

Politics and the Church: Thanksgiving Day Thankfulness

Allow me to indulge in a bit of Christian punditry. The following isn't just politics, it's a mix of theology and political science. You won't find what I have to say here in any secular political commentary – or anywhere else for that matter. Two parts to this discussion: 1, Does this election have meaning? And, 2, What was terribly flawed about the election?

I. Can we discover meaning in the presidential election we just had? Perhaps we can. I say, “perhaps” because this presidential election had no super-majority. So it wasn't a referendum or mandate on anything. In this election, it's the character of Americans that is so obviously on display to the world and to God.

Media analysts have already explained why 75 million Americans voted for Joe Biden: They didn't like President Trump. OK. That was easy. No further discussion is needed on that because it wouldn't be helpful. Of greater interest is, Why did 75 million people vote *for* President Trump despite four years of incessant, media-generated and culturally disseminated indoctrination and political turmoil? That is astonishing! The Trump lawn sign, “GOD, GUNS, COUNTRY,” perhaps reveals part of the answer. I suspect that these people probably resented the policies the Democrats sought to impose, resented the Democrat's unrelenting hatred of their president, and resented mega-wealthy coastal elites trying to impose their will on our country. They remember being called “deplorable” and were determined not to grant Democrats the power to treat them as “deplorables.” They saw on TV the riots and mayhem in the cities and the Democrats failure to stop it or even to denounce it. Other reasons surely could be brought to bear.

Of vastly greater importance is, Why did *evangelicals* vote almost as a solid block for President Trump? I suggest three basic reasons, selfishness, altruism, and religious. Let's briefly explore each of these.

(1) We're all to one degree or another self-absorbed. It's intrinsic to being human. So we're concerned about our jobs, our houses and our guns, our church, our pensions, and our businesses, our self-respect, and our prosperity and peace. And of course our rights and our freedoms. Evangelicals knew from Donald Trump's four years' record that he would continue to support these, but that they'd be in jeopardy with Democrats controlling Washington. I call these “selfish” reasons.

(2) I suspect that evangelicals understood that the policies Democrats actually intend to implement would be an unmitigated disaster for our country. They were thinking about what's best for America economically and in other ways. They really wanted “America to be great.” This Christian nationalism is highly problematic, and we can discuss it another time. I call this an “altruistic” reason.

(3) Evangelicals understood that, although he was no model of godliness, and he didn't publicly promote religion, Donald Trump stood for God. He represented God in an ungodly culture, in a government saturated with godlessness. He took the side of Israel over Muslims. He tried to limit the persecution of Christians in other countries. The hatred of Trump that was on display for 4 years was likened to a spiritual battle, the forces of Satan and atheism against the side of good. So a vote for Trump was a vote for God. This is the third, my “religious” reason.

But something is missing. Was there any consideration as to what God is doing in history? What was God's will for our nation? Was that in *anyone's* mind as people voted? The problem is, God is not in all our thoughts, as He should be. The God of the Bible is no deist type of god, who created and then went off somewhere leaving his creation to run on its own. He's not asleep, oblivious to events in our world. God is not merely interested in what we do; He's sovereignly controlling history for His holy and good purposes. We evangelicals shouldn't be self-interested, but God-interested. All the time.

Now you may argue, “How can anyone know what God is doing? He's in heaven, and He's been silent since the canon was closed.” But God *has* revealed what He's doing! It's there in His Word. We just don't take His Word seriously. We read the Bible selectively. We read with great interest what affects us personally. And the rest? “Oh, it's there for the professionals of the Church.”

Paul knew that history was headed to a destination. He wrote of it in several places. The Book of Revelation makes that end-point clear. The Church age will come to an end and then begins the “Day of the Lord.” After a

brief but terrible period of judgment called “Tribulation,” Christ will return and establish the Millennial Kingdom. Daniel, Zechariah and others anticipated this stupendous era that’s coming. God has a glorious future planned for His cosmos, and He’s at work in the world today making it a reality.

End-time events focus on Israel, its surrounding nations (mainly those to its north and south), and the countries of the ancient Roman Empire. America is not in prophesied end-time events. So what is today the greatest power on earth will not figure as a major player in future events because America will lose its towering place in the world. Its era of dominance must come to an end. The Democrat Party (wittingly?) will see to that.

Many in the church, especially those who want “America to be great,” will find this line of thought distressing. We need to understand that we have no inherent right to peace, prosperity, freedom, and law and order. We suppose that as Americans, these automatically are ours to enjoy. No. These are gifts from God, they are blessings from His hand, and He can revoke them when and as He pleases according to His holy will and purposes. His wisdom is perfect. And He rules His creation with goodness, love and justice – all in perfect harmony.

The outcome of this election therefore is loaded with meaning. God’s plan for our nation, for Israel, for the entire world of His creatures, is unfolding right before our eyes. We’ve just been given the privilege of seeing God at work, we’ve been privileged to see God doing something of eternal significance right in front of us. Therefore, let us be thankful. Thanksgiving Day is a time for us to express thanks, so let us joyfully shout a sincere “Thank You” to God for this new, great, powerful, climactic work He’s doing.

II. The fundamental problem with elections is that democracy is a lousy form of government. This election we just had made fully obvious why “democracy” is a failure. It makes us long for a better form of government.

(a) People can have severely flawed character and yet they are entitled to vote, in fact encouraged to vote. They may have no rational basis for their vote, no interest in or ability to analyze issues. They may be merely voting unthinkingly the same as their friends vote, as their parents voted, or as they always did in the past. They may be voting as the media or culture cleverly manipulated them to vote. Yet they vote. Voting without personally thinking through the issues is irresponsible voting, and that should be understood as immoral. In essence, democracy devolves into mob rule. It’s why the Greeks of ancient times eschewed democracy.

(b) Voters may have not the slightest concern or interest in their fellow citizens. Morality demands a concern for the interests and welfare of others, even if one’s own personal interests need to be sacrificed. Voting their own personal interests, or their own likes or dislikes, self-indulgent people show themselves to be immoral. Political science says that democracy’s virtue is that a million people voting their self-interest will result in good. That’s belief in magic. A million people voting their self-interest is a million immoral votes. Very few today embrace the concept of voting what’s best for the nation.

(c) If one side just barely gains a majority, that side could (and probably would) arrogantly, maybe tyrannically, exploit their win and, impelled by lust for power, proceed to govern without concern whatsoever for the will or values of the minority – which may have lost the election by only one single vote. The concern for the will and interests of a minority, political science says, is a virtue of American democracy. That’s wishful thinking, because it doesn’t account for human sinfulness.

(d) Democracy is necessarily wide open to fraudulent voting. Fraud is inherent in the process. Only a Christian penchant for honesty and truth can avoid it. Thus only Christians or those whose moral character has been formed from biblical ideals should be allowed to vote. That’s not how it is though in a democracy. Liars and cheats vote too; even worse, they write the voting rules and count the ballots. Fraudsters force their will upon others, which, though it probably never entered their minds, repudiates the most fundamental assumptions of democracy, which are the equality and autonomy of the individual and his freedom to choose.

(e) Most important of all is this: Democracy assumes as a foundational belief that a people, completely by themselves, by their own lights, determine the destiny of their nation. That’s totally false. It ignores the God of the Bible, arrogating power and wisdom to humanity that is neither legitimate nor realistic. God exists! And He sovereignly rules His cosmos. That means He, not we, ultimately decide the future of a nation or a people.

Democracy, the foundation of America's form of government, is not merely flawed, it's not merely unbiblical, it's anti-theistic at its core. It doesn't merely ignore that God exerts His will on a nation, it denies it.

Morality and character are Christian virtues. As the Church's influence disappears, so must any legitimacy democracy may have had. Democracy as a form of government absolutely must fail, primarily because it totally ignores humanity's sin nature. As so many Americans have by now abandoned Christianity and its values, the failure of democracy was on full display in this election. Democracy is, after all, a humanist value. Humanism holds that humans have free will and absolute autonomy, so they're free to choose their and their nations' destiny. Democracy came out of the Enlightenment. Probably originating with the anti-monarchial pantheist, Baruch Spinoza, it was picked up by political philosopher John Locke then quickly adopted by deists, anti-theists who exalted reason over revelation, and other well-intentioned but less-than-clear-thinking political and church leaders. Nothing about it is biblical. It probably should be understood as just another facet of fallen humanity's rebellion against God.

Democracy is, at its core, the fantasy that analysis of issues by a rational citizenry will result in good government. It can't. America has achieved what it has by God's grace, thanks to the blessings He's gifted this nation with and for His purposes. The ideal form of government that God has always planned for His people is a benevolent but dictatorial monarch, who rules under the authority of God.

What the above means is, Let's open our eyes to what God is currently doing and respond appropriately. Instead of wanting to go back to the way things were in a prior era (see Numbers 14:4, the saddest verse in the Bible), let's join God in His work going forward. Although it may be disconcerting to us – indeed, it may be painful to experience – as His agenda plays out, we need to trust God implicitly that His will is good, and what He's doing in the world and with our nation is wise and exactly what is right and necessary.

God is right now doing something stupendous, something really major and unique, something none of us have experienced in our lifetimes. He has sent into the world the coronavirus, a symbol of terrible judgment soon to come. And He is now allowing our nation to descend in godlessness so that America should deserve the judgment that godlessness demands. This is all happening right in front of our faces. Can't we see it? We in the Church have a higher calling than politics. So let's get at it. Many of our pagan neighbors, if they hear of Christ's love and the blessings that are on offer in the Gospel, may repent and become new persons in Christ.

Voting, we have the privilege of participating in determining policy and of controlling the direction our nation takes with respect to issues that surface. Yet . . .

“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases” (Prov 21:1).

King Solomon acknowledged this spiritual truth. But if the heart of the king, so too everyone else! Although we have democracy as our form of government, God controls the outcome of elections. God sovereignly controls all politics, in every nation, throughout the course of time, regardless what the form of government is. And “He directs it like a watercourse...,” which means God controls a nation's destiny, whether it goes to war, enjoys prosperity, or it collapses, its destiny is in God's hands. In His infinite wisdom, God is able to direct the flow of history without directly manipulating human free will. Like a master chess player, He so controls circumstances that humans freely choose what they will, but always so that God's will is carried out.

As God is ultimately in control of our nation, and as the Church has responsibilities of the most exalted nature, Christians needn't be concerned about politics. Politics is for pagans. We believers have been gifted with the Spirit of God to achieve far greater things in life. And we long for the future when Jesus will sit on an earthly throne and rule the world in love and in righteousness, when peace, prosperity and the knowledge of God will extend out from Jerusalem to the entire world. That is, or should be, our heart's great desire.

God has a wonderful purpose for His creation, so let us rejoice and give thanks, much heart-felt thanks, as He is allowing us to see Him at work.