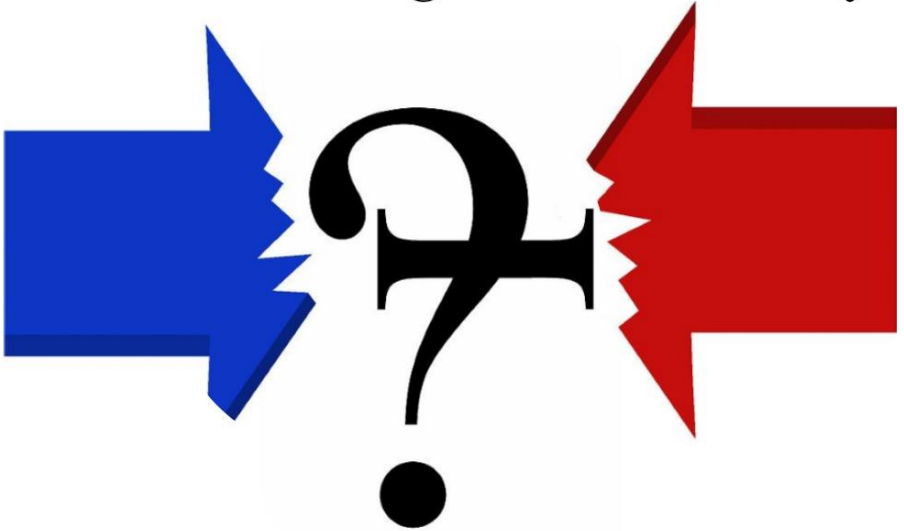


Summer Nights @Trinity



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**
- **June 29th: God's Kingdom**
 - Civility

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
- Class #3: Our Polarization is easy, but dangerous, because it keeps us from seeing/relating to others...
 - **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."
 - We're becoming more polarized (as a people, as a government) – because people are groupish...
 - How do we Reason?
 - Rider/Elephant
 - Foundations for Reasoning
 - **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...
- Class #4: Tools for Understanding
 - Ways and Means
 - Legislate Justice but not Morality
 - 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
 - Humility
 - Move beyond the politics of complaint (Wallis 41)
 - Prophecy

CLARIFICATION: LEGISLATING JUSTICE FOR THE POOR

- What I'm NOT saying: Welfare Programs = Justice
 - Wisdom/Complexity
 - "Take the debate over how to combat poverty. Many liberals favor government intervention on behalf of the poor and the marginalized—welfare programs, affirmative-action policies and the like. Many conservatives argue, on the other hand, that these efforts often do not end up helping the poor. Not every program that is intended to benefit the poor actually does so; indeed, interventionist solutions often make matters worse in the long run. Furthermore, some policies and systems do not specifically aim at bettering the lot of the oppressed but may in the end produce beneficial effects for them; poverty-stricken people are often served better by the production of wealth than they are by redistributionist programs." (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency:

Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 2069-2073). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- Ways and Means
 - “Some Christians have been very active in this arena. Unfortunately, in many cases, their proposals have been ill-advised. These poor policy prescriptions stem from elevating ends over means, and emphasizing compassion and zeal over an accurate understanding of how economic and political markets actually function.” (Schansberg 153)
- 2 Parts of Most problems (Upstream and Downstream)
 - Systemic Issues, Medical, Personal, Psychological, Spiritual...
- What I AM Saying: How do we HELP? And how to we make THAT our goal?
 - “In sum, providing financial assistance can easily have detrimental short-run and long-run implications. The Bible does not endorse government welfare efforts, blanket solutions for disparate problems and motivations, or indefinite assistance to those capable of supporting themselves. Instead, the Bible encourages Christians to voluntarily help the poor with individually-tailored solutions designed to empower recipients to lead productive lives.” (Schansberg 199-200)
 - “Jesus had a soft spot for the least and the lost, the ostracized, the moral failures, the crooks and prostitutes and lepers, the invisible and untouchables and people on the margins, the first-century religious community’s punching bags. And he was willing to be misunderstood, caricatured, and rejected for it. Are we?” (Sauls 92)
- A Place for the Church?

INTRO: THE NEED FOR CIVILITY

- Predictors of 'Road Rage'

GOAL: CONVICTED CIVILITY

- “As Martin Marty has observed, one of the real problems in modern life is that the people who are good at being civil often lack strong convictions and people who have strong convictions often lack civility. I like that way of stating the issue. We need to find a way of combining a civil outlook with a “passionate intensity” about our convictions. The real challenge is to come up with a convicted civility.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 103-106). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
 - Truth and Love
- “Civility is public politeness. It means that we display tact, moderation, refinement and good manners toward people who are different from us. It isn't enough, though, to make an outward show of politeness. Being civil has an “inner” side as well.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 106-108). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- Aristotle on being Civil
 - “like the Latin *civitas*, the root for our word “civil.” Aristotle was convinced that we cannot become truly human until we can capably function as citizens of the city. To be good citizens, we must learn to move beyond relationships that are based exclusively on familiarity and intimacy. We must learn how to behave among strangers, to treat people with courtesy not because we know them, but simply because we see them as human beings like ourselves. When we learn the skills of citizenship, Aristotle taught, we have begun to flourish in our humanness.” (Mouw, Richard J..

Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 129-132). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

CIVILITY IS NOT

- An External Show of Politeness
 - One of our big ‘virtues’ these days is tolerance... but toleration is both passive and doesn’t move us through the conflict.
- Relativism
 - “Christian civility does not commit us to a relativistic perspective. Being civil doesn’t mean that we cannot criticize what goes on around us. Civility doesn’t require us to approve of what other people believe and do. It is one thing to insist that other people have the right to express their basic convictions; it is another thing to say that they are right in doing so. Civility requires us to live by the first of these principles. But it does not commit us to the second formula. To say that all beliefs and values deserve to be treated as if they were on par is to endorse relativism— a perspective that is incompatible with Christian faith and practice.” (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 195-200). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- Liking Everyone
- An Evangelism Strategy
- Unity for Unity’s Sake

GOD AND CIVILITY

- Jesus
 - “as I began to review how Jesus acted in public places, I realized that kindness and gentleness pervaded these encounters.” (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil

World (Kindle Locations 431-432). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- God's Gentleness and Concern for Righteousness
 - "The question of the divine character is crucial to our topic. Christian anticivility is grounded in a failure to understand God's own civility. Many convicted Christians place a central emphasis on the harsher side of the Bible's portrayal of God's character: sovereignty, holiness, power, wrath and the like. I, too, believe that God possesses these traits. I have no interest in trying to "tame" the God of the Bible. God is a sovereign ruler— but in Jesus Christ he made it clear that he is that rare kind of ruler who comes to his people in the form of a servant. God is holy— but his holiness is revealed in his love for us. God is all-powerful— but his supreme power is displayed in the weakness and vulnerability of the cross. God is a God of wrath— but he is also "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86: 15).
 - **"As agents of God's righteousness, we are called to imitate the divine character.** In our efforts at public discipleship, we need to cultivate the traits that are associated with God's own kindness and gentleness." (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 352-360). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- A Slow God
 - "The fast-God theology distorts our understanding, for example, of the patterns of social change. I am convinced that one reason many of my spiritual kinfolk are so reluctant to take questions of racial and economic justice seriously is that the problems in those areas seem so intractable. If God works quickly and decisively, then the fact that these problems haven't been solved yet must mean that God doesn't care very much about these particular

areas of human concern.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 2018-2021). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- God is Patient with Us
 - “St. Ignatius: “God uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines.” Even though we haven’t yet been perfected, God uses us to work his purposes.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 2026-2027). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

ADVANTAGES OF CIVILITY

- Good Pluralism and Diversity
 - “So there is at least one kind of pluralism that God loves. God cares deeply about cultural diversity. This means that Christians need not be threatened by cultural differences as such. These differences are to be sanctified, not eradicated. This kind of pluralism— an appreciation for the contribution each cultural group makes to the beauty of the divine mosaic...” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 984-986). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- A Better Witness
 - “A thoroughly democratic society, in which people are granted the right to live out their basic commitments, provides us with an excellent arena for Christian evangelism and teaching. If diverse viewpoints have a right to be expressed, then ours has a right to be expressed. It is to our advantage, then, to promote a political system that encourages religious pluralism.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 958-960). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- A Deeper Faith

- “I need the wisdom, reasoning, and apologetics of C. S. Lewis, though some of his theological beliefs are different from mine. I need the preaching and charisma of Charles Spurgeon, though his view of baptism is different from mine. I need the resurrection vision of N. T. Wright and the theology of Jonathan Edwards, though their views on church government are different from mine. I need the passion and prophetic courage of Martin Luther King Jr., the cultural intelligence of Soong-Chan Rah, and the Confessions of St. Augustine, though their ethnicities are different from mine. I need the justice impulse and communal passion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, though his nationality is different from mine. ... {Lots more}” (Sauls xxii)

CHALLENGE TO CIVILITY: OUR HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

- “You don’t have to spend too many minutes tuned into Christian programs on radio or television to hear anticivility sentiments:
 - “We are in a battle for the soul of our nation!”
 - “There can be no compromise with falsehood!”
 - “Satan’s favorite words are ‘toleration’ and ‘pluralism!’”
- But it isn’t just people on the “right” who are anticivil. Opponents of civility can also be found on the Christian “left”:
 - “The enemies of liberation must be confronted without fear!”
 - “The struggle for justice is too urgent for us to worry about being nice!”” (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 312-316). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

CHALLENGE TO CIVILITY: KNOWING THE LINES

- ““How can I turn my back on my faith, my people?” he asks himself. “If I try and bend that far, I’ll break!” Tevye pauses and begins a response: “On the other hand...” He pauses again, and then he shouts: “No! There is no other hand!” Every person who strives for convicted civility must think about the kind of moment at which Tevye has arrived. There may well come times in our lives when civility is not enough, when we have considered all our options and find that we have come up against the limits of our convictions. To bend any further is to break.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 1565-1569). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

CHALLENGE TO CIVILITY: FEAR

- MR. LYONS: ... labels are not an appropriate way to try to identify people, that we need to come together, meet face to face, talk to those who have a challenge with us, try to hear one another out. It's amazing once you just sit down for five minutes how much you really do find common ground, find that the person you had perceived to be a certain way was not. And I think you're speaking to the fear-based mentality that drives not just Christians, but a lot of our culture. Politicians use it, media uses it, it's entertaining, but we really try to stir up fear and we try to make people afraid of an imagined future that really isn't true that nobody's really pursuing and we do it because it's good ratings, it raises money, it engenders a spirit behind you and the momentum behind a crowd to be behind you and for you. And I think that slowly we're going to have to break that down and it's going to take more conversations like this, but examples like I think what Jim described to John.

CHALLENGE TO CIVILITY: TRUE OPPOSITION

- “Civility is not enough in some situations. But I must repeat: its basic requirements are never canceled.

Christians never have a right simply to cast aside kindness and gentleness. We are never justified in engaging in a no-holds-barred crusade against our opponents. Going beyond mere civility does not mean that we can become less than civil.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 1702-1705). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- “Without grace, civility cannot endure. And what else but grace could possibly sustain us in those moments when we have no choice but to move beyond civility?” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 1712-1713). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- “Human wickedness is real. God respects human freedom. And God alone will decide our final destiny in the light of what he knows about the life plans we’ve chosen. These three themes are crucial to my understanding of civility. No attempt to be civil will be biblically adequate if it downplays the reality of evil. Civility cannot mean relativism. All beliefs and values are not on a moral par. When we show kindness and reverence toward people with whom we disagree about important issues, it cannot be because we don’t care about the ultimate questions of truth and goodness. Christian civility takes human freedom seriously. I may want people to believe as I do about some basic matters— but what I want is for them to choose to see things that way. This means that I must rely on testimony and persuasion in presenting my views to them. Civil Christians will be very reluctant to endorse moral and religious programs that rely on coercion. And Christian civility will display the patience that comes from knowing that the final accounting belongs to God” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil*

World (Kindle Locations 1831-1838). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- “Idolatry is committed, not merely by setting up false gods, but also by setting up false devils; by making men afraid of war or alcohol, or economic law, when they should be afraid of spiritual corruption and cowardice.” - GK Chesterton
 - MR. MOUW: Yeah. You know, you're getting at something that I'm just really deeply disturbed about — that, for Christians who take the Bible seriously, it isn't that we have these convictions and then we also got to try to be civil, but the truth element of civility is itself one of the convictions. I mean, if our repertoire of convictions includes this, that God tells us we must not bear false witness against our neighbors, then how can we be so fast and easy and loose with telling the truth about others? Making these blanket statements about Muslims? I mean, you and I know Muslims who do not fit any of the stereotypical caricaturing kind of claims that are being used these days. And yet people think nothing of just saying, you know, the Qur'an is an evil book and anybody who's devoted to the Qur'an is just an evil person and we might as well just...
- And Yet...
 - “The Next Billy Graham could be drunk right now...” (Moore 206)

HOW TO BE CIVIL: WATCH YOUR MOUTH

- “Civil people watch their language. We must hold ourselves responsible for what we say.” (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Location 480). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- “God is always listening to what we say. That can be a rather intimidating thought. It might seem that the best policy is not to say much at all, rather than run the risk of saying the wrong thing.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 491-493). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

HOW TO BE CIVIL: WATCH YOUR HEARTS

- Empathy and Teachability
 - “the spiritual dimensions of civility. In the previous chapter, for example, I discussed empathy and teachability. Those are very much “inner” states of being. To be empathetic is to be inclined toward identifying with another person’s hopes and fears. To be a teachable person is to be open to new thoughts and feelings.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Kindle Locations 782-785). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
 - “Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. This is a powerful call. Civility requires that we reduce the psychological distance between ourselves and others. We need to develop a sense of commonality with people who initially strike us as very different from ourselves. One important means of doing this is by cultivating empathy. “Empathy” literally means “in-feeling”— it is to project myself into another person’s feelings so that I begin to understand what it is like to have his experiences. If I want to gain empathy for a neighbor who is consistently defensive and insulting, I can try to imagine what it is like to be torn by the hurts and fears that give rise to his antisocial behavior. In doing so I may find links between his inner life and my own; or I may use my imagination to explore feelings that I myself have never experienced directly.” (Mouw, Richard J.. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil*

World (Kindle Locations 630-636). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

- Curiosity
 - MR. MOUW: You know, I've experienced this in my own relations over the last decade or so with the Mormon community. The three religions that I take very seriously for dialogue are Judaism, Islam, and Mormonism. Those are ones that I've chosen to concentrate on. So in the case of the Mormon community, I just decided that I was going to listen. I was going to ask them, "What do you really believe?" and to try to get at an understanding of Mormonism, which, you know, I have real disagreements with a lot of things in it. But I wanted to be sure that what I was disagreeing with was really what they believed. It's been a wonderful experience for me and that's really helped me to get at a better sense of where the real differences are.
- Gentleness
 - **1 PETER 3:15-16** BUT IN YOUR HEARTS SET APART CHRIST AS LORD. ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU TO GIVE THE REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE. BUT DO THIS WITH GENTLENESS AND RESPECT, **16** KEEPING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE, SO THAT THOSE WHO SPEAK MALICIOUSLY AGAINST YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST MAY BE ASHAMED OF THEIR SLANDER.
- **2 TIMOTHY 2:23-24** DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH FOOLISH AND STUPID ARGUMENTS, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THEY PRODUCE QUARRELS. **24** AND THE LORD'S SERVANT MUST NOT QUARREL; INSTEAD, HE MUST BE KIND TO EVERYONE, ABLE TO TEACH, NOT RESENTFUL.
- **1 PETER 2:17** SHOW PROPER RESPECT TO EVERYONE: LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS, FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING.
- **HEBREWS 12:14** MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ALL MEN AND TO BE HOLY; WITHOUT HOLINESS NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD.

HOW TO BE CIVIL: MY SINFULNESS, YOUR HUMANITY

- “Convicted Christians will often be tempted by the crusading spirit. So a rule of thumb is necessary: For starters, concentrate on your own sinfulness and on the other person’s humanness. We become more civil by gaining a more honest picture of ourselves and others.” (Mouw, Richard J.. Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (Kindle Locations 560-562). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)
- Envision what the other person could one day be... (Sauls 96)

HOW TO BE CIVIL: HONOR THE OTHER PERSON

- MR. MOUW: ... what we really need is convicted civility. And it's that — you know, how do we look at people with whom we have real disagreements, serious disagreements, and at the same time treat them — you know, the Biblical term — there are two wonderful terms. They're in the Bible in the Old Testament, Jeremiah, says, "Seek the Shalom" — the welfare, it's usually translated — but "Seek the Shalom of the city in which you are — God has placed you because in it's Shalom, you will find your Shalom."
- And how do we look at what was in that context, you know? Hebrew people in exile trying to figure out how in the world they're going to relate to a pagan culture. And then God says, seek their Shalom, seek their well-being, you know, even if you disagree radically with them. And then in the New Testament, the Apostle Peter says that we have to honor all human beings and have a regard for their well-being. I take those to be sort of different ways of getting at a very common Biblical theme. What does it mean for me to honor the Muslim, to honor the Mormon, to honor people of unbelief who are hostile toward Christianity? What does it mean to honor them? And then I

think we need to work at the theology there, you know.
How do we view other people?

CLOSING THOUGHTS



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