

# “Declaration of Independence... and dependence”

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – July 4, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

## SLIDE 1

### Scripture reading – Romans 13:1-7

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. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.

## SLIDE 2

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. **SLIDE 3**

## Introduction

- Good morning Holy Trinity Church! Happy Independence Day. 245 yrs ago that the Dec of Independence was ratified by the colonies. Voted on July 2; Thomas Jefferson wrote up the document; ratified July 4, 1776. Great day for all Americans and celebrated as the founding of our Republic (1781 Articles of Confederation; 1789 Constitution).
- How do we square our separation from England with Rom 13:1-7: “submit ourselves to the governing authorities”? In short: the colonists reasoned that it was George III, rather than the colonies, who had violated the governing documents of the English parliamentary system (Magna Carta 1215; English Petition of Right 1628; English Bill of Rights 1688 which granted certain rights to British citizens. Further, they read Gal 5:1 and insisted: “No King but King Jesus!”

- So, while this document was a declaration of independence from George III and a puppet Parliament in England, it was simultaneously a declaration of dependence on God. God is mentioned four times in this short document. In fact, the US would be the one modern nation that would institutionalize its dependence on God (Most states required elected officials to be Xns in good standing with their church).
- The founding documents enshrined the principle that individual rights are granted, not by the state, but by God. The state's role is to simply acknowledge those rights and ensure they are not infringed in any way through a system of just laws. When a government official violates those God given rights, it is the right and responsibility of the people to oppose that official. This was the rationale behind our declaration of independence from Britain.
- On this, the 245<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, I want to push the pause button for one-week on our Eph series and this opportunity to share with you a few thoughts about how we as American Christians should be involved in the political sphere.

## **But... should we be political?**

- Some Christians answer “No: we are citizens of heaven” (Phil 3:20). “Don’t get involved in worldly affairs. Just preach the gospel. Political talk is so divisive.”
- That position is based both on faulty premise and an inadequate understanding of our original mandate from God. The premise is that if we are citizens of heaven, we are no longer citizens of earth, when the clear teaching of scripture is that we are both. Furthermore, our original mandate from God was to image him to the world and exercise his dominion over the earth (Cultural Mandate of Gen 1:26). This is done through social, cultural and political means. This mandate has never been rescinded.
- At the same time, we live in a period of history, following the ministry of Jesus Christ, when the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth during his earthly ministry, and at the end of that ministry he commanded his followers to extend the Kingdom of heaven beyond the borders of Israel and reclaim the disinherited nations (Great Commission of Matt 28:19-20). So, we are citizens of this world (as we fulfill the Cultural Mandate) and at the same time, citizens of heaven (as we fulfill the Great Commission).
- As a consequence, we are to be very much engaged in the affairs of earth: praying, voting for men and women who value what God values, working to

make things better in the here and now, speaking up, writing letters, exercising God's lordship over the creation. IOW, we are to do the good works that God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10) and we are to be salt and light to preserve, expose and be a blessing to the world around us (Mt 5:13-16).

- This fact helps us to understand the biblical emphasis in both testaments to be good citizens on earth. One example from each testament:

**Jeremiah 29:7**

**"Seek the prosperity of the city to which I have sent you as exiles. Pray to Yahweh on its behalf, for if it prospers, you too will prosper."**

**1 Timothy 2:1-2**

**"I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered for everyone--for kings and all those in authority--so that we may lead tranquil and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity."**

- So, should Christians be political? The answer is a resounding "yes". If we are going to be faithful disciples of Christ, we have no choice but to fulfill the political dimensions of our calling to image God, representing his interests on the earth. But we want to make sure that we exercise our political responsibilities in a way that is constructive, that doesn't conflict with our mission to extend the Kingdom of heaven, and that's what we want to explore today.
- Some of you are already dialed into this stuff. Others are not so sure. Read recently that half of self-identifying evangelicals don't vote: not okay. Not an excuse to say: not interested. Too complex. Do your homework! You have more information at your fingertips than all previous generations combined.

## **How should we be political?**

Question we want to address is: how can we exercise our political responsibilities in a constructive way? A way that a. I want to suggest three guiding principles:

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#### **1. We should be political without being partisan**

- What's the difference? Important distinction.
- "Political" refers to that dimension of humanity that determines how we conduct our affairs as a body politic. **Everyone is created a political animal.**

It's part of being an imager of God. We are inverteerately, unavoidably political.

- “Partisan”, on the other hand, means that we have wed our political responsibilities to a single political party, and that party affiliation comes before any other considerations. IOW, we are so partisan—so committed to the Blue Team or the Red Team—that we are oblivious to the party's faults and other extenuating factors.
- I'm arguing that we must be political because we cannot be otherwise. But we must not be partisan. So, each of us should take a vital on-going interest in political issues at the federal, state and local levels. But we should avoid identifying ourselves too closely with any particular party or group or individual so that we can keep our allegiance to God intact and central. **God does not wear a MAGA hat nor a BLM tee shirt.** God transcends all creaturely categories (cf. Josh 5:14).
- Ex: I don't know what you think of Mike Pence. Whatever you think of him, he made a statement at the recent Faith and Freedom Coalition Conference that is worth quoting: “I am a Xn, a conservative, and a Republican in that order.” That's a helpful statement, I think.
- We should be political without being partisan. Second,

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### 2. We should be principled without getting personal

- This has a couple of applications. First, in our voting. We need to vote for policies not personalities. Don't vote for people on the basis of how nice they are or how much you like them. Vote for people who support policies that you know to align with God's values. Vote for people who love what God loves and hate what he hates. I'd rather have a jerk in office who does what is right than a Mother Theresa character who is incompetent or who represents policies that are bad for our republic and/or opposed to God. Ex: Jimmy Carter is a fine person but in many significant ways made a poor chief executive (financial policy). Ideally, you will have both: people of character together with competence, but that is often not the case.
- Second, we need to be principled, not personal, in our praying. We should ask God to oppose the policies of those who, because of their ideological commitments, make themselves our political enemies. But also pray that God will save their souls. Ex: You might hate Nancy Pelosi's policies but you

must love Nancy Pelosi. She may have made herself your political enemy. But that doesn't exempt you from Jesus' command to love your enemies.

- The main thing here is to keep to the issues. Vote for those persons and parties best align with what God teaches about the most pressing issues of our day. Which issues? Here are a few of the biggies:
  - **Religious freedom.** Most foundational. **COVID.** The God-given right to worship him, share our faith, gather as churches (**listen candidates; DNC vs. RNC conventions**)
  - **Life.** The God-given right to live when he says live and die when he says die. Protecting our most vulnerable populations (unborn and elderly) from the fiat of the state do determine these through abortion and euthanasia.
  - **Individual rights.** The God-given rights recognized in the US Bill of Rights (freedom of speech, assembly, press, defend yourself). These are inalienable.
  - **Personal responsibility.** The emphasis God places on character and the requirement that each person take responsibility for oneself and one's family, that through integrity, industry, ambition and hard work, one build a life for oneself, not depending on others for handouts.
  - **The rule of law.** The fact that no one (king, president, senator, Governor) is above the law. Applied equally to all to protect the innocent and punish the guilty (Rom 13:1-7).
  - **Others:** Important issues in our day: an **immigration policy** that attracts those from other countries that want to make their home here; **a firm stance against foreign adversaries** wanting to cripple our country (strong military and energy independence); **sane and ethical financial policy** (don't spend money we don't have); **election integrity** (easy for every eligible citizen to vote but hard to cheat: photo ID, ballot harvesting).
- Which party, which individuals best represent these values? In the mid-term election in 2022 and the next presidential election in 2024, vote for people who best align with God's view on these issues.

## SLIDE 6

### 3. We should be faith-filled, not fearful

- We have a choice: We're either going to be controlled by faith or fear
- If we're controlled by faith, we're not going to give into fear. We're going to be courageous and unstoppable. We're going to pray and speak out and stand

up and make sacrifices to do everything within our power to make our country, our state and our city what we know God wants them to be.

- If we're controlled by fear, we're not going to stand strong in faith. We're going whine and snivel and sit on our hands while we give our kid's and grandkid's futures into the hands of people that hate God and hate America. And we will have no one to blame but ourselves for squandering the unprecedented opportunities and freedoms God gave us at the founding of our country.
- Look, I know that it's hard not to get discouraged. But if we throw up our hands and give up hope, the battle is lost. If, on the other hand, we stand strong together, we will find the moral courage and the means to make a difference through God's help. It only took one David to rout the enemies of Israel: one stout heart that refused to be intimidated or shut up or cancelled; one guy who said of Goliath, who said "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine who dares mock the armies of the living God (1 Sam 17:26)?!"
- Historically, all revivals were born in dark times, when man's extremity birthed God's opportunity (Great Awakening; Second Great; Revivals).
- What can we do?
  1. **Pray.** Every day, plead with God to have mercy on us (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-4). Join our group on Fridays at 12pm at the church.
  2. **Research the issues.** Check out the resource list below.
  3. **Speak up:** tell your friends, write letters to elected officials, boycott companies who want to fundamentally change America (ex: Nike, Delta, Amazon, Target, Starbucks, Amazon, Apple, FaceBook, Twitter, Google, etc.).
  4. **Keep the vision alive of a better America and better Church:** do everything in our power to help make it a reality.

## SLIDE 7

### Conclusion

Imagine an America...

Where love, freedom and mutual respect are our hallmarks  
Where we are proud—not ashamed—of our country

Where good is rewarded and evil is punished  
Where character counts more than color  
Where everyone citizen has a voice  
Where there are equal rights for all  
Where kids are taught to love—not hate—our country  
Where unborn children are treasured, not murdered  
Where everyone has a right to defend themselves  
Where elections are transparent and fair  
Where we seek immigrants who love America and want to make it their home  
Where we deal with foreign adversaries from a position of strength  
Where there is freedom of worship, not from worship  
Where we supply our nation’s own energy and critical resource needs  
Where we have only as much government as needed  
Where we encourage personal enterprise and hard work  
Where companies sell goods and services, not agendas  
Where we—as a nation—live within our means  
Where law breaking extremists, left and right, are held accountable  
Where we help victims without perpetuating victimhood  
Where the media report the facts  
Where we demand integrity from our elected leaders  
Where those who protect us are honored among us  
Where schools teach without indoctrinating  
Where virtue is esteemed, not spurned  
Where we argue with, but don’t “cancel,” one another  
Where we focus on what unites us, not what divides us

## Some resources

**Some good, accessible books:** Barton, David. *The Myth of Separation*; Marshall, Peter and David Manuel. *The Light and the Glory*.

**Some thoughtful, intelligent political/cultural commentators:** Victor Davis Hanson, Dennis Prager (PragerU), Thomas Sowell, Mike Huckabee, Candace Owens, Trey Goudy, Deroy Murdock, Tucker Carlson, Larry Elder, Greg Kelly, Shelby Steele, Sean Spicer, Laura Ingraham, Tomi Lauren, Charlie Kirk, Eric Metaxas, Carol Swain, Ben Shapiro, Dave Rubin, Jordan Peterson. More “progressive” but worth listening to: James Lindsay, Jonathan Haidt, Alan Dershowitz, John McWhorter, Glenn Lowry, Brett and Heather Weinstein, Douglas Murray.

**Some thoughtful politicians.** Senators: Ted Cruz, Tom Cotton, Josh Hawley, Tim Scott, Mike Lee, Rick Scott, John Kennedy, Rand Paul, Ben Sasse. Representatives: Jim Jordan, Dan Crenshaw, Louie Gohmert, Madison Cawthorn, Kevin McCarthy,

Lauren Boebert, Doug LaMalfa, Paul Gosar, Matt Gaetz. Governors: Christi Noem, Ron DeSantis, Greg Abbot. Former cabinet members: Mike Pence, Mike Pompeo, Ben Carson.

**Some organizations the teach American and/or biblical values:** Heritage Foundation, Hoover Institution, Faith and Freedom Coalition, American Conservative Movement, Conservative Political Action Convention, American Conservative Union, Hillsdale College, Prager University, Americans for Limited Government, Focus on the Family, Amistad Project, Project Veritas, House Freedom Caucus, Family Research Council, Alliance Defending Freedom, Concerned Women for America.

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**Communion**