

**BEING CHRISTIAN IN AN ELECTION YEAR**  
**Romans 13:1-6 NIV 84 (TITLE SLIDE)**

A couple of weeks ago, when I made it known that I'd be preaching on "Faith and Politics," I got more than a few emails and comments on FB. Almost all of them were very positive and told me that they were looking forward to this series. I said "almost." Not everyone was so excited. One person wrote me and said, in so many words, "*Politics and religion don't mix.*" In other words, "*Politics has no place in the Church or in a sermon.*" Really? This got me to thinking: Does talking about faith and politics have a place in the Church when you can't turn on the TV or read a newspaper today without hearing or reading about politics and the upcoming election? Although I understand all too well where people who feel this way are coming from, I also believe that the Scriptures tell us otherwise.

Now, let me just say right up front something very important. This isn't my first rodeo! I'm not stupid enough to stand here on a Sunday morning and tell you who to vote for or which party you should align yourself

with. First of all, it's forbidden by the IRS to do so, or we risk the loss of our tax exempt status as a church. Neither we as a church, nor I as a pastor, can endorse or recommend one candidate or party over another. So relax. That's not what any of these sermons are about. They're about helping us see this or any election from God's perspective and know what to look for in our candidates and political parties, so that we can make informed choices based not on politics, but on Godly, Biblical principles! Over the past month or so, I've spent a lot of time, as you can imagine, preparing for this important series with the election just a few weeks away. I've been thinking, researching, reading, and of course praying a lot about it. So for the next 3 Sunday's, I want to share with you what I believe we as Christians should know about faith, politics, the election, and what God's revealed in Scripture about them.

Incidentally, I must tell you that as a Christian, a taxpayer, and a registered voter, I really struggle every election. Frankly, I'm very discouraged by all the negative campaign ads and mud-slinging going on all

over the media. Someone said the other day on the radio said that this is “silly season”-- a season of politics where people just say and do all kinds of silly, hurtful, things that muddy the waters of making an informed choice at the polls. Like many of you, I need some guidance and direction as to what to do as a Christian voter on Nov. 6. But more importantly, I want to know, **“What Jesus would do about voting in this upcoming election?”**

Let’s go back to my opening comments and this whole issue of politics having no place in the church. In today’s first verse of Scripture we find Paul saying: **“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.** This pretty much says it all, doesn’t it? Paul’s telling his churches that God is the source of all authority in government and by association, politics. That’s why the early Christians were encouraged to treat government and its leaders with respect and obedience. Peter says it another way: **Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the**

**supreme authority (1 Peter 2:13),** Governments were established by God and to be obeyed, not because they were always right, or always treated everyone fairly, but because their authority was from God. God gave governments power so obeying them was the same as obeying God. Titus 3:1 says: **Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.**

I could quote you dozens of other passages to prove my point here this morning and convince you that faith and politics DO mix. But what about government itself? What has government said about this matter in the past? Listen to what Patrick Henry, one of our founding fathers, once said about religion and politics: **“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.”** John Jay, our first Supreme Court Chief Justice said: **“Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”** You see, our founding fathers believed this

great nation was established with the help of God. They frequently expressed their beliefs and convictions that believers, people of God, needed to be involved in the political process of our nation.

With the election coming up in a few weeks, what are we to do as Christians? What kind of things should we take into consideration as we try to weave through all the rhetoric and political ads? Personally, I'd like to know what Jesus would do in this upcoming election. These are crucial questions because we're going to elect the next president of the US, and a lot of other local and state leaders on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>. I want to know what WOULD Jesus do? Well, first of all, I believe Jesus would...

## 1. GET OUT AND VOTE!

Vs. 1 in today's passage says: ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*** Not only is God the source of political governments, he also established the rulers

and the way the government rules and operates. This means our democratic system of government God placed in America. *(By the way, it's not really a true democracy. It's a republic. We don't each vote on how the government is run. We elect officials to do that for us and represent us in the legislatures.)* And since this system of government allows ALL citizens to participate in choosing its leaders, Christians not only have a right to vote, they have the God-given responsibility to be involved in the political process. Samuel Adams, (not beer guy) another of our founding fathers, said it this way: ***“Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote that he is not making a present or a compliment to please and individual, or at least that he ought not so to do; but that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country.”***

Voting, my friends, isn't just a right—it's a God given responsibility. Voting is also an expression of our faith. How? Well, let's think of it in terms of “stewardship.” I'm reminded of Matt 25 where Jesus tells a parable about a man who entrusted 3 of his servants with

talents. Two of them used their talents wisely, investing and putting it to good use. The third buried his in the ground, not drawing any interest or increasing it. That servant lost his talent and was given to the other 2. In the same way, our vote is a like a talent from God. He's given us this wonderful opportunity to determine who will rule over us and make our laws and set the policies for our state and nation. But many Christians won't vote. They choose to bury their talent in the ground. Christians are called do their civic duty first as citizens of the Kingdom of God first AND as citizens of this country second. I believe Jesus would vote and encourage us to vote as well. *But when you vote this Nov, remember ...*

## **2. VOTE VALUES, NOT ECONOMICS!**

Candidates make a lot of promises during the campaign. But what God's most concerned about is the candidate's heart. We need to look not at the promises made by the candidate, but at their heart. Prov 23:7 says: *for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart*

*is not with you.* In other words, if you want to know what people are like, don't go by their words--look at their actions over the long haul. Character DOES matter. Their faith also matters because it informs their decision making just like it does for you and me. Jesus said in Luke 6:45: *Good people bring good things out of the good stored up in their heart, and evil people bring evil things out of the evil stored up in their heart. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.* Whichever candidate you vote for, choose based on their values, NOT their economics. Every elected official is in a position of power and of trust. They have the potential to either help or hurt people. You see, God looks at a person's heart. Candidates will promise us anything to get elected so make sure you vote values and not just economics. Thomas Jefferson once said: *"The reason Christianity is the best friend of government is because Christianity is the only religion in the world the deals with the heart."*

## **3. Finally, be sure to VOTE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND NOT A POLITICAL PARTY!**

I was really tempted to take a poll today and ask

everyone to stand up when their particular political persuasion was called, but I decided that might not be a good idea. So I've got a better *idea*. *Let's take a poll electronically, and anonymously. (Explain the text message system and take the poll. Show results!)*  
Point: We're all UM Christians, but we vary greatly in our political ideology and affiliation!

As people of God, we must remember that our ultimate affiliation and allegiance shouldn't be to a political party or ideology. It should be to God! Galatians 3:28 tells us, ***There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*** Tony Campolo, pastor, author, sociologist and speaker, was once asked: *"Do you think God is a Republican or Democrat?"* To which he replied: *"Neither. God's bigger than any political party."* God, you see, transcends all our party affiliations and political bents. Ultimately, as Christians, we belong to only one party: the KOG party! We believe that God is Lord of all...even the Lord of the voting booth!

I don't know about you, but the problem for me is finding which candidate God would have me vote for. It's not easy. That's why I'm recommending that we do our homework. Go online and check out the voter guides provided by independent sources. Do some research on each candidate, regardless of your party affiliation. Find out where they are on the issues that matter to God, like helping the poor, meeting the needs of the elderly and the weakest among us, education and affordable healthcare for all. Watch the debates coming up. Listen to their words and not so much the "talking heads" who put their particular spin on things. Look at their voting records and past actions concerning the issues that really matter. Noah Webster, political writer, editor, and author said in 1823: ***"In selecting men for office, let principle be your guide. Regard not the particular sect or denomination of the candidate—look at his character."***

In researching for this series, I found something that might be helpful. In your bulletin today is a helpful little guide. It's called *"Christian Principles in an Election Year."* It's published by the National Council of Church's

Justice and Advocacy Commission. It's simply a tool to help us make informed choices from a faith perspective.

Here's the bottom line folks: Do your homework. Don't just take someone else's word about a candidate or the media's spin on them. Don't get all swept up in all the party politics and mudslinging going on. Really pray about it. Seek God's choice. Make your own informed decision. But whatever you do, be sure to VOTE! The future of our great nation, and to a certain degree, the world, hangs in the balance every 4 years. Let's let our FAITH inform our POLITICS. Let's let our FAITH in the living God, who created government and politics in the first place, lead us and guide us. And let's trust the one who loves us with an everlasting love, and who leads us into all truth, shape all our futures!

*God bless America!*