TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Brooks McKelroy

#324 Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed?
#480 Blessed Assurance

Scripture Reading by: Pierce Balch
#349 Ten Thousand Angels

Communion Devotional by: Ken Coleman
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#587 Sing and Be Happy
Sermon: A Thanksgiving Meditation: God Reigns
Proverbs 21:1

#313 The Old Rugged Cross
#851 I'll Fly Away
Closing Prayer by: Don Lynn

Our small groups will meet today.
Ken Coleman's group will meet at
the building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Nov. 3, 2024

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

The Church's Social Strategy

We have attempted to refine our thinking on the relationship between Christians and the government. After laying down some fundamental principles, we moved last week toward application, exploring the mission of the church: to call people out of the world and into the kingdom of God. That leads to a second, closely related observation: attempting to co-opt the government to promote a Christian vision of society is not only the wrong mission, it is the wrong method.

Political Activism
When cultural transformation is promoted as the goal of God's people, then it is only logical that the political process is lifted up as the most realistic means to achieve it. Political activism becomes a Christian duty. The trouble with this is success or failure in the political realm is consequently connected to the progress of God's nation. One of the more insidious features of such an outlook is that advancing a particular ideology swallows up a prior commitment to Christ. Scot McKnight sums it up:

[W]e can look more closely at the many Americans who equate the vision of Jesus with their political party's platforms. Democrats see Jesus as for the poor, and being for the poor for them means voting Democrat (compassion, aid, equality). Republicans see Jesus as for the poor, and being for the poor means voting Republican (enterprise, free market, capitalism).

We recreate Jesus in our own image – or the image of our favored political party, at least. Worse, depending upon the government to implement Christian policies and hinging the realization of the church's mission on the activity of human powers ultimately surrenders final authority to the state. Do you see the problem with that? The church is reduced to the role of lobbyist in carrying out its own work.

Church Activism
If political agitation is conceived of as the means to achieve the church's mission, failing to engage in it is ineffectual at best; at worst, it shirks a Christian duty. Getting the mission right, however, leads naturally to the proper method. If the goal is not transformation of society but moving people out from the world and into God's nation, then it is clear that utilizing the government is not a legitimate means. Instead, the church acts as a visible witness, manifesting to the world the alternative offered by God's people. We are called to live holy lives, just as God is holy, performing good works that others might see God reflected in our community and be led themselves to glorify God.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Veronica Valant, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Yalonda Jackson, Cassandra Valent, Linda Frank, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meeting Monday, Nov. 4th at 6:30 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Nov. 5th at 8:-00 a.m.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Danny Balch	
Don Taylor	Walden David	
Robert Ward	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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On the other hand, this orientation makes the opposite extreme of complete withdrawal from the world unthinkable. Jesus talks about his people as "salt" and "light" in the Sermon on the Mount. Failing to be a living witness in the word is to hide the light under a bushel, to keep the salt in the cellar. A monastic separatism is incompatible with being a visible alternative community. But in conflating Christian duty with political activism, rejecting such methods is implicitly viewed as a rejection of encountering the world by those on both sides of the divide. The resultant tendency sees working through the state to influence society or turning inward and abandoning it as the only two potential strategies.

For too long, we have bought into this false dilemma. Instead of coercing cultural change or leaving the world to decay in its lost state, the church must be an authentic witness of what it means to be God's people in the world for the sake of God and the world. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it, "The church doesn't have a social strategy, the church *is* a social strategy."

Christian Difference

Mission and method are intertwined, then: we must exemplify what it means to be God's holy nation. This is not merely a matter of personal righteousness, but of discernible, communal difference—rather than transforming the world, we present an alternative of a society already transformed by God.

Clearly, there are cultural implications. Through both its example and its verbal proclamation, the church can act as a prophetic conscience to the world, altering the behavior of individuals and even nations. More central to its mission, outsiders are invited to participate in God's society by choosing to put themselves under his rule. The key is to cease thinking in terms of worldly power, where change is instituted from the top down; experience teaches us that this is ineffective in the political realm, and it holds true in the religious realm as well. Scripture consistently proclaims that even if outward compliance is achieved, it is unacceptable if unaccompanied by a penitent heart. Rather, good works, faithful proclamation, living life on God's terms produces real reformation through conviction and conversion rather than control. Seeing this as ineffective or naively idealistic compared to more overt measures not only displays a misconception of our purpose – it means we don't really trust God.

The crucial point in fulfilling this role is that the church must stop compromising with American culture—being different but not *too* different, adopting its methods, believing its narrative, and adapting its values—and be the holy nation God calls it to be. Christian ethics must be more than ideals or principles that underwrite a particular ideology; they must be embodied in action, lived out in practice.

Unfortunately, we are much better at talking about what we are against than living out what we are for.

Bryant Perkins