**Should Christians be Active in Politics?**

**Various Scriptures**

 This morning, we are taking a break from our study in the book of Daniel to discuss a topic that is very pertinent to our lives as well as the lives of other believers in Christ. The question is this: “Should Christians be Active in Politics?” I know that this topic might bring into your mind some fear or apprehension. Politics is one of those topics that some families never want to discuss, especially around the dinner table. Several of my students over the years have told me stories of how their family gathered for Thanksgiving dinner, but after a political debate ended up in a fist fight or one of the members of the family ended up leaving the home by being thrown through the front window. Not every family has this much division in their lives regarding politics, but as we begin to discuss this topic, I do want to ask for you to be patient as we look carefully at what Scripture teaches regarding followers of Christ and politics. Let me be very clear by explaining to you the goal for this message: I want all of you to know that today I will not be endorsing any candidate for any political office, the pulpit is not the place to praise any other flawed human being. Our purpose will be to discuss discernment and how followers of Christ can use their faith, prayer and other believers to help them make a decision that falls into line with their confessed convictions. Therefore, what we will do today is share some insights from Scripture that will guide us as we are asked to make decisions regarding issues that will have a major impact on the future of this nation. We will be looking at several Scriptures today and then we will use God’s Word to guide us as we move ahead in the upcoming election as well as the future.

 Scripture commands followers of Christ to engage with the secular culture by practicing the skill of apologetics, which the Apostle Peter commands followers of Christ in **1 Peter 3:15**. Peter writes **“15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect;”.** When we interact with the culture and unashamedly share our faith with others, we are boldly proclaiming the gospel and giving our Lord the glory and the respect that He so rightly deserves. Today we will be discussing four reasons why Christians need to be involved in politics and then we will conclude our time together looking specifically at the importance of voting and how we can be prepared to make the appropriate choice.

 The first reason why Christians should be involved in politics is because Jesus Himself was involved in politics in His earthly ministry. This might be shocking to many people, but if we look at His ministry Jesus took several opportunities to speak out on the issues of His day that were important for others to hear. He did this because He needed His disciples to be prepared for the challenges they would eventually be facing when they continued the ministry. Now, how did Jesus participate in politics? He did this by engaging with the social elites of His time, which were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. The teachers of the law not only were responsible for teaching the people about the law of Moses, but they also played a big role in those laws being implemented. Several times in the ministry of Jesus the Pharisees would approach Him to try to find a way to trap Him in His words. Eventually toward the end of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus would address the teachers of the law and scold them severely for the ways in which they were being hypocritical in their implementation of the law. In Matthew 23 Jesus scolds the teachers by making this statement **“23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others” (Matthew 23:23).** In other words, the Pharisees were more concerned with the technical matters of the law rather than the things that were more important like justice and mercy. They cared more about Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath Day rather than making certain people were treated with love, respect and mercy. In making this statement Jesus showed that the hearts of the pharisees were not devoted to honoring God and loving others, they were interested in promoting their own agenda. The law was used to take control over others and use it to maintain their own positions of honor. What do we learn here? We need to speak up when

we see things being done that are not right. Jesus shows us that speaking up for what is right is one way that we can stand up for the gospel.

 Jesus did not shy away from becoming involved with the political leaders of His day and neither should we. When a political leader takes a position on an issue that is not in line with Scripture, we should not hesitate to share the Christian perspective with others. There is nothing wrong with sharing our views and making them known. However, when we do this, we need to do it peacefully and with respect. A follower of Christ should never act in a way that will bring dishonor to our God. Just like the Apostle Peter said, we should stand up for what we believe in but do that with love and respect. We will also be discussing in just a few moments how we can stand up for our convictions through voting.

 The second reason that Christians should be active in politics is because Scripture commands us to love our neighbors. We do this by seeking the welfare of those who live around us in our communities and by voting in a way that supports the most vulnerable people in the society. The two groups in our society that are the most vulnerable are children and the elderly. If we do not use the right to vote when available to us then we are not using that opportunity to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves.

One such topic that needs to be the driving force behind our voting is that we need to vote for candidates who support the right to life for children in the womb. This topic is still a major concern for our society because it is such a politically hot issue. The two perspectives on this issue are the pro-choice perspective and the pro-life perspective. Those who hold the pro-choice perspective say that a woman has a right to do what she wants with her own body, therefore the baby inside of her is at the mercy of the woman. According to Scripture, the child in the womb has the same right to life and is viewed the same as a child outside of the womb. God established this in the book of Exodus when He was discussing death of a child in the womb. Let’s look at **Exodus 21:22-25 “Now if people struggle with each other and strike a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, but there is no injury, the guilty person shall certainly be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”** We see in this passage that God clearly states that a child being killed in the womb has the same rights as any other person. Now,please look with me at the account of Mary’s visit with her sister Elizabeth at the beginning of the gospel of Luke. After the angel had visited Mary and told her she would be the mother of Jesus, she was also told that her cousin Elizabeth would be having a son who would be the prophet for the coming Messiah. When Mary arrived at Elizabeth’s home Luke records Elizabeth saying, **“For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy” (Luke 1:44).** How can a clump of cells in the womb leap for joy unless that is a child? We see that life begins at conception and anything that man may do to end that life or stop that child from being born is murder, plain and simple. When we vote and use our vote to stand up for the innocent lives of children, we are taking care of those who need our help. So, a follower of Christ must use the right to vote to support those who are protecting the right to life for all children in the womb. If we refuse to vote, then we are conceding to those who want to destroy the lives of unborn children. We should never allow this to be so.

 The third reason why it’s important for Christians to be involved in politics is because it will help to protect religious freedoms for other Christians. When we vote and let our voices be heard we are not only making our opinions known, but we are also standing up for other followers of Christ so that they can continue to worship God freely. I personally believe this is so important because, as you know, there are so many other countries in the world today that do not allow Christians to worship freely and threaten to kill them if they speak of Jesus in public. Despite these threats, Christians in these nations do not stop spreading the gospel. This has emboldened them to continue preaching and sharing the good news with all. Now, if those who are sharing the gospel of Christ with others in those nations are willing to put their lives on the line for Christ, why should we not also be willing to use the freedoms we have in this country to work for other brothers and sisters in Christ to practice their faith openly. Not only will other followers of Christ benefit, but others who are not yet believers may be reached with the gospel and may come to faith in Him. We must continue our work as seed sowers and allow the Holy Spirit to use the seed that has been scattered to take root in the lives of others. Participating in politics allows the church to do that.

 The fourth, and final, reason for Christians to be involved in politics that we will discuss today is that through active participation Christians can help for laws to be enforced that support the will of God. When I was in college, I was taking a course in political thought since I was working to become a social studies teacher. A question that came up in class one day was whether laws should legislate morality? What I soon learned was that all laws, no matter where they are enforced, are based upon a particular worldview and are legislating someone’s morality. Do we want to live in a nation that promotes secular humanism (where man is the source of morality rather than God) or do we want to live in a nation who is structured according to the laws of God? We know that God is just and that His law never changes, whereas the morality of man is always changing, and it is hard to know what is right or wrong. In a world dominated by secular thinking there is no right or wrong, just a bunch of people wanting to force others to accept their individual thoughts on what is right or wrong. When followers of Christ are active in politics and participate in government, they are helping to promote laws that will support the will of God in this society.

 Now that we have addressed why Christians should participate in politics, I would like to close today by discussing the trend that we see taking place among many Christians today. According to recent polling a disturbing trend is taking place among the church. There are many Christians who are so dissatisfied with the two candidates we have running for president that they are deciding to sit out of this election. As we have already discussed today, refusing to vote is not a solution to the problems our nation is facing. If you find yourself being frustrated with the candidates you have available to you this election cycle, I would like to share with you some pastoral advice which I hope will be helpful to you.

 The first piece of advice I will give you is to do your research on the candidates running for office. To make an educated decision means that voters must take the time to read about the positions that each candidate is taking on the issues. You can do this by visiting the websites for both candidates and you can also use the writing provided by other Christian ministries that you trust. I receive the decisions magazine from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association monthly. In a recent issue they took time to explain each presidential candidate’s views on the major issues of the day. They addressed the issues of abortion, freedom of speech, national defense, the economy, etc. I have read this magazine for a long time and know that they represent a solid Christian worldview, so when reading that information, I knew that I was being provided with what I need to make an informed decision when voting. I encourage you to use any sources of information you trust to help you make the best decision.

 My second piece of advice as your pastor is to urge you to vote for the candidates and vote on the issues in a way that consistently supports your Christian convictions. We must remember that when we vote for political offices, we are being asked to choose the candidate that most closely aligns with our Christian convictions. After you have done your research then make certain to vote for the candidate that most closely aligns with Godly values. We must remember also that these people we are considering are human beings just like us, therefore they are sinners and have flaws. No living person in history, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, can claim to be perfect or deserve worship from people. If we approach this election keeping this fact in mind, we will be able to actively participate in the election while at the same time consistently maintain our personal convictions in our faith.

 As we conclude our time together today, I hope that this message encourages and equips you as you approach not only this election, but other opportunities for political participation in the future. Let us share these words from the Apostle Peter **“13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God, that by doing right you silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil but use it as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king” (2:13-17).** I feel these words of instruction are perfectly suited to our discussion today. Peter instructs his readers to approach their relationship with government in the following manner: 1. He says that followers of Christ need to submit to the earthly authorities for the sake of the Lord. We need to do this because God uses earthly authority to punish evildoers and praise those who do right. We submit to that authority by participating actively in choosing the leaders for that government. When we support the government, we are also showing our respect for the Lord who has instituted it. 2. Peter also says that we must use our freedom as bondservants of God rather than a covering for evil. We can do so by actively participating in the government we live under by voting and expressing our opinions especially when the government takes actions that contradict the Word of God. We need to submit to the governing authorities and use our freedom to honor our God. However, we must also stand up for the faith and elevate those support Godly values. By doing so we are showing that we honor all people, love the brotherhood and fear God. Let us be known as followers of Christ who use the freedoms provided for us to honor and show respect for our Lord and Savior who has given us every good and perfect gift. At this time, please join me in a word of prayer as we lift this nation for the days ahead. Ask if there are any questions or comments regarding the message or about the election coming up.