

“The Christian Citizen”

Pentecost 16

1)

Romans 13:1-10

2)

September 20, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When you go to bed at night, what do you pray for and what are you most thankful for? We start out our prayers by saying thank you to God for the gift of life – Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.” Our prayers continue by praying for family members and friends and all who I love. Then I pray that Jesus forgive all my sins that I committed in the past day. And then the family blessing.

When we look at our lives, we have many things to be thankful for –

- Health
- Ability to provide for my family
- Fall weather

Of all these things, does it ever cross your mind to pray for government? The president? Governor? Mayor? Any and all who hold offices of public trust?

Unfortunately, the political climate is very poor today. And rather than praying for government, we are tempted to turn against government, and against everyone who does not share our views. For this, and for all our sins, we repent.

In our second lesson, God shares with us what he wants from every Christian. Not only does he tell us how, we want to find out what the very definition of what it’s like to be “A Christian Citizen.”

Think about the blessings of living in the United States. Every generation has a story to share. I hear from my parents, and perhaps you’ve heard from yours, how hard your parents worked to give the kids a better life. And how much their wages have increased over the years. We’re afforded more luxuries and more opportunities.

Thinking of government –

- What would it look like if there were no laws? If there were no stop signs. If there were no police officers patrolling the streets and keeping us safe?

- Utilities – heat and water and sewer
- Social security
- Thankful for government for organizing that and taking care of it's citizens.

⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Think of what life would be to live in another country. (Recall the experience of living in El Paso.) No running water, heat, light or electricity across the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juarez. As far as government is concerned, I had more than one member come to me and ask me to pray for a co-worker who was kidnapped and held for ransom.

We are thankful for the protection's and blessings of government. Unfortunately, there is a political nature around government today that is extremely heightened. At times we find ourselves guilty of rebelling against the government or not to be thankful for government. We repent of those sins because God wants us to, as the apostle Paul tells Timothy – **“I urge, then, that requests be given for kings rulers and all those in authority over you.”** God wants us to pray for good government. He wants us to pray for the president, he wants us to pray for the governor, he wants us to pray for the mayor. he wants us to pray for all forms and aspects of government so that we can have those blessings.

I don't know about you but I'm not a perfect citizen. I don't think any of us here are. We find ourselves guilty of those times that we've rebelled against the government, perhaps have said a terse word and against those elected officials. Maybe we've been disappointed when the police officer pulls us over for speeding. But it's true not a single one of us is perfect.

Friends, I have good news for you. There's one who was not only a good citizen but he was the perfect citizen. Our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Think about where he found himself when he was born. His mom and dad had to make the trek to Bethlehem just so they could go and be counted in the census so that they could, in turn,

pay taxes to the government. The family forced to do they were forced to flee because there was an evil ruler who wanted to rid the country of all the babies two and under. Jesus was questioned by the pharisees and the teachers of the law about who should you respect more God or Caesar? Jesus said, **“Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's.”** Even at the very time of his death being put to death by Pontius Pilot who wanted nothing to do with crucifying Jesus. But abdicated all responsibility when he tried to wash his hands clean of Jesus. There’s Jesus, not getting upset at those who persecuted him, put him on trial and had him hang there to die. One of Jesus' last words from the cross was **“Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.”**

Do you see how Jesus was the best citizen and the perfect citizen? Take our place and to be our perfect substitute in every way? Jesus paid for every one of our sins and the sins of the entire world. He died there on the cross.

When we think of this time in the apostle Paul's life was the time of Nero as Caesar. He was considered tyrannical, evil and vindictive. He was the one who in 64AD went and persecuted, killed executed by crucifixion, Christians and blamed them for the great fire of Rome. And yet the apostle Paul had the ability to say what he says here and verses 1 and 2

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

God’s encouragement for us here today is to offer respect and honor that is due to our government the same way that Jesus did for us perfectly the same way that Jesus did when he was the perfect citizen. The same way that Jesus did when he died on the cross to take away all are sin. He goes on to say in v 6 – to give respect, honor, taxes – whatever it is that we owe to government. We can be thankful for the blessings of government. The blessings that we have here in the United States. Every government has been established by God, whatever country you live in. They all serve God's good purpose – and God’s purpose – He **“wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”** And how are people to get that

knowledge? By you and I as Christians upholding the laws of the land, being good Christian citizens, but most importantly sharing that good news of the gospel – Jesus is our Savior from sin.

It's no accident that God has richly blessed the United States – not because we are a Christian nation, but because there are Christians living in this nation who have the freedom and the ability to share that good news of the gospel with others.

Notice what the apostle Paul says here at the end of our lesson. He gives a great example of what good Christian citizens also do. The second table of the law –

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

How do we do that? We go out of our way to help our neighbor. We go out of our way to help and serve. Perhaps it's someone who lives down the street, a family member or as Jesus said in giving the example of who our neighbor is in the parable of the good Samaritan – even those who might be considered our enemies. So, you mean the person who cuts me off when I'm driving down the road in heavy traffic? Do you mean the coworker who perhaps takes credit for something that you did at work? Do you mean the one who speaks poorly about you at school? Yes, God tells us here this morning to love all people equally – to **love your neighbor as yourself.**

How do we get that ability to love our neighbor as our self? When we look to the cross and see who loved us perfectly to see that our Lord Jesus loved us first. It gives us the ability to go and love our neighbor as our self. The good Christian citizen honors and respects government and those in authority. And, loves his neighbor.

Have you heard? There is an election taking place on the 1st Tuesday in November. Politics are dividing our nation, and pitting people against each other because of who they vote for. I don't know who you'll vote for. I don't know who will be in office in January as

president. But, I do know that no matter who is elected president, whoever is our governor, all who serve us are gifts and blessings from God – they have been established by God. God is using these institutions of government for our good. It's important for us to support them knowing that they're looking out for our good. It's important for us to offer up our prayers and give them honor and respect, whether we voted for that person or not. We are good Christian citizens when we find our center in God's Word. We hear the good news of our Savior who loved us and forgave us all our sins.

Let's pray - Dear Lord God, you have given us so many blessings and opportunities for which we are to be thankful. Help us also to be thankful for good government. Give us, also, opportunities to love our neighbor as our self. We know that we sometimes fail at this. But, we also ask you to give us that strength by directing us to the cross and to see what your Son, Jesus did for us there, when he gave up his life for us and for all people. We love, b/c he first loved us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)