

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

January 11, 2021

The Case for Being Apolitical

Some will disagree, but I believe it’s wise for Christians to become almost entirely apolitical, especially when it comes to national politics. An “apolitical” Christian refuses to let politics rob them of their “joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13). Some Christians seem to pin their hope on who wins or loses an election and I don’t see how that helps them or anyone else.

Personally, I still vote but the outcome of an election doesn’t affect my attitude or mood. After all, after we cast a vote, there is nothing we can do to change things, especially at the national level. I may be able to have some impact in local politics and state level, it makes no sense to set your hair on fire because of what politicians do or don’t do.

Another reason national politics doesn’t cost me any loss of sleep — and more to the point — is that Jesus himself was apolitical. Yes, it was a much different political environment then, but there is no evidence that he took any interest in politics (which probably didn’t please some of his disciples — Simon the Zealot, for example). In all his discipling, other than “*render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God’s what is God’s*” (Matthew 22:21), Jesus has little to say about government itself and he specifically told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Politics, by definition, is “of this world” but Christians are described as “strangers and exiles” (I Peter 2:11) who, like Abraham, are “*looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*” (see Hebrews 11:10, 13-16; I Peter 2:11).

Being apolitical doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be involved in social issues; we should. But we can’t expect the government to carry our water on those issues. There’s an attitude that says, “*elect the right people, then I can wash my hands of personal responsibility.*” I don’t see Jesus “voting” for that. Instead, he would endorse Proverbs 31:8-9:

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

We’re not accomplishing this by casting a vote every so often.

I fight against becoming cynical (and often lose) on this issue, so I have to be careful. I have developed an increasing — make that *soaring* — lack of trust in most politicians and even the political process itself, as it has evolved during my lifetime. How is it that so many of our “public servants” have become wealthy when their annual salaries are not much higher — or maybe even *less* than — the salaries of some of you who are reading this? Not all are guilty of corruption but there are enough of them and they cast a huge shadow over the whole political scene. It’s a shame.

If you disagree with me on this that’s fine. This is an opinion, a judgment. I know some feel that we should be on the front lines of the political scene, and if one of “us” runs for political office, I would support him or her. But I don’t feel we should ever hitch our hope to politicians and politics.

I know some argue that God literally sets up governments today, as he often did in Old Testament times and, if so, then we should be involved because God is involved. But I’ve not seen any evidence that God controls the human political scene today. Quoting Daniel and other passages that tell us explicitly that God did that in times past is not proof that he is doing it now. Yes, God has ordained the institution of government (Romans 13) but we’re not told that he’s picking and choosing government officials today. Are we really going to argue that God put Hitler, Stalin, and men like them in power? To what end? And where’s God’s word on that? That view, promoted by those who toss free will out of the window with their “*God is in control of every molecule*” mantra, plays into the hands of atheists and agnostics who use it to try to show that God is cruel and capricious.

When people begin to pin their hopes on a candidate and get depressed or worse if their candidate doesn’t win, then they are getting dangerously close to making politics an idol. Also, since politics, by its nature, is divisive, that makes it anti-evangelistic. If my political views dominate my thinking, then I am likely to be biased against anyone who does not share my views. That might, at least subconsciously, make me less inclined to take the gospel to someone who is not “on my side.” I have strong opinions on moral and social issues, but that shouldn’t stop me from reaching out to anyone with the gospel, regardless of what side of the political spectrum they are on. Jesus warned us to “judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Would Jesus have allowed the tax collectors and sinners to approach him if he was as political as some of us are today? Would he have given the woman at the well the time of day? Jesus came into a world of kingdoms to call people to *his* kingdom which, he said, “*is not of this world*” (John 18:36). His kingdom is about “seeking and saving those who are lost” (Luke 19:10) without regard to their political persuasion. Our aim should be to help anyone become a true disciple of Christ and if they do, their moral and social views will change accordingly.