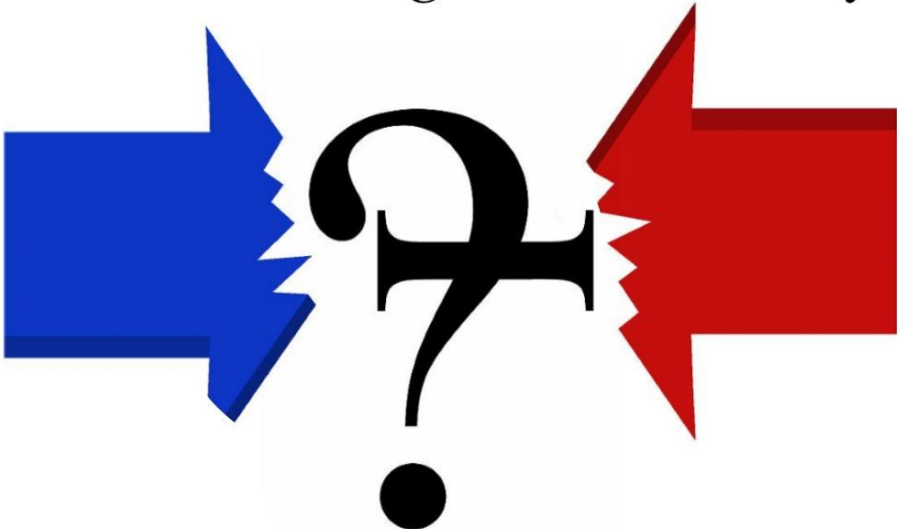


Summer Nights @Trinity



Jesus and Politics

GENERAL OUTLINE

- **June 1st: God's Caesar**
- **June 8th: God's Christendom**
- **June 15th: God's Counter Culture**
- **June 22nd: God's Concerns**
 - Ways and Means
 - Legislation (for or against?)
 - Tools
 - Examples
- **June 29th: God's Kingdom**
 - Civility
 - Public vs Private
 - Who are we to BE in this world?

MY HOPES AND GOALS

- **Goal:** Help us (as Christians) think deeper, speak more civilly, and be more compassionate about political issues

REMINDERS:

- General Rules of All My Classes:
 - The Bible is our ultimate authority
 - Ask Questions

MATTHEW 7:1-3 "DO NOT JUDGE, OR YOU TOO WILL BE JUDGED." ² FOR IN THE SAME WAY YOU JUDGE OTHERS, YOU WILL BE JUDGED, AND WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE, IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU. ³ "WHY DO YOU LOOK AT THE SPECK OF SAWDUST IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE AND PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE PLANK IN YOUR OWN EYE?"

REVIEW

- Class #1: God sets up Governments
 - We are to be under them... under Him...
- Class #2: Our first allegiance is to be citizens of the Kingdom of God
 - There is a Political Element to Church: We serve THE KING...
 - Church and State together is bad for the Church
 - Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's

- Class #3: Our Polarization is easy, but dangerous, because it keeps us from seeing/relating to others...
 - We're becoming more polarized (as a people, as a government) – because people are groupish...
 - **ISAIAH 30:21** WHETHER YOU TURN TO THE RIGHT OR TO THE LEFT, YOUR EARS WILL HEAR A VOICE BEHIND YOU, SAYING, "THIS IS THE WAY; WALK IN IT."
 - How do we Reason?
 - Rider/Elephant
 - Rider: Thinking/Reasoning/Controlled Processes
 - Elephant: Emotions/Gut/Automatic Processes
 - Example: Alarm Clock
 - Moral Decisions are made by the Elephant, then the rider explains it
 - Foundations for Reasoning
 - Care/Harm
 - Christians: Mercy
 - Fairness/Cheating (Altruism and Proportionality)
 - Christians: Justice
 - Loyalty/Betrayal
 - Christians: Faithfulness
 - Authority/Subversion
 - Christians: Humility (Obedience – Walk Humbly with your God)
 - Sanctity/Degradation
 - Christians: Holiness
 - Liberty/Oppression
 - Christians: Peace/Shalom
 - Liberals Tend to Use: Care and Fairness
 - Conservatives tend to Use: Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity, and then care and Fairness (though to a lesser degree)

- **MATTHEW 5:43-44** "YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID, 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.'
⁴⁴ BUT I TELL YOU: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU,
 - **God got to know us... maybe we can get to know our neighbors better...**
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GROWING FRUSTRATION

- “The competing ideological options, from which we are forced to choose, are perhaps at their lowest ebb in compelling the involvement of ordinary citizens in public life. It is not that people just don’t care, but that they feel unrepresented and unable to vote for anything that expresses their best values.” (Wallis, Jim. God's Politics (p. 72). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.)
- “With religious fundamentalists on one side and secular fundamentalists on the other, how should religious people express their vision of faith and politics? How do we do more than conform to existing options and instead help create better alternatives for solving the pressing problems of our society? And, most particularly, how are we to vote? First, we should ask what the religious profession of candidates actually means for their policy making. If religious affirmation is not tied to real political values and directions, what good is the expression of such public piety?” (Wallis, Jim. God's Politics (p. 78). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.)

God’s POLITICS

- “God’s politics is therefore never partisan or ideological. But it challenges everything about our politics. God’s politics reminds us of the people our politics always neglects – the poor, the vulnerable, the left behind. God’s politics challenges narrow national, ethnic, economic, or cultural self-interest, reminding us of a much wider world and the creative human diversity of all those made in the image of the creator. God’s politics reminds us of the

creation itself, a rich environment in which we are to be good stewards, not mere users, consumers, and exploiters. And God's politics pleads with us to resolve the inevitable conflicts among us, as much as is possible, without the terrible cost and consequences of war. God's politics always reminds us of the ancient prophetic prescription to 'choose life, so that you and your children may live,' and challenges all the selective moralities that would choose one set of lives and issues over another."

(Wallis, xv)

- "Dare we search for the politics of God? O It's much easier to just use god to justify our politics" (Wallis, 32)
- "Abraham Lincoln had it right. Our task should not be to invoke religion and the name of God by claiming God's blessing and endorsement for all our national policies and practices—saying, in effect, that God is on our side. Rather, Lincoln said, we should pray and worry earnestly whether we are on God's side." (Wallis, Jim. God's Politics. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.)

CHRISTIANITY: PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

- Is Faith supposed to be private or public?
- "American Christians, in the name of justice, try to create a society in which faith in a living God is rendered irrelevant or private. For some, religion becomes a purely private matter of individual choice. Stick to saving souls and stay out of politics, it is said, On the other hand, activist Christians who talk much about justice promote a notion of justice that envisions a society in which faith in God is rendered quite unnecessary, since everybody already believes in peace and justice even when everybody does not believe in God." (Hauerwas 37)
- "Political theologies, whether of the left or of the right, want to maintain Christendom, wherein the church justifies itself as a helpful, if sometimes complaining, prop for the state." (Hauerwas 38)

- “We believe both the conservative and liberal church, the so-called private and public church, are basically accommodationist (that is, Constantinian) in their social ethic. Both assume wrongly that the American church’s primary social task is to underwrite American democracy. In so doing, they have unwittingly underwritten the moral presuppositions that destroy the church.” (Hauerwas 32)

GOD: PERSONAL, PRIVATE OR PUBLIC

- “God is personal, but never private. And the Bible reveals a very public God. But in an age of private spiritualities, the voice of a public God can scarcely be heard. Private religion avoids the public consequences of faith.” (Wallis, 31)
- “However, that personal God is never private. Restricting God to private space was the great heresy of the twentieth-century American evangelicalism. Denying the public God is a denial of biblical faith itself, a rejection of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus himself. Exclusively private faith degenerates into a narrow religion, excessively preoccupied with individual and sexual morality while almost oblivious to the biblical demands for public justice. In the end, private faith becomes a merely cultural religion providing the assurance of righteousness for people *just like us*.” (Wallis, 35)

WAYS AND MEANS

- “At least implicitly, one of the most prominent themes in the Bible is the pursuit of godly goals using godly methods.” (Schansberg 41)
 - “...our agendas for government activism represent the pursuit of appropriate goals and the use of appropriate methods.” (Schansberg 42)

- 2 Variables:
 - Are you “for” or “against the right thing”?
 - Are you going about it the right way?
- The Pharisees are the ultimate example of wanting the right things in the wrong way

LEGISLATING MORALITY VS JUSTICE: DEFINING THE TERMS

- Legislating Morality: “efforts to regulate and restrict consensual but sinful acts between two adults in which no significant, direct costs are imposed on others. Although both parties enter the agreement willingly and expect to benefit, Christians believe that, as sin, the activity is, on net, harmful. But the key point is that the behavior is voluntary for both parties and both parties expect to benefit...” So, for example, sex outside of marriage, drug use,... “(A second category of LM is using government to force or legitimize ‘good behaviors’ such as prayer in schools.)” (Schansberg 57)
- Legislating Justice: “is the use of government to try to improve justice and to reduce or eliminate unjust outcomes.” ... “‘justice’ issues will be those in which someone’s rights are directly and significantly violated. Obvious examples of this include murder, rape, and theft. In other words, one party uses force of some type to directly harm another party; someone benefits directly at the expense of another.” (Schansberg 57-58)

SHORTCOMINGS AND ISSUES

- Shortcoming: An Oversimplification
 - They’re intertwined – and maybe a spectrum
 - Acting justly is to be moral...
- Shortcoming: Part of the argument will be that Legislating Morality is bad because these things don’t involve harm – but because of our understanding of sin, that’s just not true

- “First, we must distinguish between instances when the government allows people to sin and when the government forces people to sin (through omission or commission). And we must distinguish between what the Bible calls for in terms of the behavior of believers and what God expects from non-believers. In discussions about God’s standards and our response to the authority of government, believers are often unclear, or at least sloppy, about the Biblical differences between these concepts (Schansberg 61)

THE CASE AGAINST LEGISLATING MORALITY

- “[God] gave us a free will. Why? Voluntary praise is far better than coerced praise” (Schansberg 66)
 - Ie. Why give Adam and Eve free will? Why not legislate more than just the tree?
- Jesus didn’t work to legislate morality... instead he sought to bring individuals closer to God.
 - “With legislation, guilt and resentment may be more likely, but salvation may be more elusive. In response to the enslaving power of sin, human law has some power to change behavior, but simultaneously, it may also hinder the power of Christ to transform lives.” (Schansberg 72)
- Jesus only seemed to push for morality on an individual level... or from religious people
- Jesus didn’t seem to push for ‘governmental reform’
 - Woman caught in adultery – John 8
 - To neither condemn or condone...
 - 100% Conviction
 - 100% Compassion
 - “While liberal churches often ignore or downplay the conviction, evangelicals too frequently leave out the compassion. Both are wrong.” (Schansberg 79)
- “In sum, legislating morality is neither explicitly condemned nor encouraged in the Bible. But notably,

politics and concern for 'social morality issues' (outside of the church) are absent from the teachings of Christ and the apostles. And most important, legislating morality is inconsistent with the style of Christ's preaching and the substance of his message. If one of our goals is to become more Christ-like, we need to determine what Christ would do. As such, it is difficult to imagine him advocating the use of legislating morality." (Schansberg 81-82)

SOME PRACTICAL REASONS FOR NOT LEGISLATING MORALITY

- Judgmental
 - Jesus didn't come to CONDEMN the world (John 3:17)
 - This makes us pharisaical
 - **1 CORINTHIANS 5:12-13** WHAT BUSINESS IS IT OF MINE TO JUDGE THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH? ARE YOU NOT TO JUDGE THOSE INSIDE? ¹³ GOD WILL JUDGE THOSE OUTSIDE. "EXPUL THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOU."
- Promotes Works-Based thinking
 - "As John MacArthur expresses it: 'Forcing people to adopt our biblical standards of morality only brings superficial change and hides the real issue – sin and their need for rebirth in Jesus Christ.'" (Schansberg 85)
- Legalism
 - Makes us proponents of legalism – keeping people away
 - **COLOSSIANS 2:20-23** SINCE YOU DIED WITH CHRIST TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THIS WORLD, WHY, AS THOUGH YOU STILL BELONGED TO IT, DO YOU SUBMIT TO ITS RULES: ²¹ "DO NOT HANDLE! DO NOT TASTE! DO NOT TOUCH!"? ²² THESE ARE ALL DESTINED TO PERISH WITH USE, BECAUSE THEY ARE BASED ON HUMAN COMMANDS AND TEACHINGS. ²³ SUCH REGULATIONS INDEED HAVE AN APPEARANCE OF WISDOM, WITH THEIR SELF-IMPOSED WORSHIP, THEIR FALSE HUMILITY AND THEIR HARSH TREATMENT OF THE BODY, BUT THEY LACK ANY VALUE IN RESTRAINING SENSUAL INDULGENCE.

- Consistency
 - Not really the Light of the World
 - Not all that loving
 - Doesn't work and it turns people against us
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LEGISLATING JUSTICE

- We worship a God of Justice and Righteousness
 - **PSALM 89:14** RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE ARE THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR THRONE; LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS GO BEFORE YOU.
 - **JOB 37:23** THE ALMIGHTY IS BEYOND OUR REACH AND EXALTED IN POWER; IN HIS JUSTICE AND GREAT RIGHTEOUSNESS, HE DOES NOT OPPRESS.
- We are to Condemn Oppression:
 - **DEUTERONOMY 27:19** "CURSED IS THE MAN WHO WITHHOLDS JUSTICE FROM THE ALIEN, THE FATHERLESS OR THE WIDOW." THEN ALL THE PEOPLE SHALL SAY, "AMEN!"
 - **ISAIAH 10:1-3** WOE TO THOSE WHO MAKE UNJUST LAWS, TO THOSE WHO ISSUE OPPRESSIVE DECREES, ² TO DEPRIVE THE POOR OF THEIR RIGHTS AND WITHHOLD JUSTICE FROM THE OPPRESSED OF MY PEOPLE, MAKING WIDOWS THEIR PREY AND ROBBING THE FATHERLESS. ³ WHAT WILL YOU DO ON THE DAY OF RECKONING, WHEN DISASTER COMES FROM AFAR? TO WHOM WILL YOU RUN FOR HELP? WHERE WILL YOU LEAVE YOUR RICHES?
- We are to Defend the afflicted:
 - **MALACHI 3:5** "SO I WILL COME NEAR TO YOU FOR JUDGMENT. I WILL BE QUICK TO TESTIFY AGAINST SORCERERS, ADULTERERS AND PERJURERS, AGAINST THOSE WHO DEFRAUD LABORERS OF THEIR WAGES, WHO OPPRESS THE WIDOWS AND THE FATHERLESS, AND DEPRIVE ALIENS OF JUSTICE, BUT DO NOT FEAR ME," SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY.
 - **LUKE 1:53** HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS BUT HAS SENT THE RICH AWAY EMPTY.

- **Exodus 3:7-8** THE LORD SAID, "I HAVE INDEED SEEN THE MISERY OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT. I HAVE HEARD THEM CRYING OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR SLAVE DRIVERS, AND I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR SUFFERING. ⁸ SO I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM FROM THE HAND OF THE EGYPTIANS AND TO BRING THEM UP OUT OF THAT LAND INTO A GOOD AND SPACIOUS LAND, A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY-- THE HOME OF THE CANAANITES, HITTITES, AMORITES, PERIZZITES, HIVITES AND JEBUSITES.
- We are to Defend the poor:
 - **PROVERBS 29:7** THE RIGHTEOUS CARE ABOUT JUSTICE FOR THE POOR, BUT THE WICKED HAVE NO SUCH CONCERN.
 - **ISAIAH 1:17** LEARN TO DO RIGHT! SEEK JUSTICE, ENCOURAGE THE OPPRESSED. DEFEND THE CAUSE OF THE FATHERLESS, PLEAD THE CASE OF THE WIDOW.
 - **JEREMIAH 22:3-5** THIS IS WHAT THE LORD SAYS: DO WHAT IS JUST AND RIGHT. RESCUE FROM THE HAND OF HIS OPPRESSOR THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN ROBBED. DO NO WRONG OR VIOLENCE TO THE ALIEN, THE FATHERLESS OR THE WIDOW, AND DO NOT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD IN THIS PLACE. ⁴ FOR IF YOU ARE CAREFUL TO CARRY OUT THESE COMMANDS, THEN KINGS WHO SIT ON DAVID'S THRONE WILL COME THROUGH THE GATES OF THIS PALACE, RIDING IN CHARIOTS AND ON HORSES, ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR OFFICIALS AND THEIR PEOPLE. ⁵ BUT IF YOU DO NOT OBEY THESE COMMANDS, DECLARES THE LORD, I SWEAR BY MYSELF THAT THIS PALACE WILL BECOME A RUIN."
- It's What Jesus did
 - Luke 4:18 – while Jesus was took many injustices done to him in stride, he was far less tolerant of injustice done to others
 - “Biblically, we can see that Christ verbally defended the rights of others in matter of justice but did not restrict the freedom of unbelievers in matters of ‘social morality.’” (Schansberg 139-140)

- Sum it all up: **MICAH 6:8** HE HAS SHOWED YOU, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD. AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU? TO ACT JUSTLY AND TO LOVE MERCY AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.

BENEFITS OF LEGISLATING JUSTICE:

- We become servants seeking to put the needs of others before our own
 - The only people that we upset are the few beneficiaries OF the injustice
 - It allows us to be FOR something, and not just against something
 - The needs that we're addressing are the REAL and FELT needs of those who are actually currently suffering
 - It's what God's about
-

TOOLS

- Wisdom: Complexity is the Reality
 - 2 Parts of most problems
 - Embrace Paradox and maybe Avoid Polarization
 - A Higher Perspective
 - Care about those on the other side
 - Seek to understand them (and even love them)
 - Humility
 - Move beyond the politics of complaint (Wallis 41)
 - Protest is ok, alternatives are better
 - Less verbal grenade launching
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PROPHECY

- A Place for Prophecy...
 - “Prophecy is not future telling, but articulating moral truth. The prophets diagnose the present and point the way to a just solution. The ‘prophetic tradition,’ in all of the world’s great religions, is just what we need to open up our contemporary political options, which are, honestly, grossly failing to solve our most pressing social problems.”
(Wallis, 72)
- “The prophetic office is, after all, different from the kingly office. We do not rule in the present era as kings. We have been given no such authority as the church. We have, however, been given an assignment to bear witness. The prophets bore witness to the kings and rules and nations, pointing to what their consciences already know, if only at the subliminal level. But the judgment was left to God” (Moore 40)



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