

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU GO TO VOTE 11-4-12

Well, it promises to be an interesting week in the US of A. What will happen with the Senate? Will it remain under Democratic control? And, of course, will we have another four years of our current president or move on to someone new? Voter turnout should be quite high. And, if you are of age, I hope you are planning to vote. And, I hope you are intending to vote Christianly –in a manner that honors your Savior and Lord. How do you do that? I want to answer that, in part, by offering this morning a list of twelve things to think about when you go to vote. Twelve is a big number, but it won't take big time to work through them.

First, I encourage you to think about how blessed we are. When you go to the polls on Tuesday or turn on your TV to get the results, give thanks to our God for His mercies on us as a nation. The election process in our country is certainly not perfect. I expect there is some fraud going on here and there. There are certainly lies being told. You can't run for major office without being slandered. But, we have a process that remains mostly legitimate. So, be thankful for that, for the opportunity you have to influence the direction of our nation. Give thanks that all citizens of all races, all genders, all religions have equal rights to cast a ballot and even run for office. Be grateful that you can walk to the polling place without fear of violence. Even if the election does not go your way on Tuesday, there is much for which we can be thankful to God who has blessed us far beyond anything we deserve. Amen?

Secondly, I encourage you to think about your responsibility as a little king. Or, perhaps, a little queen. What do I mean by that? I mean that, in our system of government you have power. As Lincoln put it in the Gettysburg address – ours is a government of, by and for the people. We do not have a king. We all participate in the governing process so that laws are not so much made by “them” but by “us.” The implications of this understanding are enormous. For one, it means that when God speaks in the Bible to rulers – to governors and kings, he is speaking to you. For instance, I Peter 2:**13-14** *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.* There God speaks to the governed and says to be subject. That applies to us. But so too does the last part. We read that the responsibility of government is to punish the evil and praise the good. Romans 13 says we have the sword to minister God's

vengeance. Throughout the Old Testament rulers are admonished to dispense justice and to rule according to the word of God. As little kings in a republic, we must hear these words of God as directed toward us. We are responsible. Now, there are some voices in the church urging believers to basically ignore politics and focus entirely on gospel ministry. That may be fine in a monarchy, but in a government of, by and for the people, it is pure negligence. We have an opportunity on Tuesday to promote what is right and just and good or to be indifferent to what is right and just and good. What's more, if we allow the enemies of the cross to have things their way, we may soon wake up to discover that we have no gospel mission on which to focus. Our freedoms as Christians have been eroding for years. I have little confidence that in thirty years my son will be able to preach what I preached last Sunday. So, again we are reminded that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. ® As you plan your Tuesday, as you awaken to the day, think about your responsibility as a little king or queen in a free America.

Thirdly, as you go to vote, think about the golden rule. Think about the great commandment to love your neighbor. Think about Philippians 2:4 *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others*. And yes, think about those words of John F. Kennedy who famously said, (play video or audio) *ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country*. The basic point here is to not vote according to what will promote your interest. Sadly, so much of political speech is along just those lines – how *a vote for me* will help you. What should matter is what is right, what is just, and what will serve the interest of the entire republic. Older voters are to vote with equal concern about younger voters. The wealthy vote with concern for the poor. The poor vote with concern for the wealthy. It is not about what advances my group. And most of all here, we should vote with regard for the disenfranchised – those citizens who have no vote – and primarily I think here of our children.

Fourthly, I encourage you, as you vote, to think about the universality of sin and how that impacts your options. Basically, every candidate is flawed. Every one. And this is not the first election in which that is the case. I was at a pastors retreat twelve days ago at which one of the pastors was saying that she was not interested in the presidential election because neither candidate was worth her vote. Now, I get that, to a point. My ideal candidate has never run, and never will. No one has perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, a perfect record. You may feel like you are voting for the lesser of two evils, but sometimes the lesser of two evils can spare us incredible suffering.

Be aware too of an arrogant superiority that looks down on the candidates as if they are flawed and you are not. With appropriate humility, hold your nose if you must, but vote for the rotten, confused sinner whom you truly believe will be the better option for our country.

Fifthly, as you go to vote, remember that character in a candidate does matter. It does. Some will tell you otherwise and say that all you really want to look at is their positions and their competence. Marital fidelity doesn't matter. Honesty is optional. Vulgarity is irrelevant. Sorry. God says otherwise. Jesus says in Luke 16:10 *he who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.* A man who can't keep a promise to his wife, can't be trusted to keep his promise to a nation either. That's the point. And the reality is that leaders get manipulated in all kinds of ways by the threat of being exposed. The private life and the public life cannot be separated. And, if you are in Grant McKinney's Sunday School class on the Old Testament kings you are seeing just how much God evaluates the rulers of his people based upon their personal morality as well as their public morality. Character matters and should be weighed in as you vote.

With regard to our presidential candidates – I think it worth noting that we have a couple of men who have been rather exemplary in their family lives. They are both to be lauded for that. As far as we know they have been faithful husbands who value their families. That is commendable in both.

The sixth thing to ponder as you go to vote is the sanctity of human life. The sanctity of human life. This is the value upheld by the sixth commandment which prohibits murder, but, of course, you know I raise this issue because of the divide in our culture over its application to the pre-born. But here again, the Scriptures are unambiguous. David, in Psalm 51 confesses that he was with sin from the time of conception. Not birth, not some age of accountability. He says he was a human being with a moral status from the time of conception. And in Luke's gospel we read of how the first witness to the divinity of Jesus came from John the Baptist, who was filled with the Spirit of God and leapt for joy in his mother's womb. The abortion issue is very significant for those who believe in the value of human life, created in God's image. Sadly, whether abortion should be legal is not really much of an issue in our national debate, but whether the public should pay for abortions, whether private employers must pay for abortions is still very much a live issue. A candidate's or a party's view of the pre-born may not be the only thing to consider, but it is certainly something weighty to ponder as you head to the polls.

#7. The seventh thing to think on as you go to vote is the sanctity of marriage. The sanctity of life supports the sixth commandment. The sanctity of marriage lies behind the seventh commandment which prohibits adultery. As we saw last Sunday, God vigorously stands behind the sanctity of marriage, even to the point of commending capital punishment for those acts which assault this institution. In our land, in 1996, the Defense of Marriage Act passed both houses of Congress with large majorities and was signed into law by Bill Clinton. It defined marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman. The current administration now views portions of this act as unconstitutional and will no longer defend it. Where a candidate and a party stands on the issue of marriage should matter to us who value what God values.

An eighth thing to think about as you go to vote is the sanctity of private property. Contrary to the socialist ideal, the Bible affirms the right of individuals to own property. This is the principle that lies behind the eighth commandment which prohibits stealing. Thou shalt not steal. And unless there is private ownership, theft has no meaning. Now clearly, there are disagreements among candidates and parties as to the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage. But, is there real disagreement over the sanctity of private property? Well, you may be able to detect a critical difference as you hear political figures refer to private wealth and the government's relationship to it. To what extent does a leader see individual wealth as belonging to individuals, and to what extent is it perceived as belonging to the government to advance its agenda?

And how one thinks about the right to private property impacts our ninth point to ponder and that is the importance of justice for all. Justice for all, and I would especially note the special concern under this heading for the poor. Zechariah 7:10 says *Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.* Unlike the lands dominated by Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam, concern for the hurting has always been a mark of Christian societies, as it is today. Thankfully, every political figure and party is in favor of looking out for the poor. The disagreements come over how to best do so and over whether government should be about the task of forcibly redistributing wealth. As Christians, we know that the needs of individuals go far beyond the financial realm but they certainly include the financial. However you see the strategy debate, a concern for the poor should be in your heart as you go to vote.

The tenth thing on which I encourage you to think is that our hope is in the Lord. Ultimately it is. Our hope is in the Lord and thus not in any party or politician or policy. This means that we don't

watch the election results on Tuesday night with fear and trepidation. In my experience, the results of elections are never as bad or good as we tend to think they will be. But even if they are, the Lord is bigger than any national calamity that may befall us. So, we pray. We pray. I Timothy 2 tells us how and why. I Timothy 2: **1-2** *I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.* We want rulers who will let us freely live as followers of Jesus and so we pray for that. We ask God for that. We can fill a bubble on a ballot, but we can also move the arm that moves the world with our prayers. Our church is offering an opportunity on Tuesday morning at seven to do exactly that. But whether you join us then or not, when you walk to the polls, would you do so with prayer on your lips and in your heart that the hand of Providence will move in mercy over our nation? And would you consider fasting as well. That is a way of putting your prayers in all caps, or in bold. Fasting conveys to our own hearts and to the Lord just how important an issue is for us. So, put your hope in the Lord and express that in fasting and prayer.

There is an eleventh thing to think on as you vote. We don't know who will be president in February, but we do know who will be King. We don't know who will be president, but we do know who will be King. And there is no vote on this one. God has appointed His Son as King. I remember twelve years ago, sitting at a traffic light at a busy intersection in Palm Bay, Florida where we were living. And at this intersection there was an empty lot on which there must have been two dozen political signs. One sign particularly caught my eye. It said, "Ted Jensen For Supreme Overlord." I cracked up when I read that because Ted Jensen was a high-school kid in our church. And I loved the imaginary office – *Supreme Overlord*. We don't vote for one of those. God has already made His appointment for that position. In the very first Christian sermon in Acts 2 Peter made this his concluding point: Acts 2:**36** *Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.* This Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He reigns today and He will reign on Tuesday and He will reign in 2013. So please understand, this is a gospel sermon today. I am preaching the good news of the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament says that all things have been put under Jesus, all things subject to Him, but not everyone can see it yet. Some day they will and

every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord and King. Praise Him! Crown Him Lord of All!

And finally, the twelfth thing to think about as you go to vote is that although our national debt may continue to rise, the most important debt, the greatest debt, the most dangerous debt of all has, for believers in Jesus, been paid in full. I don't know what awaits our children if our national debt becomes thirty trillion dollars and the economy collapses. It concerns me deeply; but far more important is the debt of sin which can damn us to hell for all eternity. But Christ Jesus, the servant King, has taken my debt upon his shoulders and born it all to Calvary. All sixteen trillion of my sins were laid on Him and the treasure of His righteousness has covered them all.

If a candidate in our day were to stand on national TV and announce that if we vote Him into power He will wipe out our national debt everyone would mock and jeer. But this is the promise of Jesus to you. Make Me your King and your debts become mine, my riches become yours. You go from being a spiritual debtor to eating at the table of the King, enjoying His riches, and, most of all, enjoying Him, whom to know is life eternal.

Up next for us, is the pleasure of fellowshiping with our Savior at His good table. Oh, living dying, let me bring, my strength, my solace from this spring, that He who lives to be my King, once died to be my Savior.