristics. The point of doing this, and the point of all of Ethnos, is that people would be turned to him (v.12)

Now let's stop here briefly and think about this in relation to how we are to live in our society today, in light of social issues and politics of the day (our question above). For those of us who may be really interested in getting involved in social issues and politics, we need to realize that our first order of business is to get our life in the Christian community on track with God.

Before tackling issues of **welfare** outside, is the church inside taking care of the poor properly within the church?

Before expecting the Government to handle **religious tolerance**, is the community a tolerant place (not theologically, but in kindness and due respect)?

Before expecting government to handle **social security**, are we taking care of our elders?

Before discussing **the status of marriage and homosexuality**, is the church modeling marriage properly? Are homosexual people treated with love, care, justice, and truth?

Before arguing about how the government will help with **jobs**, are we encouraging productivity in the church?

So, how should we tackle the social issues of our day? Take care of them in community.

Now the problem is, of course, we sometimes stop short just here. We can get too into church and not realize we are called to shine forth God's goodness outside of our walls. That's what Matt 5:13-14 is all about. And so the second part of our answer, especially in light of the democracy that we live in, is:

Participate in democracy.

Now this isn't really explicit in our text because the Bible was not written in a time of a democracy like ours. In fact, it was written in a time of Emperor rule, and it was pretty nasty at that. Now we live in a time where we participate in government. One of the facets of submission to our government would be to participate. It would be to vote and dialogue.

But beware, we need to realize a couple of things when we do this:

- Participate knowing that true change must come from God's Spirit and a change of heart

Don't think legislation alone will solve the issues of our day.

- Participate knowing that God is the one who will set up His kingdom, not us.

Don't think we're supposed to make the US a "Christian" nation!

- Participate knowing that fighting for what God would consider good is a good thing; legislating morality is a good thing (legislating religion is not).

"Salt and Light"

But many of us will ask, but can we legislate morality?

Yes: All laws are somehow moral. Justice is a moral issue. Genocide in Darfur is a moral issue. Civil rights was a moral issue, which interestingly began from a Christian notion the Enlightenment went for.

In fact, we could even say legislation morality is inevitable; you will inevitably impose some sort of morality on someone else when you write a law.

So the question is: whose morality do we legislate? This is quite a complex question, going into the realm of moral/ethical theory and philosophy. But it can be said that the founding fathers thought of some type of Moral/Natural Law (Declaration of Independence: we hold these truths to be self evident) concerned for the general welfare of people).

Conclusion:

Restate

Vote: Oct. 18

People using politics for God

Joseph

Daniel

Mordecai

Ezra, Nehemiah