

“Souls to the Polls”
John 18: 33-37
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Rev. Paul Nulton
Pastor, First United Methodist Church
Marion, WI

A big football game last night ended with one highly ranked team defeating another highly ranked team. For three hours the players on one side did their best to defeat the other team. One team won and one team lost, and then players from both sides knelt together on the field to pray. Opponents during the game had Christ in common after the game. It reminded me of the political campaign, and the need for God in it.

How to Vote?

- Pick one important issue: the economy, the war, abortion, health care, marriage, taxes global warming, energy supply. Then pick the candidate who agrees with me on that one issue.

But that doesn't work. Just because a candidate has it right on one issue, doesn't mean he or she will really mess up our country in the other areas.

- The problems are complex. Let's find the one who has a simple answer. Finding a simple answer to a complex situation doesn't work any better than using arithmetic to build a nuclear collider machine. It hasn't worked with the war in Iraq or the war on drugs. It's left us with a huge debt from the banking industry. Simple answers are usually wrong answers.

- Or I could pick the one who would make the government benefit me. It doesn't matter whether that benefits my neighbor across town or across the seas. I vote my own self interests.
- Or we could just ignore politics. After all, no matter what you say, someone isn't going to like it. So isn't it easier to avoid conflict by keeping silent?

But this doesn't work either. Keeping silent postpones conflict, it doesn't manage it.

- Or I could decide I want to know God's will. So I could pick a few verses from here and there in the Bible and build a case for voting for someone. I get some telling me to vote for Obama and some telling me to vote for McCain. It would be easy to let them decide for us, take their word for it. There are many organizations who send us voters guides with verses from here and there to prove their biases.

Instead, we Christians need to go to the Bible to find God's plan for America and the world, and base our choices on God's will. But there are so many distractions.

We hear the criticisms. Both candidates have dirty laundry in their past. Obama admitted using drugs in high school and early college and McCain was having an affair while he was married, and then divorced.

Both say they will reduce taxes and the other will raise them.
Both are patriotic and have faith in Christ and Christian values.

Each accuses the other of being elite and out of touch with working people. This accusation always comes against successful people.

Each candidate is telling you what the other candidate said and you aren't sure if they've got it right.

Republicans blame taxes on the "tax and spend democrats" who blame the taxes on "borrow and spend" republicans.

So check your sources before you believe them. If somebody tells you something about a candidate, check it out from other sources. Otherwise you might be only passing on someone's bias. That's just one of the rules for advocating a candidate. I've got a sheet on a table in the entry with more guidelines on how to promote a candidate honestly.

We Christians can get past the sarcasm in the speeches.

Past the sexism and racism that pollutes our country.

We can remember from the Bible God's plan for the world and then see which candidate's vision is closer to it. We can see which candidate is more able to get us toward God's plan for the world.

We Christians are less interested in what is right or left and more interested in what's up and down.

We Christians can pay attention to the central issues and put away the side issues.

Christians are prayerfully measuring the proposed policies of all candidates against Christian ethics and values. Our broad set of Christian values should inform our political decisions. We can't translate scripture directly into most public policy positions, we find the main Biblical principles that apply to a range of issues. Think and pray about whom you would entrust with the responsibility to lead your community, state, and nation.

We go by the whole Bible, not just parts from here and there. For example: "Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." —PROVERBS 31:9 There is a lot more in the Bible about this than about being born again, than about Jesus returning, than about baptism.

Principles and Policies for Christian Voters

Compassion and Economic Justice

God shows a special concern for those in poverty and acts in history to lift them up. The Bible teaches that societies should organize so that all members have genuine access to the resources needed to live a decent life and provide for those who are unable to care for themselves.

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat ... and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” —ISAIAH 65:21-22

Peace and Restraint of Violence

Our world faces a major challenge of how to resolve conflicts, reduce violence, and defeat terrorism without preemptive war. War has become a first resort instead of the last resort. In a world with terrorists, terrorist states, unilateralist superpowers, and weapons of mass destruction, alternatives to an endless cycle of violence are needed.

“ ... They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

—ISAIAH 2:4

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” —MATTHEW 5:9

Consistent Ethic of Life

All life is a sacred gift from God, and public policies should reflect a consistent ethic of life.

“Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you.”

—ISAIAH 42:5-6

“The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” —JOB 33:4

Racial Justice

Full humanity and dignity are denied when people are discriminated

against for ethnic or racial reasons, whether intentionally or due to systemic structures.

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” —GALATIANS 3:28

Human Rights, Dignity, and Gender Justice

Each human being is created in God’s image. Policies should protect human rights and promote human dignity.

“So God created humankind in God’s image ... male and female God created them.” —GENESIS 1:27

“ ... what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.” —PSALM 8:4-5

Strengthen Families and Renew Culture

Strong families are the essential foundation of a good society. A culture that promotes healthy families is necessary to raise our children with strong values.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God” —ROMANS 12:2

Good Stewardship of God’s Creation

The earth and the fragile atmosphere that surrounds it are God’s good creation for the sustenance and enjoyment of all things. Our policies must protect creation from interests and activities that damage it.

“God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.” —GENESIS 1:31

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” —PSALM 24:1

Voting is paramount for advancing a more just and peaceful world. Further educate yourself about the positions and priorities candidates have taken, then think and pray about whom you will entrust with the responsibility to lead your community, state, and nation. While no choice is ever perfect, education, prudential judgment, prayer, Bible study, and careful examination of conscience can guide these important decisions.

“Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” —PROVERBS 31:9

God's vision for America

Like Abraham and his people in Gen 12: 1-3, it is blessed to be a blessing.
Like the direction and example of Jesus, it is the salt of the earth, light of the world, and servant to those with less power

We can be a country that fight evil:

It fights a war on drugs by not using them.

It fights a war on terror by finding cells of haters and isolating and stopping their attacks rather than beating up countries.

It fights racism, sexism and classism by refusing to judge by race, gender or class.

A place with freedom of religion that allows us to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It honors and promotes God the Father, Son and Spirit by paying more attention to Christ-likeness in action than in correct beliefs or feelings.

A place that uses its resources for the sake of the world, not just for the sake of itself.

A place that takes leadership in solving world problems like scarce energy, disease, warming and war.

A place that takes the lead in economic globalization that is ethical and benefits the poor as well as the rich.

People who hold their government to high standards of honesty and justice and care for the poor.

We vote based on God's will for the country and the world, then choose the candidate which will bring us closest to that plan. Some of us are so convinced that one is right and one is wrong, we will be elated or very disappointed after the election. Some of us will win, some will lose. Then what will we do? We will do as the opposing football players did. We will kneel and pray together because we have Christ in common. We will pray for God to heal where we are broken and support where we are whole, and we will work together for our country.

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