

Question: What do you think Jesus might say about the controversy over the treatment of illegal aliens?

I believe that Jesus would not get involved in the complex political issues of the current debate, but he would be deeply concerned about the human lives being discussed in this controversy. During his earthly ministry he acknowledged the God-given role of government (Romans 13:2). When the Pharisees asked Jesus about paying taxes to the Roman government, he took a coin and asked whose inscription was on it. When they answered that it was Caesar's, he told them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). In a similar way, Jesus would say that we should respect our government and obey the laws of the land so long as they do not call upon us to disobey God (Acts 5:29). At the same time, he would have a deep and godly concern for the lives of foreigners who live in our land. God told Israel, "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Exodus 22:21; 23:9); but he also commanded both native-born and aliens in Israel to obey the laws of the land (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 18:26).

In addition, Jesus would be deeply disturbed by the racially-prejudiced and ungodly attitudes being demonstrated toward strangers in our land even by some Christians. Some people may wave the flag of God and country while spouting hateful ridicule of people of other races or nations who do not speak English, but Christians must go beyond mere national loyalty. Christians must have the attitude of their Lord Jesus who loved and died not only for the righteous but also for ungodly sinners like you and me (Romans 5:6-8). This does not mean that he approved of their sin, and we are not expected to approve of their entering our country illegally. Instead, just as Jesus loved and helped us get our lives right with God, we should do what we can to help illegal aliens become legal. If our rulers decide to offer clemency to illegal aliens as a way to deal with the problem, I can't imagine people who have been forgiven by God's grace opposing such a plan. As Jesus said: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12).

While Jesus would not get involved in the political process and tell the government what laws should be passed or not passed to deal with immigration, he would encourage us to treat all people with justice, mercy and

compassion (Matthew 23:23; Micah 6:6-8). One of the New Testament letters says: “Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12 NIV). Many of the foreigners who are in our land both legally and illegally are poor people who came to find a better life for themselves and their families. To be sympathetic and kind toward them does not mean we encourage disregard for the law. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus said to the unrighteous, “Depart from me you who are cursed. . . I was a stranger and you did not invite me in” (Matthew 25:26).

In the apostle John's vision into heaven near the end of the Bible, he saw a great multitude of people “from every nation, tribe, people and language” standing before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9). If we are unwilling to be with people of other nations and languages in this life, can we expect to be welcome before the throne of God? What do you think?

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