

CLEAR THE AIR: Burning Issues Confronting Christians Today
Sermon #3: THINKING RIGHTLY ABOUT GOVERNMENT
(Social Justice and Political Activism)
Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 13:1-7

"Ang simbahan ay walang silbi sa ating kahirapan. Ituloy ang laban. Makibaka! Huwag matakot!"

"The church has become irrelevant to a struggling society – a social club with its own exclusive entry requirements"

When you hear statements like this, and you are part of a church, you might bristle with anger at the seeming insolence of those who say this. Note that there are two extremes in this issue. On one hand we have the Separatists: it's us against the world. Keep those sinners out of the church, just preach the gospel to those willing to hear. On the other hand we have the social gospel: with hard work and diligent effort, God's people can build God's kingdom in the world right now. They make the mistake of thinking that the kingdom of God is something that we build.

What does the Bible say?

1. Every Christian's COMMISSION in life: The Great Commission Matthew 28:18-20

- The mission of the church is to make disciples. That is what the church alone can really do – bring people to faith in Christ. But what do those disciples look like?

Dr. Tim Keller: "You haven't disciplined someone if they only have been equipped to evangelize and bring people to church. If they are truly disciplined, they must be motivated and equipped to love their neighbors, to do justice and mercy. And they also must be equipped to integrate their faith with their work, to engage culture".

- The job of the institutional church ("the church gathered") is not to change social structures/culture, but to create disciples ("the church scattered") who **will** change social structures and the culture.

2. Every Christian's CHARGE regarding government:

- a. We are to Submit to the governing authorities: Romans 13:1-7
This involves following laws, paying taxes, and rendering honor.
- b. We are to Pray for governing authorities: 1 Timothy 2:1-2

3. Every Christian's CALLING within local culture: With the aim of pleasing God and blessing others (1 Corinthians 10:31-33) do what you can with what you have, where you are:

So, what do we have right now in local culture, and how do we use it wisely?

- a. Freedom to vote. Never waste it, no matter how imperfect our system is.
- b. Freedom of speech, of expression, of the press, the right to peaceful assembly and freedom to petition the government regarding grievances.

In exercising our basic freedoms, be mindful of never destroying your Christian testimony to the lost or making weaker Christians stumble. Always ask yourself "Can I still witness to an unsaved person about the love and forgiveness of God through Christ after this? Is there a weaker Christian who will misinterpret this and stumble? (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9; 1 Cor. 10:32; 2 Cor. 6:3)

- c. Freedom to exercise your vocational calling, and your faith within your calling. Some Christians will be called to serve God through public service. Praise God for them, pray for them and encourage them in the faith. But even if you are not in public service, you are called to bless others still – pay fair wages, produce the best products or give the best services, share your faith while you work and show your faith by your work, etc.

- d. Freedom to do religion that is pure and faultless in God's eyes. Every Christian is called to "mercy ministry":
James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Final Thoughts:

When we draw our marching orders from the New Testament rather than the culture, it becomes clear that the task of the church is to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, making disciples of all who come to Christ (Matt 28:18-20) and caring for the needy who become part of the body of Christ (1 Tim 5:16; Gal 2:10).

Let us focus on proclaiming the gospel and seeing God transform lives as sins are repented of and deep changes are made in the hearts of people. With the fearless preaching of the gospel, comes loving acts and social ministry.

Life for all humans on the planet is short, we must tell them the message and show them the message with deeds of love. As Dr. John Piper asked in Lausanne III: "Could the evangelical church say – *we Christians care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering?*"