

Christ Community Covenant Church
Spirit Filled Living in a Broken and Fallen World: *Christ in Culture and November 9, 2016*
Pastor Dave Scherrer - November 13, 2016

We are continuing our mini-series on the *Christ and Culture* built off of our study in 1 Corinthians. When we reached chapters 5 and 6 we have seen that Paul is deeply aware that his young church plant in the city of Corinth was morally and spiritually wandering. The city of Corinth and its pagan morals were increasingly infiltrating the culture of the church rather than having the church's Kingdom Culture having an impact on the city. Leaders of the church had become involved in egregious sexual sin and were throwing their money around in such a way so as to ruin the role model of leadership in the church. There were legal problems, chronic one-upmanship and deep divisions. Paul was mad. The church culture and behavior of the church was supposed to be categorically different from the behavior of the world culture.

We have seen that these same kinds of threats are very real in the 21st century. The culture of the USA right now in the wake of this election is a culture of fear and anger. We have seen this anger on display for the last 18 months of this election cycle and now in the aftermath of the election we see a culture beset with raw nerves and deep fear.

A culture of raw nerves and deep fear

I get concerned when I see a defeated Christian based on political loss or an arrogant or prideful Christian based on political gain. The false hopes and desperate fears of the world are not our hopes and fears. I have entitled this sermon ***Christ in Culture and November 9, 2016***. This is of course the day after the presidential election. Understand, I am determined in this pastoral moment this morning to not be distracted from the "Main Thing" which is, as Paul said in the first Chapter of 1 Corinthians, to only speak of Christ and Him crucified. And I promise you Christ is the center of this sermon. But the life lesson we are living right now in the wake of this election cannot be ignored. I am not inclined to discuss the election too much except to point out the places where our culture is hurting and then to apply the power and the love of the cross to a culture filled with anger over a loss or strutting with false pride over a win. As you know there are deep lines in the sand and a sweeping divide of ideologies that has resulted in terrible behavior on 'both sides.'

I have observed that Democrats for eight years felt under represented and alienated under the Presidency of George W. Bush. Those were hard fought political battles in both 2000 and 2004 with much at stake. Then for the last eight years the Republicans have felt alienated and underrepresented in the President Obama years. 16 years of keeping score and holding grudges. Now the rubber game in this grudge match is over. But the deep divide remains.

I am saddened and brokenhearted for our country. I am saddened by the ***so called losing side*** that feels the only way they can be heard is to protest, some of which have turned destructive and violent. There are images recorded of anti-Trump protesters ganging up on one man beating him while screaming "You voted for Trump." My soul is grieved by this.

Or this flyer from the ***so called winning side***, found on the campus of a Texas university in San Antonio.



My daughter teaches at Metropolitan State University here in Denver and she is afraid. My nephew teaches in a catholic university in San Antonio, the city where this flyer originated, and he is afraid. Somehow this election has given permission for either side to turn violent. Nerves are raw and people are fearful and angry.

I am a civic minded man, I believe that we must be invested in the political process of our nation, but I am first and foremost a Citizen of Heaven. I am a card holding member of the Kingdom of God and my King is Jesus Christ. I put no eternal hope in blue or red. I put no hope in economic systems or educational systems to change the world. These systems are all flawed, finite and passing away. The only hope for our broken and fallen world is the Savior God Jesus who lived, died and lives again as our only and best hope. We need to remember a couple of things and then I want to pass on some advice to the church - our church and others who might listen in as to how we should respond to a world caught up in a culture of fear and anger. We must ask "How is the church to respond?"

How is the church to respond?

First, we need to get our heads in the game. All the emotions tend to overwhelm us. First and foremost we must remember that it is God who is in charge of every aspect of this world. I have preached this and I believe it - He is God of "all things." And elections are part of all things. Kingdoms and rulers are part of all things. We know this from both the Old and New Testaments:

Daniel 2:20-21

²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Romans 13:1 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.

Secondly, as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven we live by a different code and by a different culture. We do not hold grudges and we do not seek to alienate and to hurt. We are inclusive rather than exclusive and worldly power has no attraction for us. We care about the marginalized and those to whom injustice has fallen. Jesus said in his Kingdom teaching . . .

Matthew 5:13-20 ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

I was preparing this sermon for this congregation with an expectation that Secretary Clinton was going to be the winner. In looking at the words I prepared last week for today, I feel the same about them now. The sentiment isn't about who won so much as it is about addressing the hurt and frustration and fear that we all seem to be experiencing.

My first advice to the church is to show empathy and kindness and charity to all.

**Show empathy and kindness for the confused and fearful.
Show charity for believers who voted the other way by assuming the best about their motives wherever you can.**

While some Christians voted for Trump because they thought that, given the two options they had to choose from, he was the better of the two, every Christian should be outraged by demeaning comments made toward certain groups in our society, whether we are part of that group or not. And we should stand against injustice and discrimination wherever we see it. Christians who voted for Trump must seek to understand why many immigrants, women, some minorities, and some members of the LGBT community feared a Trump presidency. We must speak out against injustice, bigotry, and demeaning comments and we must address that fear with love.

Many of our black and Hispanic brothers and sisters in Christ are fearful and confused this morning. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ, made in the image of God like us. Ask questions, acknowledge their hurts, and above all, *listen*. Whatever else this moment calls for, it calls for **empathy** towards the hurting and afraid.

As we have explained before, mature, gospel-loving, reflective Christians were genuinely consternated about which was the better choice in this election. Some felt that even with all her flaws, Clinton was the better overall choice for the country—usually because of the attitude she displayed toward the poor and disenfranchised and the hope that a woman president might be inspiring for our youth. I appreciate these hopes. Others thought that, despite his flaws, Trump was the better choice because of his pro-life stand and his pro-business stance. And many were conflicted by both candidates.

At this point, I'm not trying to persuade you one way or the other (I never was). What I want to encourage you here with is this: *Don't assume the worst about those who voted the other way*. Don't assume that fellow believers who voted for Trump did so because they are utterly insensitive to minority struggles or unconcerned about misogyny, xenophobia, or sexual assault. Many voted for Trump despite their disgust at those things, because they thought the things Clinton stood for were at least as dangerous to the country. So as you engage those who voted differently, do so with **charity**.

In the same way, don't assume that those who voted for Clinton are naïve about the threats to religious liberty or too cowardly to oppose abortion. Many believers were very aware of those things but just couldn't support a man who displayed the perceived character failings of Trump. ***When a brother or sister in Christ in Christ votes a different way than you, choose to believe the better narrative about why they might have done so.***

<p>Honor and pray for our president. Be cautious about appointing yourself God's spokesman.</p>

Regardless of how you voted, we as Christians must be committed to honor, pray for, and respect *all* of our political leaders. The Apostles Paul, Peter, and even Jesus himself command us to do so (1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:17; Mark 12:17). You do not have to *like* your president to seek his or her good, honor him or her, and love him or her well. You need not have cast a ballot for him to recognize him as president and support him. Loving our neighbor applies to our leaders, too. By the way, this is not a command simply for Republican presidents. This should characterize our attitude toward President Obama as well.

And to be clear, honoring your president does not mean sparing criticism where it is warranted. Just the opposite: We honor people by telling them the truth, even when that truth is uncomfortable. We can do so, however, from a posture of honor and respect and with an olive branch in our hands, as Peter commands us (1 Peter 2:17).

The church must continue to be a voice “speaking truth into power,” respectfully calling President Trump to a higher standard. We do not represent our Savior well or love our president well if we ignore sin. We must continue to hold Trump accountable for the ways his public words and deeds have been perceived as dishonoring and harmful.

I'd also encourage us to be cautious about declaring definitively God's intentions in this election. ***I've already seen social media filling up with some declaring Trump as "God's answer to the prayers of his people," and others declaring him to be the "judgment of God on America."*** A better posture is to encourage Trump where he works in an upright manner, and speak against him where he doesn't. It is almost never wise to appoint yourself God's spokesman about contemporary events. Based on what you see in Scripture, stand with righteousness and against injustice wherever you see it.

Finally,

**Don't abandon civics, even when it's impossibly messy.
Repent of making politics an idol.**

Don't let the next time you care about politics be the year 2038. Part of the reason we ended up with two candidates that most of the country did not approve of and that were unfit for office is *that so few people involved themselves early on*. Only 14 percent of registered voters came out for the primaries, with only 9 percent of them casting a ballot for Clinton or Trump. Our turnout for local elections is often even more dismal, even though the impact is often more immediate and more influential.

Frankly the past year has left me wanting to disengage from politics and run away. Don't do it. It is because we love our country that we should continue to pay attention to politics, even if it becomes increasingly messy. For many of us, God may even want us pursuing politics as a calling. I hope someone here in this room today will feel that call.

Finally, **Repent of making politics an idol**. This is always the danger of politics. So at the present moment, you're liable to think Trump will save us. Or that he will completely destroy everything. But he doesn't have the power to do either. He may make the United States great, or he may ruin our country, *but he can never save and he can never truly destroy*. Don't make the mistake of elevating politics to the throne of your life. If you do, you'll be utterly crushed when things don't go your way. It's fine for you to be disappointed right now or to be hopeful – depending on your persuasions. It's not okay for you to be dismayed and defeated.

The powers of the most powerful nations are, as Isaiah says, a drop in the bucket, working according to the overarching purposes of the Almighty God (Isaiah 40:15). One day America and all its presidents will be an obscure footnote in the annals of history; but Jesus will reign on his throne forever and ever. The arch of history is long, and it tilts toward Jesus.

This is a the time for grace, peace, hope, truth and love to address the hurt, sadness, fear, lies and anger.

This is not a time to be red or blue or purple. It is a time to be above the fray, it is time to see the true colors of the church - the color of the purest of salt and of the brightest of lights.

Why I am not afraid or ashamed (and why you shouldn't be either)

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1. Faith flourishes in bad times. People turn to God when everything else has left them empty, disappointed, and betrayed. Inevitably materialism, hedonism, and the worship of self is a dead end ... America has had two Great Awakenings and many smaller spiritual revivals in our short history. All of them happened in times of difficulty or rapid cultural change.

2. Young people are asking the right questions about life. This new generation of 16 to 30 years olds wants more than institutional religion and power hungry politicians. They want meaningful relationships and purposeful ventures. This is the Kingdom of God. We have the corner on that market!

3. America is still filled with tens of millions of God-honoring people. And the world, as a whole, is becoming more devout, not more secular. The recent Pew Research Center study revealed that between 2010 and 2050 the Christian Church worldwide will grow by 750,000,000 in the same period—seven times more than those who ‘unaffiliate’ with the church.

Let’s get to the end of this. These are really passing reasons that I am not afraid. Do you know what the big idea of Revelation is? Spoiler alert!! I know I am giving away the end – its two words: Jesus Wins! *He is coming back and when he does everything will be made right!*

Rev 3:10b-11a I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

In the midst of a world that at times seems like it is crumbling around us what will we do?

- Remember Jesus and him crucified and
- Hold on to the promises of God

We just passed the anniversary of the so called “Perfect Storm.” A movie of the same name was released largely about the Andrea Gail fishing boat that was lost at sea. In October 1991, 3 weather fronts over New England combined with the remains of a hurricane coming up from the eastern seaboard.

Mary, a six year old little girl, and her father John went sailing off the Jersey shore. He hadn’t checked the weather report. Six miles out, he was shocked at how fast the winds changed and a storm came up. Soon the boat capsized and the two were in the water. The life preservers were still tied to the boat while the boat was being swept out to sea and beyond their reach.

John realized there was no way he could swim the six mile back to shore while holding his little girl. To save them he would have to swim alone. “Mary, you can float on your back as long as you want,” he told her. They had practiced in the pool at home. “Float on your back, Mary. I’ll swim to shore, and I will be back for you.” Three hour later the Coast Guard found John.

For the next hour and a half as darkness came on, they looked for the little girl amid twenty to thirty foot swells. Then, miraculously, the spotlight found her. She had been floating nearly five hours.

The guardsman later asked her, “Mary, how did you do that?” She said, “Well, my daddy said I could float on my back as long as I wanted to, and that he would come back for me. My daddy always does what he says.”

The Andrea Gail fought with courage and power, and she sank. Mary just practiced her back float and she didn’t even know she beat the storm of the century all the time believing her father at his word.

~ Peter Heitt, *Eternity Now*

Let me remind you once again of the words of the Savior to this little hurting church . . .

Rev 3:10b-11a I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Prayer