



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The Political Divide

Living as Kingdom Citizens Above Party and Country

We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. When followers of Christ live as kingdom citizens above party and country, we stop fighting our neighbors, stand against the real enemy, and represent the kingdom well.

PREACHED BY

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SERIES

We're Honoring to All People, Week 3 of 5

MAIN TEXT

Hebrews 12:28

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Sermon Transcript

Well, do me a favor this morning, if you don't mind, turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12, Hebrews 12, and then if you will, stick your finger in 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Corinthians 6. I want to talk this morning on the subject of the political divide in America. I should say happy 250th birthday to the United States of America, but I don't know if that's what I should say. I kind of feel like I ought to say happy 250th birthday to the Divided States of America some days. It doesn't feel like we're getting along, does it? I think unless you're living under a rock, everybody in here is aware of the tensions in our nation right now.

There's a tension in civil life. There's a tension between neighbors. There's a tension between fellow citizens. We have divergent political and otherwise opinions, and it just seems to be impeding on our ability to simply get along. Anybody else feeling this? Anybody else? I realize it's going to be a quiet summer. Next summer I'll preach on seven ways that you can win the lottery through the Holy Ghost and you all will get more excited. It feels like we're struggling to get along in the country. In fact, there's quite a few statistics, and buckle up, I'm going to have a lot of data I'm going to share with you this morning.

Some studies have revealed that one in three Americans say that they've lost a relationship over political differences. One in five people who are estranged from family cite that political differences are the direct cause, meaning if you took everybody who has had to cut off or been cut off from family and you threw them in a room, 20% of those people would say it was politics. That's why it happened. 38% of both Republicans and Democrats say that they would be upset if their child married someone from the opposing party. One in five American workers have been treated poorly by colleagues due to their political beliefs, and 55% of human resource professionals say they feel minimally prepared to handle politically charged discussions at work.

Why? Because people are flipping out over this stuff. Imagine being in a profession where you deal with the inner workings and relationships inside an office, and they come in and they say, "Well, he voted Democrat," and you're thinking to yourself, "God, I wish y'all would have just gotten in a fistfight." Because I know what to do with that. I don't know what to do with this. And it seems like the chasm between opinions is getting wider and wider. Think about this: in 2008, presidential candidate at the time, Barack Obama, said marriage was between a man and a woman.

This is on record, national news stuff. This ain't no deep dive conspiracy theory. It was on the news. That's in 2008. In 2012, then President Barack Obama reverses that opinion, and in 2015, same-sex marriage is legalized at the national level. That's how quickly things are changing, and there's a chasm between opinions. Fifteen years ago, think about this, it was entirely without controversy to define a man or a woman by biological markers, and today it's absolutely offensive. In 2008, one of my favorite comedians, Steve Harvey — go ahead and judge your pastor.

My favorite comedian, Steve Harvey, he does a comedy special, and in the comedy special he has a whole bit built around the fact that his 16-year-old son wanted to get a tattoo, and he said, "Not in my house. At 16 years old, you're too young to make a decision that's going to affect your body for the rest of your life." Sixteen, too young for a tattoo. Fast forward to 2026, be careful if you're a five-year-old boy and they catch you walking through the house with your mother's purse over your arm, because somebody might say, "Hey, he identifies as a girl," and they'll take you right down to the surgery center and chop your wee-wee right off.

That's the day that we live in. That's where we're at. Let me put a mark in my Bible. I have words I've been trying to work into sermons: wee-wee. Sometimes all it takes is for one of my preacher friends to go, "You wouldn't say that." Tune in this Sunday, amen. But the reality is, it's not just sex and gender stuff that is separating us. That is not where all things end. Right now, if there's a conflict anywhere in the world, we're taking sides on it as a nation. If Ukraine and Russia are in a conflict, you've got one set of political people saying, "Well, we support the Ukraine," and then another one saying, "We support Russia." And then if Israel and Iran are in a conflict, you've got one political group going, "We support Israel," and you've got another one saying, "We support Iran." And at some point, we have to look at ourselves and go, "Man, I live in Churchula, Alabama."

Does this opinion really matter to the degree that I ought to be arguing with people who are in wherever they're at in Minnesota over this? We're screaming and arguing and having fights with each other on stuff that we don't even have a dog in the fight on. Think about crime. We've got people who have a full political value, a guiding post, that they say crime should not be okay, and then we've got another group that says you should be able to do as much crime as you want without being punished. That's a pretty big chasm there. Republicans think you should be able to carry a gun, but you shouldn't be able to shoot up heroin.

Democrats want to take your gun, but give you a needle to shoot up heroin. We are in some strange times. Democrats think if there's an unknown virus that scientists are warning us about, that we should take precautions like wear a mask. Republicans, on the other hand, think that if you tuck a copy of the Constitution in your vest pocket, that you will be protected from all diseases. I tossed that in right there, by the way, since I know who I'm talking to this morning. I tossed that in to make sure that you understand one side of the spectrum is not losing it.

Everybody is out of their freaking minds over this stuff. The worst thing that could happen to the Republican Party is a Democrat come out and say you should not sit yourself in the microwave for five minutes, because you'd have conservatives saying, "That's my constitutional right." And guess what? Now we lose the next election, because 400,000 Republicans have shoved themselves in a microwave. We're fighting over the dumbest stuff. I mean, we really are, and it doesn't matter where you're at on the spectrum. We're all losing it. Just go ahead and set up where we're going this morning, amen.

Republicans want to make America great again, but Democrats say that's an insensitive sentiment. That's actually been really insightful to me, because I had something happen recently. I love late night talk shows. Anybody else like the late night stuff? I like late night. My guy is David Letterman. I watch David Letterman stuff still. I'll pull it up on YouTube, and I'm watching old episodes. Not even the Late Show, but Late Night on NBC. I love this stuff. Recently, I'm sure that you've heard this, that The Late Show on CBS has been canceled. It is no longer airing.

I just love late night TV. I like the format. I like all of it: The Tonight Show, The Late Show, Late Night, The Late Late Show. I like them all. I haven't watched a lot of Stephen Colbert on CBS, but I watched his first episode, because it was his first episode. When they announced his last episode, I put it in my calendar. I stayed up a few weeks ago, and I watched his last episode. I like these TV institutions. I don't know why, but I do. While I was watching it, he had a big to-do on the show. I actually really enjoyed it. They didn't do a big sappy farewell.

He just did a normal show, but with some big guests. He brought out his big last talk show guest. He brought out Paul McCartney. I don't know if you know why Paul McCartney was a big deal. It's because The Late Show is filmed in the Ed Sullivan Theater. It's where the Beatles did their first live televised broadcast in America. Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr in the Ed Sullivan Theater. There's some mojo going on there, amen. They brought in Paul McCartney. When they were in

the conversation, Stephen Colbert asked Paul McCartney what his impressions were of America the first time that they came over.

I believe it was the '60s. I could tell you what he said, but we have this great LED screen. I'm going to let you see what he said. Look at this right here. "What was your first impression of America itself, being over here? Had you been over before that?" "No." "Okay." "So it was — we're American, you know?" "Yeah, I know, but I'm American." "But as a boy from Liverpool, what did you expect? America's where all the music we loved came from. All the rock and roll, the blues, and the whole thing. Even going back to the Fred Astaire — it was all from America. So that's what we thought America was, just the land of the free, the greatest democracy."

"That's what it was." "Yep." "Yep. That was it." "And still is, hopefully." "Yeah, yeah, sure, sure." The land of the free, the greatest democracy — that's what it was. Why don't you follow me here. These are two outspoken liberal people, one a musician, one a media personality, outspoken liberals. Greatest democracy, land of the free, that's what it was. If only there was a mechanism by which what it was when it was great could be that again. What if we were to make America great again? Is it just me, or did Paul McCartney just say, "I want them to make America great again"?

And yet at the same time says that's completely insensitive. Here's what's interesting. We're all saying the same things, and yet we're fighting with each other over the finer points. If I say I want America to be great again, they say, "Well, that's insensitive." And then in a paragraph of words they say, "Let's make America great again." We all are really wanting the same things, and we're just choosing to be at each other's throats. This is what I want to talk to you about today. It is pretty normal for the church to live inside of the political divide. Unintentionally — maybe I should have prepared for this message more — my political affiliations are on my sleeve right now.

I'm going to tuck those away as I preach this morning. But what I want to talk about is the fact that the church lives in this political divide, and I think we navigate it poorly. Pastors and parishioners wave their partisan flags proudly. And oftentimes that's happening in the pulpit, it's happening in the pews, it's happening in this construct that we call church. Many in this room, if we were to be real honest about it, you are party first, country second, and kingdom last. You don't believe it? Let's go look at the last 14 days of your posts on the internet.

And we'll find out real fast. Party first, country second, kingdom last. But God's solution for our nation's problems is not praying in schools. The solution isn't hanging the Ten Commandments in the courthouse. It's not having all Christian representatives in the government, though that is my preference and it will impact the way that I vote. The solution is and always will be when Christ followers and the church operate as kingdom citizens above all else. Hebrews chapter 12 — I told you to turn there a little while ago.

HEBREWS 12:28 ESV

²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 28 says this: "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken."

Somebody say, "I have received a kingdom." We've inherited a kingdom. We have inherited a kingdom. You can't see it. You can't put your hands around it. But we have inherited a kingdom. In fact, Hebrews 11 says that we are strangers and exiles in this world.

HEBREWS 11:13 ESV

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

I am an American. I do have a political affiliation. But above all else, I'm a citizen of the kingdom. First Corinthians chapter 6, let's turn over there. I want to read a little bit more to you. It's a verse — this is a passage.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10 ESV

¹ When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers! ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

It says, “When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare to go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?

Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more then matters pertaining to this life? So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers. To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you.

Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud, even your own brothers. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” Now listen to me here. This passage in its context is about court. It's about lawsuits amongst the brethren. But the bigger idea here is about the church's appeal outside of itself to the governmental systems of this world.

What he's saying here is, he's saying you've got something greater than what you're appealing to. You have the kingdom. These people over here do not have the kingdom. And you keep taking things to people who don't have the kingdom. No. As if it's a superior result you're going to get. No. We as believers, kingdom citizens, we appeal to lesser powers and we get lesser results. And frankly, it represents the kingdom poorly before unbelievers. Now, let me answer this, because I know it's coming up in your brain. Should we completely disengage from political involvement?

My answer to that is no. I think you need to be politically involved. You need to vote. I think that one might be worth sticking on your fridge. You need to be informed. You need to be aware. You need to be involved. I think it's fair to make your opinion known. But believe it or not, you can do that without being a turkey. I was really searching for the right word there. There were 15 others I thought were more suiting, but not for the moment. So we have to be cautious when we think our wins and our losses are connected to any particular political outcome.

I think you should be involved. But I need you to hear me this morning. When a candidate who you think is godless, is in another political party, wins an election — by the way, I'll toss this in, whether they win rightfully or wrongfully, it doesn't matter, because God sees all things. He knows what's going on. That being said, when those things happen, when the person you think is the worst candidate wins, that is God's will for that to happen. God is placing that person for a purpose. God placed wicked men over Israel and Judah to bring about His purpose.

ROMANS 13:1 ESV

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

There are moments where if you don't like the person who wins an election, you should just sit back and go, "Well, God is up to something." Norman Hutchins sang a song. He said, "God is up to something." You just need to sing that little tune to yourself. America is 250 years old. And if it doesn't make it to 251 years old, I want to tell you this today. You win. You win because you have the kingdom. Now, I believe America is going to have a long, prosperous future. But I believe it's going to have a long, prosperous future because there is something happening in this season where there is going to be a kingdom people that rises up and actually steps into their purpose, where we can see some change for good in this country.

Somebody ought to give the Lord a praise right there. And part of the way that we're doing this and seeing kingdom people actually make an impact is by putting our eyes on the correct opponent, the correct enemy. We take our eyes off of opposing opinions and turn our attention to the real enemy.

EPHESIANS 6:12 ESV

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians chapter 6 says this in verse 12: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." We aren't fighting our Democrat neighbors or our Republican neighbors.

No, we're putting our attention on the real enemy, which is a cosmic force of evil. It's bigger than what you think it is. We're dealing with loftier enemies than some congressman from here to there. We have bigger things going on than what they're reporting on the news. And today what I want to do is just pull down a handful of things that you can tactically wrap your hands around and see the strategy of the enemy to divide us and to keep the kingdom from coming in this nation. Put it on an observable level, and I think we're going to have some stuff that we can actually live out to see God do a great work, first in this area and then in the nation.

If you're ready for it, say amen. All right, here's three things. The first one is the algorithm. You've got to be aware of the algorithm. This is loftier than what you think is happening in the nation. I don't know if you know this or not, but if you are actively on social media at all and you're consuming information at all on the internet, you have unknowingly surrendered a great portion of your free will. Back when news media started to show more partisan bias, especially in the mid-'90s when we started to see these breakout cable news stations, you had at least the control to determine what information you were going to consume.

Granted, it was going to be lopsided. The newspapers were going to be lopsided. The news channels you were going to watch were going to be lopsided. But you got to choose your lopsidedness. It was a choice you still got to participate in. But if you're consuming any media right now, the algorithm is deciding what you're viewing. If you're reading things on the internet, it's deciding what you get to see. It doesn't matter who you follow. It doesn't matter who you subscribe to. The algorithm is making the decision for you. For instance, I do not watch The View.

I don't watch The View. I'm not going to say I've never watched it, but in my life probably a sum total of 10 times max I've watched it. There was probably chicken soup and ginger ale involved. Amen. And so I don't watch The View. Yet I am wildly aware of what is happening on The View at any given time. I don't follow these people on the internet. The closest thing I get to The View is watching Sister Act. But I know what they were talking about this week. Why? The algorithm is forcing it on me continuously. I'm constantly seeing things about The View.

The algorithm has been maximized for clicks. The only thing the algorithm wants is for you to click through the internet. And researchers have started to look into what produces the most clicks on the internet. It turns out that the single strongest predictor of social sharing is political. In fact, negative political posts are 4.8 times more likely to be shared than generally negative posts, which trend above all other posts. That means if you get on the internet and complain, that's probably going to get shared. But if you get on there and you gripe about politics, it's five times more likely to get shared.

These people know this, so they designed the algorithm around it. Toxic posts on X, which used to be Twitter, receive 27% higher visibility and 86% more shares than non-toxic ones. They want you to have your rage amplified. The algorithm rewards hostility with visibility. Here's where it intensifies. The algorithm is creating a feedback loop where it's training people. And there's a lot of psychology here about dopamine and this, that, and the other. But it's training people that when it posts some type of negative content, when it gets shares, it enters you into a feedback loop to create more negative content.

The internet is designed to perpetuate negative content. Are you hearing me? Negative content. These platforms are effectively training people — listen to me — to get angrier and angrier. So what does that mean for us? Because if we know the scheme of the enemy, we can reverse engineer some things. Here's the first thing you need to know. The world isn't as bad as we think it is. When they share, when you see somebody on the internet who's going in and doing civil journalism, civilian journalism, and they're going in with a camera, and they're asking people questions that they know will get a rise out of them, then those people who you can visually look at and see aren't all there to start with act like complete fools.

Believe it or not, that's not the average person in America. The average conservative does not live in some isolated environment where anytime someone comes in who is a liberal gets absolutely screamed at and yelled at and beat up. They probably aren't tarring and feathering people like everywhere. On the flip side of that, most Democrats do not live in downtown San Francisco in the midst of a perpetual protest where if someone walks in there with a polo shirt, we

already know that they're a conservative, and they ask a question and these people flip out and lose their mind on them.

That's not the average Democrat. It's real quiet in here. Y'all ought to just go ahead and own it. All of them don't have blue hair and lose their mind every 15 minutes. That's the truth. So we're seeing extremes online. The world isn't as bad as we think it is. The whole world is not at war with one another. They put the ones that are on the news. And most of those places have been at war for millennia. It ain't new. It's the thing that happened this week. So people with other views are not as different from us as we think they are. And if we allow the algorithm to dictate how we think about and view people, we choose to be informed by neither reality nor the word of God.

We're letting a perspective be forced upon us. We're submitting our minds — willfully, by the way — to a world system, and in turn, that world system is controlling us. And we got people out here who want to know if AI is the Antichrist. Facebook's got a better chance of being the Antichrist than AI, because you believe everything you see on there. Sorry, I just felt like preaching all of a sudden. Amen. The algorithm does not care if you are liberal. It does not want you to be liberal. It doesn't care if you're conservative. It doesn't want you to be conservative.

It just wants you to be consistently outraged. And if it can keep you outraged, it keeps making money. And that outrage leads to disdain, bitterness, and hate. Number two, second thing you need to be mindful of, is your own assumptions. Your own assumptions. While the algorithm is programming our minds, it's making us look at the other side with deep disdain. If you're conservative, you're looking at liberals with deep disdain. If you're liberal, you're looking at conservatives with deep disdain. And the studies back this up. Some Pew Research data that came out a few years ago says that 62% of Republicans and 54% of Democrats hold very unfavorable views of the opposing party.

Here's what's crazy. That has doubled since 1994. Doubled. In a generation, doubled. 72% of Republicans say Democrats are more immoral than other Americans. 63% of Democrats say vice versa. Now get ready. That has doubled since 2016. In 10 years, we have decided our neighbors who think differently are our enemies. Wow. Wow. 72% of Republicans, 64% of Democrats say people in the other party are more dishonest than other Americans. So we look at them with disdain, and then we think they're lying to us. Constantly. More and more people are viewing anyone on the other side of the political spectrum as close-minded, dishonest, immoral, and unintelligent.

We've made enemies of fellow Americans by holding beliefs — or that hold different beliefs from ours. And this is actually getting to the point where it's not only people who believe differently than us. We have now reached this place where if someone who we agree with 119% is friendly towards someone that we disagree with, that person is now our enemy. "You're weak. You're fickle. You won't hold the line. You won't stand for truth." Man, I'm just trying to buy a double quarter pounder at McDonald's. I didn't think I needed to give this Democrat a piece of my mind.

This is how we look at it when you talk reasonable. There are preachers who are standing in their pulpit acting like walking through life with some measure of decorum — that was a word my grandmother used to use on me, because I got a little fire in me — but walking through life with some bit of decorum is you being a weak, deceived Christian. And now, now, now where we live is, we do a 250-year celebration for America on the White House lawn, and if you go to it, you're not patriotic. We do a July 4th event where every person in the event has to stand behind what looks like a 30-, 40-foot plexiglass bulletproof partition in order to participate, because nobody wants to walk on that stage in this climate with the way people are behaving.

And we think it's just happening. No, there is a root of this happening. The guy who shot Donald Trump when — I don't remember when this was. This was — no, no, it wasn't Donald Trump, because he's been shot at so many times. Do you

remember ever having multiple times that a president got shot? You know, back in the day when people shot at presidents, you know, that was one time. And when they took that guy down, everybody kind of went, “Maybe I ought to not try that again.” But no, Charlie Kirk — the guy who shot Charlie Kirk. This guy is sitting on the internet getting enraged.

And you go, “Well, I don’t do that.” Yeah, but did you post something that got in there? Were you ugly to somebody? And it started a seed, and it got down over here where so much hate that came out of maybe even church people. Now I’m preaching a different message than I was preaching a minute ago, amen. Got over here, and because we participated in a world system when we have a kingdom. We participated in a world system, and now it hits this guy, and he loses his ever-living mind. Which, let’s be honest, I don’t think he was in his right mind for a while anyway.

But we participated in this to some degree to cause him to act this way. And then we lose someone who was the father of a young child in a public display that, by the way, most of us have watched over and over again. And it’s like it doesn’t even faze us, because we want to watch people get killed on TV all the time anyway for entertainment. My God, I just feel the prophetic on me. We have a kingdom, and we settle for lesser things. Since I didn’t split the church last week, I thought this week I’d give it an honest go. We had some people walk out last week, and they just walked out.

It was nothing but the amount of people in this church that have reached out to me to say, “Well, that couple did not like that message.” Y’all have been so fun for me this week, amen. Hallelujah. There are a lot of things that go on in our nation that when we look at people and we start making assumptions about what people have in their heart, we deceive ourselves. We have to be careful of our own assumptions, because we’re starting to look at the other side worse and worse and worse. We’re believing them less and less. We think they’re bad people more and more.

And the longer that we do that, it causes us to make bold assumptions. And so now if someone is of an opposing political party, we believe that they have 355% buy-in on whatever that political party is talking about right now. And we have to be careful of that, because political parties tend to have pretty extreme stuff that they believe on both ends of the spectrum. I don’t side, I don’t get on board with everything that comes out of every Republican’s mouth. It would stand to reason that not every Democrat gets on board with everything that comes out of every Democrat’s mouth.

In fact, I’m watching a lot of older Democratic politicians who — I’m watching them, and they don’t believe the stuff they’re saying. I’m watching them not believe it. You can see it in their eyes. And so when we start to do that and we otherize people, we can make some bold assumptions that can lead us to some negative places. Because if you look at every Republican and you say they’re a racist — well, my God, you shouldn’t be racist. But if you look at every Republican and think they’re racist, you’re going to start eventually treating them like they’re racist.

And you ought to treat racists poorly. I think racists should be shamed and ashamed. There’s just some stuff you ought to keep to yourself, in my opinion. It’s 2026. But then if you look at every Democrat and you go, “They’re a Marxist” — I mean, for the sake of the country, we have to stand against socialism and communism and Marxism. But maybe they’re not. Maybe there’s somebody in the Congress who’s spouting off with their mouth a lot, and they get a lot of TV time because it enrages us. And they don’t buy into that. Could it be something that we don’t even know why they would vote that way?

Maybe if we sat down and spoke with them, we would understand. It’s understandable and reasonable not to have tolerance for major extremes. But we can’t assume that everybody buys into a major extreme. It’s important that we guard ourselves against making assumptions about other people’s motives behind their politics, and making

assumptions about their thoughts when it comes to the people they support. Because something that we may not see, that if we knew about, would make complete sense, and we might actually understand them.

PROVERBS 18:2 ESV

² A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

In Proverbs chapter 18 it says this: “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”

Don't be a fool. Don't be a fool. Seek to understand. Do more than express your opinion. Let me hit this last point, and I've got to wrap up. I preached two messages: one I was planning on, one I wasn't. Amen. Number three — and I've done a whole teaching on this before — number three, beware extremes. Beware extremes.

MATTHEW 17:14-18 ESV

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.”

¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

Matthew 17 verse 14 says, “And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he’s an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.’ And Jesus answered, ‘O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.” I'm immediately attuned to “he falls into the fire, he falls into the water.” Two polar opposite extremes. We have to be careful. And I want you to make no mistakes. If you haven't been able to tell, I have strong political opinions. I really do.

I have some strong. Y'all can throw me on the cable news station. I'd make good money. Amen. I've got opinions. But I also have an assignment that supersedes it. But I've got strong political opinions. And some of the opinions I have would actually be helpful, I think, in civil discourse. Some of them are probably superfluous, but I do have some thoughts that are there. However, I just want to tell you that when it comes to the far left and the far right — this would be your left — the far left and the far right, we've got to be careful, man. There's some extreme stuff out there that we have got to be careful of.

They are dangerous places to find yourself. Firstly, because most of the ideas are crazy. Some of this stuff is what? It's wacko. People who think you ought to have open borders with no immigration enforcement. I mean, imagine that. Imagine a day where bin Laden could have just walked in here, grabbed himself a private plane and a McDonald's and done as much damage as he wanted to. Just open borders. Just open borders. Because we think everybody is the same. Everybody ain't the same. Some people want to come here because their country is horrible and they want to live the American dream.

And some people want to come here because they hate America. And you better have, I don't know, like a questionnaire, like a Scantron or something at the border that someone's got to fill out. Abolishing police and prisons entirely. I'm not worried about crime going rampant. I'm worried about people protecting themselves too much. I'm nervous to come to some of y'all's houses already. I'm announcing myself coming down the street: "It's just me." Deporting entire ethnic and religious groups to preserve the national heritage of America. That sounds extreme.

Round up all of these people and let's... These are extreme ideas. Frankly, if you believe them, they do make you crazy. But they will drive you insane. These thoughts will drive you insane. But also, I want you to know this. This man went into the fire and the water, but he didn't just do that. He did it because he was demon-possessed. But we've got to be clear that when we operate in the extremes of things, we tend to open ourselves up to some type of demonic activity. The demonic activity is on the extremes. It's in the extremities, and we have to be careful of that.

Have to make sure we keep a measure of consideration, nuance, diplomacy in our lives, in our political culture, even as kingdom ambassadors.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 ESV

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Let me go back to the kingdom for a minute. How do you stay kingdom-minded while being politically involved? Because I do want you to be politically involved. I believe that's healthy for our nation. I'm going to give you two things that I would do. One is, you need to leave — when it comes to here, you need to leave your politics in the parking lot. Leave your politics in the parking lot. I just want you to know, this is how I'm leading.

This is how I'm doing it around here. This is an apolitical zone. I want everybody up in this rig. I don't just want conservatives. I do want liberals. I want everybody in this church. And I'm not going to act like nothing is going on in the world. When things happen, I am going to talk about it. I am going to address it. At some point the way I feel is going to come out, if you can't tell already. You know, I'm going to express my opinion at times, but I'm going to do my best to keep this an apolitical zone. And by the way, Jesus did that. Jesus told his disciples, he said this, he said, "There's a lot of stuff I'm not talking to y'all about.

But I'm going to send you the Spirit of truth." If that's good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me to say I'm just going to preach the word and let the Holy Ghost do a work in you.

JOHN 16:12-13 ESV

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

I'll preach to conservatives and let the Holy Ghost do a work in them. I'll preach to liberals and let the Holy Ghost do a work in them. And for those of you who could care less, you're included too. Amen. The second thing, and this is the last piece of advice, is you need to detox from the world. You need to detox from the world. You have to take moments to just turn off the noise that we live in.

We're living in constant noise. It's constantly incoming. Have you ever wondered why stuff that took no energy and effort 30 years ago feels like it's the most daunting task today? Like you go home and all you've got to do is fix the cabinet door, and it's like back in the day you come home and it's done, but now it feels like it's lingering on forever and you have no energy to do it. It's because we're under a constant barrage of information and noise and instant access. There was a time where we didn't know what was happening everywhere in the world, and we were better off for it.

Everybody talks about the world getting smaller and smaller. That's not necessarily a good thing. And so sometimes you have to detox from the world and get into God's presence and let your brain be rewired according to His will. Romans chapter 12 — we all have heard this.

ROMANS 12:2 ESV

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

“Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” And when your mind is renewed, it helps you to discern what the will of God is. You need to know the will of God more than you need to know how bad this congressman from over here is. And by the way, if she was crazy four weeks ago, she's probably going to be crazy today.

Have y'all ever noticed that we only know about like seven people in the Congress? And by the way, they're cracking that code. None of this is to govern anymore. It's to get face time on TV. This is one of the primary reasons I want you to develop a daily Bible reading, prayer, and worship time. It detoxes you from the world and the world system. That's going to be a high priority for me going into 2027, is to make sure this is a church that can get stuff done in the secret place. I want to be able to step up here and go, “Hey, guys, we need \$500,000.” And rather than just hoping somebody is flush with cash in the room, I'd like to see — I mean, I'll take it where I get it, amen — but I'd like to see 50 people descend into the secret place and go in there and, without me ever having to touch it, get that thing for us in prayer and come back in here, and we find it and show up.

I want us to be a praying church, a praying church — not just so the church has, but so you have and your family has and there's breakthrough in your life and in your sphere. So that's one of the reasons. That's why I want you to do that. It detoxes you from the world system. But I also want to make sure that we keep politics outside of what we're doing here, because some of you don't need any more politics. You've got zero Bible. You're getting 30 minutes with me, and you're getting 20 hours a week or more with Fox News. And so you need to come in here for a minute and not hear more of that, hear less of that, and get detoxed from the world, amen.

So that's why we're going to be pretty apolitical around here. It's not because it doesn't matter. It's because it matters to you maybe more than it actually does matter. It's not that it's not important. I just think maybe we are a little, I don't know, over the top. And so we've got to detox and come back into line with the kingdom. Ephesians 5 talks about this being a ministry of Jesus Christ to the church.

EPHESIANS 5:26 ESV

²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

It says “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” You need to come in here and get washed off. You need a shower.

We’ve got to get some of that stank of the world off of you. Listen, I read this in the last couple of days. I’ve been in John this week. And I don’t have it in my notes, but I want to read it to you. John chapter 17. You can write this down. John 17 verse 14 says this.

JOHN 17:14 ESV

¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

This is Jesus speaking. He says, “I have given them your word.” He’s praying. He’s praying. He’s talking to God, and he’s talking about us. He says, “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of this world, just as I am not of this world.” I told you, we are different people.

We are set apart. We are called out. We are not like everybody else. We don’t have a political system. I appreciate congressmen, governors, presidents, all of it. That stuff, that’s not my highest appeal. My highest appeal is Jesus Christ. Revelation chapter 1 says that he is over the rulers of the world.

REVELATION 1:5 ESV

⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

But right here it said, because you are not of this world, because this is not really the thing that you’re operating in, you need the word. You need the word. The word is not something that we kind of fit into our little lives. No, the word is building our world, because we’re not of this world.

We’re the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we’ve been given Jesus Christ as the head over all things — not just the church, but over all things.

EPHESIANS 1:22 ESV

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

So we have to detox. We’re going to be a detoxing church. That’s it. This is a detox center now. Amen. In Jesus’ name. We’re detoxing. We’re washing. We’re resetting. God’s doing a work in us. Amen. So now, before I close today, if you give me just a moment to say one more thing, I’m going to — if you’ll afford me, I’m going to take a moment of total hypocrisy and do what I said I wouldn’t do this whole message.

Okay? So this is just because I had to stand up here and do it. Amen. So y’all give me — afford me one moment, if you will. And if you won’t, just, you know, I don’t know, hum to yourself. Maybe you’re in here this morning. You say, “I don’t really care about politics. I really — that’s, I’m neither here nor there.” I just want to give you something to consider this

morning. At this church, we believe that Jesus Christ makes life incredible. Jesus makes life incredible. John 10:10 said that he came to give you life and life to the full.

JOHN 10:10 ESV

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Some versions say life abundantly.

And I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to improve your quality of life in every which way. But on top of that, I am pro anything that improves quality of life. I want your quality of life to go up. I want you to have a better quality of life. I want you to wake up on Monday and like it more than you did before you started coming to this church. Amen. I want you to have a good quality of life. And I just want to share this with you because I've done a lot of statistical research going into this message. The data is pretty clear. It's not conclusive, but it is real data, and this is very clear.

Since 1972, since 1972, in regular surveys that have been done, conservatives have reported being “very happy” at approximately 10 percentage points higher than liberals. Conservatives also report higher life satisfaction and a greater sense of meaning and purpose. Also, surveys in 2021 and 2022 found that among young liberal women — talking about college age — that young liberal women were almost three times more likely than conservative young women to report depression, liberal young men two times as conservative men. So this is where I'm going to close my message.

It's a pretty apolitical zone around here as far as I'm — to borrow from the great Bill O'Reilly, this is a no-spin zone. Okay. But if you want to have a better life, vote conservative. That's all I got to say about that. That's what the statistics say. Man, I tell y'all, the one thing that was patronizing, and y'all don't even give me nothing. Y'all are the worst. I can't wait for this series to be over. Amen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. If you appreciate the word of the Lord this morning, give the Lord a hand. Clap and praise.

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is the third message in a five-week series on honoring all people. It preaches into one of the most charged subjects in any room: politics. The aim is not to move anyone left or right. The aim is to move everyone toward the kingdom.

Three cautions. First, the humor in the opening jabs both parties on purpose. Land both sides, or the room will hear a partisan sermon instead of a kingdom one. Second, the message uses a good deal of survey data. The figures below are as preached; know your sources before you use them. Third, the close is a self-described “moment of total hypocrisy” in which Pastor Jason states a political conclusion. Decide ahead of time whether you will use it, and if you do, frame it the way he did: as an aside, after the message, not as the message.

Introduction

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 12, and stick a finger in 1 Corinthians 6.

Happy 250th birthday to the United States of America. Or should I say the Divided States of America? By name, we are the *United* States, but many days it does not feel like we are getting along. Unless you have been living under a rock, you have felt the tension: in civil life, between neighbors, between fellow citizens. We have divergent political and other opinions, and it is impeding our ability to simply get along.

THE DIVIDE IN NUMBERS

Buckle up; there is a lot of data in this message. Some studies have found that:

- 1 in 3 Americans say they have lost a relationship over political differences.
- 1 in 5 people who are estranged from family cite political differences as the direct cause.
- 38% of both Republicans and Democrats say they would be upset if their child married someone from the opposing party.
- 1 in 5 American workers have been treated poorly by colleagues because of their political beliefs.
- 55% of human resources professionals say they feel minimally prepared to handle politically charged discussions at work.

Why? Because people are flipping out over this stuff. Imagine working in HR and someone comes in upset because a coworker voted Democrat. You would almost rather they had gotten in a fistfight; at least you would know what to do with that.

THE CHASM IS GETTING WIDER

Think about how fast opinions have moved apart:

- In 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama said marriage was between a man and a woman. In 2012, President Obama reversed that position. In 2015, same-sex marriage was legalized at the national level.
- Fifteen years ago, it was entirely without controversy to define a man or a woman by biological markers. Today it is absolutely offensive.

Illustration: Steve Harvey and the tattoo. In a 2008 comedy special, Steve Harvey, one of my favorite comedians, did a bit about his 16-year-old son wanting a tattoo: “Not in my house. You’re too young to make a decision that’s going to affect your body for the rest of your life.” Sixteen was too young for a tattoo. Fast forward to 2026: if you are a five-year-old boy, be careful walking through the house with your mother’s purse over your arm, because someone might say, “He identifies as a girl!” and take you right down to the surgery center to chop your wee-wee right off.

And it is not just sex and gender that divide us. If there is a conflict anywhere in the world, we are taking sides as a nation. If one group is for Ukraine, the other is for Russia. If one side is with Israel, the other is with Iran. At some point we have to look at ourselves and say, “I live in Chunchula, Alabama. Does this opinion really matter so much that I ought to be arguing with somebody in Minnesota over it?” We are screaming at each other over fights we do not even have a dog in.

BOTH SIDES ARE LOSING IT

Say these with a smile, and land both sides:

- On crime, one group says crime should not be okay, and another acts like you should be able to do as much crime as you want without being punished.
- Republicans think you should be able to carry a gun but not shoot up heroin. Democrats want to take your gun and give you a needle.
- Democrats think that if scientists warn about an unknown virus, we should take precautions like wearing a mask. Republicans think that if you tuck a copy of the Constitution in your vest pocket, you will be protected from all diseases.
- The worst thing that could happen to the Republican Party is a Democrat saying you should not sit in the microwave for five minutes. Conservatives would say, “That’s my constitutional right,” and we would lose the next election because 400,000 Republicans shoved themselves in a microwave.

I toss those in so you understand that one side of the spectrum is not losing it. Everybody is. We are fighting over the dumbest stuff, and it does not matter where you are on the spectrum.

WE ALL WANT THE SAME THING

Republicans want to make America great again, and Democrats say that is an insensitive sentiment.

Illustration: Paul McCartney on The Late Show. I love late-night talk shows. When CBS announced the last episode of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, I put it on my calendar and stayed up to watch. His big final guest was Paul McCartney, and the show is filmed in the Ed Sullivan Theater, where the Beatles made their first live American television appearance. Colbert asked McCartney about his first impression of America. *[Play the clip.]* McCartney said they thought of America as “the land of the free, the greatest democracy.” Then: “That’s what it was.”

These are two outspoken liberals. The land of the free, the greatest democracy: that’s what it *was*. If only there were a way for what it was when it was great to be that again. Is it just me, or did Paul McCartney just say he wants to make America great again?

We are all saying the same things, and we are fighting with each other over the finer points. Most of us really want the same thing, and yet because we are so against one another, we see little to no improvement in our national quality of life.

1. Party First, Country Second, Kingdom Last

It is pretty normal for the church to live inside the political divide, and I think we navigate it poorly. Pastors and parishioners wave their partisan flags proudly, in the pulpit, in the pews, and everywhere in between.

Many in this room, if we are honest, are party first, country second, and kingdom last. Don’t believe it? Let’s go look at the last 14 days of your posts on the internet.

God’s solution for our nation’s problems is not prayer in schools. The solution is not hanging the Ten Commandments in the courthouse. It is not having all Christian representatives in government, though that is my preference, and it will affect the way I vote.

The solution is, and always will be, when followers of Christ and the church operate as kingdom citizens above all else.

HEBREWS 12:28 ESV

²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Have the congregation say it: “I have received a kingdom.” You cannot see it or put your hands around it, but we have inherited a kingdom. Hebrews 11 says we are “strangers and exiles on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). I am an American. I do have a political affiliation. But above all else, I am a citizen of the kingdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10 ESV

¹ When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers! ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In its context this passage is about lawsuits among believers. But I want you to see something bigger: the church appealing outside itself to the governmental systems of this world. Paul is saying, “You have something greater than what you are appealing to. You have the kingdom, and you keep taking things to people who do not have it, as if they could give you a superior result.”

When we as believers, kingdom citizens, appeal to lesser powers, we get lesser results. And frankly, it represents the kingdom poorly before unbelievers.

2. Stay Involved, and Know the Real Enemy

Should we completely disengage from politics? No. You need to be politically involved. You need to vote; stick that one on your fridge. You need to be informed, aware and involved. It is fair to make your opinion known. But you can do that without being a turkey.

We have to be careful not to think our wins and losses are tied to any particular political outcome. When a candidate you think is godless wins an election, whether rightfully or wrongfully, God sees all things. God is placing that person for a purpose. He placed wicked men over Israel and Judah to bring about His purpose (see Romans 13:1). When the person you think is the worst candidate wins, sit back and say, “Well, God is up to something.” As Norman Hutchins sang, “God is up to something.”

America is 250 years old, and if it doesn’t make it to 251, you win. You win because you have the kingdom.

Now, I believe America is going to have a long, prosperous future. And I believe it will, because in this season a kingdom people is going to rise up, step into their purpose, and make an impact for good in this nation. Part of how we do that is by taking our eyes off those with opposing opinions and putting them on the real enemy.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are not fighting our Democrat neighbors or our Republican neighbors. We are dealing with loftier enemies than some congressman from here or there. Today I want to pull a few of the enemy's tactics down to an observable level, so we can see his strategy to divide us and keep the kingdom from coming in this nation. Here are three things to stay vigilant against.

3. Beware the Algorithm

If you are on social media at all, or getting your information from the internet, you have unknowingly surrendered a great portion of your free will.

Back when news media started showing more partisan bias, especially with the rise of cable news in the mid-'90s, you still controlled what you took in. It was lopsided, but you got to choose your lopsidedness. Now, no matter who you follow or subscribe to, the algorithm decides what you see.

Illustration: The View. I do not watch The View. In my whole life I have probably watched it ten times, and there was probably chicken soup and ginger ale involved. Yet I know what they talked about this week. Why? The algorithm keeps putting it in front of me.

The algorithm is optimized for clicks, and researchers have looked at what draws the most clicks. The single strongest predictor of social sharing is political content. Negative political posts are 4.8 times more likely to be shared than generally negative posts. Toxic posts on X (formerly Twitter) receive 27% more visibility and 86% more shares than non-toxic ones. **The algorithm rewards hostility with visibility.**

Here is where it intensifies. The algorithm creates a feedback loop: when someone's outrage gets shared, they are trained to post more outrage. The platforms are effectively training people to get angrier and angrier.

What does that mean for us? If we know the scheme of the enemy, we can reverse engineer some things:

- **The world is not as bad as we think it is.** The person on camera losing their mind at a protest is not the average American. The average conservative is not tarring and feathering liberals, and the average Democrat does not live in a perpetual protest in downtown San Francisco.
- **People with other views are not as different from us as we think they are.**
- If we let the algorithm dictate how we think about and view people, we choose to be informed by neither reality nor the word of God. We are submitting our minds, willingly, to a world system, and that world system is controlling us.

People want to know if AI is the Antichrist. Facebook has a better chance of being the Antichrist than AI, because you believe everything you see on there.

The algorithm doesn't want you to be liberal. It doesn't want you to be conservative. It wants you to be consistently outraged, because outrage makes money. And outrage leads to disdain, bitterness and hate.

4. Beware Your Own Assumptions

While the algorithm programs our minds, it teaches us to look at “the other side” with deep disdain. Pew Research data from a few years ago backs this up:

- 62% of Republicans and 54% of Democrats hold “very unfavorable” views of the opposing party. That has doubled since 1994.
- 72% of Republicans say Democrats are more immoral than other Americans, and 63% of Democrats say the same of Republicans. That has doubled since 2016.
- 72% of Republicans and 64% of Democrats say people in the other party are more dishonest than other Americans.

More and more, people view anyone on the other side as closed-minded, dishonest, immoral and unintelligent. We have made enemies of fellow Americans who hold different beliefs from ours. And it has gone further: if someone we agree with 119% is friendly toward someone we disagree with, now *they* are our enemy. “You’re weak. You won’t hold the line.” I’m just trying to buy a Double Quarter Pounder at McDonald’s. I didn’t think I needed to give the Democrat in line a piece of my mind.

There are preachers acting as if walking through life with some measure of decorum makes you a weak, deceived Christian. We hold a 250th celebration for America on the White House lawn, and if you go, someone says you are not patriotic. We hold a July 4th event where everyone on stage has to stand behind a bulletproof partition, because nobody wants to walk onto a stage in this climate.

Illustration: the shooting of Charlie Kirk. We think this is just happening, but there is a root to it. The man who shot Charlie Kirk had been sitting on the internet getting enraged. You say, “Well, I don’t do that.” But did you post something that fed it? Were you ugly to somebody? It plants a seed, and so much hate, maybe even from church people, travels down the line until it reaches someone who loses his mind. We participated in a world system when we have a kingdom. And we lost a young father in a public killing that many of us have watched over and over, and it hardly fazes us. We have a kingdom, and we settle for lesser things.

The longer we assume the worst about people, the bolder our assumptions get. We start believing that anyone in the opposing party has 355% buy-in on whatever that party is saying right now. But both parties have extreme ideas on their ends of the spectrum. I don’t get on board with everything that comes out of every Republican’s mouth. It stands to reason that not every Democrat gets on board with everything that comes out of every Democrat’s mouth.

When we “otherize” people, our assumptions lead us to negative places. If you look at every Republican and assume they are racist, you will eventually treat them like a racist. You shouldn’t be racist, and I think racists should be shamed. And for the sake of the country, we have to stand against socialism, communism and Marxism. But if you look at every Democrat and assume they are a Marxist, you will treat them as your enemy

rather than your neighbor. Maybe they are not. Maybe if we sat down and talked with them, we would understand why they vote the way they do.

It is understandable and reasonable to have no tolerance for major extremes. But we cannot assume that everybody buys into one. Guard yourself against assuming other people's motives and thoughts about their politics. There may be something you cannot see that, if you knew it, would make complete sense.

PROVERBS 18:2 ESV

² A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

Don't be a fool. Seek to understand. Do more than express your opinion.

5. Beware Extremes

MATTHEW 17:14-18 ESV

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

"Often he falls into the fire, and often into the water" (Matthew 17:15). Two polar opposite extremes.

Make no mistake: I have strong political opinions. Some of them would be helpful in civil discourse, and some are probably superfluous. But I have an assignment that supersedes them. And the far left and the far right are dangerous places to find yourself.

First, because many of the ideas are crazy:

- **Open borders with no immigration enforcement?** Not everyone is the same. Some people want to come here because their country is horrible and they want to live the American dream. Some want to come here because they hate America.
- **Abolishing the police and prisons entirely?**
- **Deporting entire ethnic and religious groups** to preserve the national heritage of America?

These are extreme ideas, and if you believe them, they will drive you insane.

Second, look again at the boy in Matthew 17. He went into the fire and into the water, and he was demon-possessed. When we operate in the extremes, we open ourselves up to demonic activity. The demonic is at the extremes. Keep a measure of consideration, nuance and diplomacy in your life and in our political culture, even as ambassadors of the kingdom (see 2 Corinthians 5:20).

6. How to Stay Kingdom-Minded While Politically Involved

I do want you to be politically involved. It is healthy for our nation. Here are two things to do.

LEAVE YOUR POLITICS IN THE PARKING LOT

This is how I am leading this church: **this is an apolitical zone**. I don't just want conservatives here. I want liberals here. I want everybody in this church.

I am not going to act like nothing is going on in the world. When things happen, I will address them, and at times my opinion will come out. But I am going to do my best to keep the main thing the main thing, and His name is Jesus.

Jesus did this. He told His disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:12-13). If that is good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me. I will preach the word to conservatives and to liberals, and to those who could not care less, and let the Holy Spirit do a work in each of them.

DETOX FROM THE WORLD

You have to take moments to turn off the noise and get into the presence of the Lord. Ever wonder why things that took no effort 30 years ago, like fixing a cabinet door, now feel daunting? We live under a constant barrage of information, noise and instant access. There was a time when we did not know what was happening everywhere in the world, and we were better off for it.

ROMANS 12:2 ESV

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

You need to know the will of God more than you need to know how bad some congressman is. If she was crazy four weeks ago, she is probably still crazy today.

This is one of the primary reasons I want you to develop a daily time of Bible reading, prayer and worship. **It detoxes you from the world and the world system.** I want us to be a praying church, so that there is breakthrough in your life, your family and your sphere.

It is also why we keep politics outside. Some of you do not need any more politics. You are getting 30 minutes a week with me and 20 hours a week or more with Fox News. You need to come in here and hear less of that and get detoxed. We are apolitical here not because politics does not matter, but because it may matter to you more than it actually does.

Christ loved the church "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26). You need to come in here and get washed off. We have to get some of the stank of the world off of you.

¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

We are set apart. We are called out. I appreciate congressmen, governors and presidents, but they are not my highest appeal. My highest appeal is Jesus Christ, “the ruler of kings on earth” (Revelation 1:5). The word is not something we fit into our little lives. The word is building our world, because we are not of this world. God has given Jesus Christ as head over all things (Ephesians 1:22).

We are going to be a detoxing church: washing, resetting, letting God do a work in us.

Conclusion: A Moment of Total Hypocrisy

As preached, the message closes with an aside that Pastor Jason introduced as “a moment of total hypocrisy” against everything he had just said. Use it only with that framing, or end with the detox section above.

Maybe you are here and you say, “I don’t really care about politics. I’m neither here nor there.” Here is something to consider.

At this church, we believe Jesus makes life incredible. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to improve your quality of life in every way, and I am pro anything that improves your quality of life. I want you to wake up on Monday and like your life more than you did before you started coming to this church.

The data is not conclusive, but it is real:

- Since 1972, in regular surveys, conservatives have reported being “very happy” at a rate about 10 percentage points higher than liberals.
- Conservatives also report higher life satisfaction and a greater sense of meaning and purpose.
- Surveys in 2021 and 2022 found that young liberal women were almost three times more likely than young conservative women to report depression, and young liberal men about twice as likely as young conservative men.

To borrow from Bill O’Reilly, this is a no-spin zone. But if you want to have a better life, vote conservative. That is what the statistics say.

If you appreciate the word of the Lord this morning, give the Lord a hand and give Him praise.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

HEBREWS 12:28

²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10

¹ When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers! ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

EPHESIANS 6:12

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

PROVERBS 18:2

² A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

MATTHEW 17:14-18

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵ said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶ And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered, “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

ROMANS 12:2

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

JOHN 17:14

¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

HEBREWS 11:13

¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

EPHESIANS 5:26

²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

REVELATION 1:5

⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

JOHN 10:10

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

ROMANS 13:1

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

**2 CORINTHIANS
5:20**

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

JOHN 16:12-13

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

EPHESIANS 1:22

²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

ABOUT THE PREACHER



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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