

July 2, 2023

The View

"Sirs, we wish to see Jesus." – John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate when is passed.

We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.

NEW QUARTER BEGINS TODAY

Schedule

The Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: "Jesus at work in the Gospels."

Young Adult Class (room 12): "Jesus: making the best use of the time." Ephesians 5:15-17

Room 15/16: "Building a Great Marriage"

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today

David Posey: "Compassion"

Livestream at 9:30 & 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class: 5:00 PM @ the Building

"Praying the Psalms" (Auditorium)

Young Peoples' Class, PM @ David & Christie Posey's home

Middle school class: monthly (contact David Sanderson (david.r.sanderson@intel.com)

or Seth Reagan (sethreagan@gmail.com)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes: 5th grade and lower

6th grade and up, auditorium: Praising God in Song

Articles published in the View reflect only the thoughts and opinions of the author alone, not necessarily the editor, the elders or any member of the church at Folsom.

On Christians Fleeing Godless Areas

“PAUL IS MAKING THE POINT THAT WHILE EPHESUS MAY HAVE BEEN A GODLESS CITY IT WAS NOT A GOD-FORSAKEN CITY”

[Disclaimer: this article is not making the argument that individuals should never decide that moving to another area is the best thing for their family. We have no ill feelings at all toward those who chose, for various reasons, to move from here. Christie and I have moved several times ourselves in our 50+ years of marriage and felt we had legitimate reasons for doing so. We miss and love every brother and sister in Christ who has moved and hope they are thriving in their new location.]

California used to be *the* place to live and in the 50s and 60s many moved here from other states. In 1967 I met a fellow, John, who became a good friend and we shared an apartment in the LA area. He had moved to California from New Jersey and told me that he and his friends in Jersey would sit around in the wintertime and when the Mamas and Papa’s song “*California Dreamin’*” came on the radio they would break down and cry, unashamedly. They wanted to move here so badly. My friend, John, was able to make the move and he loved living here.

Things have changed and, as a native Californian, I’m sickened by the poor leadership that has led to increased immorality, drug use and unprecedented homelessness. The economy of California, if it were an independent country, would rank at fifth or sixth largest *in the world*. I believe these problems could be solved if state leadership had the proper priorities. But if we think these issues, by themselves, should that cause us to move elsewhere, please consider the following:

The church at Ephesus was established in one of the most degenerate places imaginable. Ephesus became a sanctuary for criminals, and idolatry was central to their culture and their economy (see Acts 19). The temple to the goddess Diana, was in the center of town. It was a moral cesspool: men were castrated to serve Diana, and there were thousands of temple prostitutes. Orgies, festivals and various sexual perversions were common there. Yet, God planted a church in the middle of all that and no apostle ever told Christians to move away from it. Instead, Paul said this:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.”

Ephesians 4:17-19 (NIV)

Paul paints a picture far worse than anything we see in what many consider the worst cities, such as San Francisco, Chicago and New York. And yet God chose to plant churches in places like Ephesus and Rome and many other cities including, of all places, Corinth, which was worse than Ephesus, by most accounts.

Those who argue that Christians should leave an area because of its depravity and wickedness deny the history of the church. Paul did the opposite of what many are telling Christians to do today. In Ephesians Paul urges the members of the church to “walk worthy of their calling”

(4:1), to maintain unity (4:3), to grow (4:11-13) and mature (4:13-16). In 5:1, he tells them to be “imitators of God” – even while living in this wretched city. Paul is making the point that while Ephesus may be a godless city it was not a *God-forsaken* city. Some have used “God-forsaken” to describe California cities such as San Francisco. Yes, that once-beautiful city is in a terrible mess. But there is small group of Christians trying their best to reach out to those who are tired of this “crooked generation” and they have had some success. The church here supports one of the men who is preaching there, Calvin Johns.

If leaving was the solution, there was nothing preventing Paul from encouraging Christians to move. But where would they go? In his work “Moral Letters to Lucilius,” Letter 7, Seneca reflects on the moral decline he observed in society. Here is an excerpt:

“Our age is rotten with vice. For in addition to the usual crimes which are rife and even on the increase, we are now menaced by an evil which stalks abroad in daylight. This evil, indeed, never stood more in need of courage; for it is not the struggle of a nobler line of vice which may be destroyed by a single blow, but the dire monster comes armed and equipped with an abundance of secret missiles.”

Ancient historian Tacitus said, referring to the Roman Empire in general:

“*Corruptissima re publica plurimae leges.*” Translation: “The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.”

Annals, Book 3, Chapter 55

Paul never suggested that they leave. Instead, he encouraged and *equipped* Christians to live and be faithful wherever they are. Or, as artist Mary Engelbreit said, “Bloom where you are planted.” Paul didn’t tell the Ephesians to run away. He told them how to live in the corrupt society.

The apostles didn’t look for the most virtuous cities to plant churches in; instead they went to godless areas in the world, preached the gospel and equipped believers to do the same. And, besides, all this talk of moving to somewhere “better” begs the question: *where, exactly, do we find these “godly” cities?* Is there a place you can live that will not challenge your faith? Where is that place?

Paul’s encourages the Ephesians (and us) to live as a faithful Christians even in the most difficult places. The New Testament never teaches that Christians should abandon cities, no matter how bad they are. Rather, the Holy Spirit teaches the reality that we live in an evil world, wherever we live, but that we are to proclaim the Gospel in those places so that some of the lost will come to know Christ just as we came to know him. We are, according to Jesus, to be that “city on a hill” and “light of the world.” We are not to abandon those who are in desperate need the love of God whether they know it or not.

We might want ask Jonah about that.

DAVID POSEY

[SOME PORTIONS OF THIS ARTICLE WERE CONTRIBUTED BY NATHANIEL JOLLY VIA TWITTER]

Politics & the Christian

BY DAVID POSEY

In the forty years that I have been preaching, I have never intentionally used the pulpit or a church newsletter to campaign for a particular candidate for public office — and I never will. That’s asking for trouble because no candidate’s views ever perfectly align with God’s word.

But a more important reason I avoid overtly political statements is simple: the Bible does not give us a command or example — or even an inference — that urges us to be unduly concerned about who is in power. After all, God chose to establish the kingdom of heaven during the reign of Caesars who were hardly “spiritually-minded.” When discussing the Roman government, Paul, in his letters, simply teaches us, as individuals, to submit to it ^{Romans 13}. So does Peter ^{I Peter 2:13ff}. And Jesus told us to “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” ^{Matthew 22:21} I believe there are legitimate questions about the jurisdiction of the government over the affairs of the church, but that’s a topic for another time. But one man recently asked, “aren’t the *people* ‘Caesar’ under our constitution?” Good point.

As government intrusion continues to increase, these are questions we will need to address. But, so far, other than during the unusual pandemic period, the government has not tried to regulate any church I’ve been part of if only because it is unconstitutional.

There is some good news. Just this past week, the Supreme Court made rulings that we should applaud. For example, the court ruled that employees, in my situations, can take Sundays off for religious reasons without fear of being fired or penalized by the employer. Another ruling allows vendors, such as web designers, cake bakers, photographers, etc., to refuse service if the activity, such as “same-sex marriage,” compromises their faith. Sometimes, a branch of government gets things right.

Neither Jesus nor Paul directly addressed some of the political/cultural issues we are so concerned about such as abortion, slavery, poverty, homelessness and these were common issues in the first century. However, the Bible teaches principles that, if applied by the majority, would solve these problems. If we followed all of Jesus’ and the apostles’ teachings, there would be no slavery, bigotry, hate, abortion, euthanasia, poverty, sexual immorality or rampant homelessness — or any of the other social ills that dominate the conversation every election cycle.

Peter said that God’s “divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” ^{II Peter 1:3}. The principles that would solve cultural ills, if applied, are found in the New Testament. For example, Paul spells out

what he calls “works of the flesh.” ^{Galatians 5:19-21} Among the many things listed is “sexual immorality” (Greek, *porneia*). That is a broad term that covers all kinds of sexual sins. If everyone took this seriously, there would be no pornography, adultery or fornication. For those of us who take this teaching seriously, we will vote accordingly, when the opportunity arises. As a practical matter, then, I’ll be more inclined to vote for a candidate that believes that the best approach to reducing teen pregnancies is abstinence, not one who condones handing out condoms in high school.

Another core principle is marriage. The Bible teaches that marriage is only possible between a biological man and a biological woman ^{Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6} and that homosexuality is a sin. ^{I Corinthians 6:9-10} So, when the state offers me the opportunity to make my views known on these issues, I’m going to do so, even when it seems to be a losing cause.

Perhaps the most obvious principle taught by the Bible is the inherent value of life. Throughout the Old Testament, the intentional taking of life (murder) calls for the most severe penalty — it was always a capital

crime. God hates murder. In its simplest form, the Bible says “Thou shalt not kill.” Paul speaks of those who are full of murder as those with a “debased mind.” ^{Romans 1:28-29}

It seems obvious, then, that the only logical choice is the candidate who supports life. That rules out euthanasia and abortion because both are a form of murder. It’s interesting that those who promote abortion do not call it what it is: the intentional killing of a person in the womb. Instead, they call it “reproductive rights.” We should ask why they don’t call it what it is, but the answer is obvious. If they said we are “*pro-killing-a-baby-in-the-womb*” this truly despicable act would be harder to “sell.”

Each person has to live with his or her own conscience. Personally, I could never knowingly cast a vote for a “pro-choice” candidate no matter what stance he or she took on other issues. It would offend my conscience if I knowingly did so. In any case, as a practical matter, it seems to make sense that before we vote we ask who Jesus or Paul might vote for if that had been available to them. Of course, it’s entirely possible that, even in today’s culture, they would be apolitical. We are free *not* to vote, but I’m not sure that’s the best choice. Sitting on the sidelines and letting others determine the leaders we put into office, when I can vote, just seems wrong. But “to each his own.”

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