

ISAIAH 9:1-7 12-24-14

THE CASE FOR BIGGER GOVERNMENT

(Isaiah 9) We may be a few minutes before we actually get there to read that. As promised, my message this evening is entitled, *The Case for Bigger Government*. You may think that an odd subject for Christmas eve. In fact, you may think there is no context appropriate for a political message in church. Certainly, an issue like the role and size of government is one bound to create some friction. We have a huge divide over this issue in our society. Some people think that government expansion is a really wonderful thing and others think it is terrible. Take a minute with me to consider the perspectives on both end of the issue, those ends normally referred to in our society as left wing and right wing. And, don't panic, we will bring all this back to Christmas.

First, there are those who are all in favor of bigger government, of expanding the scope and reach of the state. I completely understand where these folks are coming from. Now mind you, their aim, as they see it, is not to increase the size of government. No no. That is why, if you ask someone on the left if he or she wants to expand the government, they will likely say, "no." Our current president has done more to increase the size of the federal government than any chief executive before him except possibly FDR. His signature legislation swelled the reach of government into our lives, but President Obama does not see himself as wanting to grow the government. In fact, he has said plainly that he does not favor growing the government. And yet he does it in record proportions. Why? Because he sees government as a tool to do good. He, like anyone on the left, believes that there are many problems in our society that government can solve and should solve. It just so happens, that in the process of trying to provide governmental solutions to these problems, you invariably expand the size and reach of that government. I recently finished the book about President Harry Truman by David McCullough – almost 1,200 pages. Truman comes off in the book as a very practical man. He was not an ideologue. He would never have written a book on political philosophy – but through some fascinating twists of providence, this relatively uneducated man became our 33rd president. Now, as a practical man, his approach was to detect problems and solve them. As president, his tool for solving problems was the federal government and so, he followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Mr. Roosevelt, by expanding what the federal government did, and how much it spent and how much control it had over the lives of Americans. He believed he was doing good through government and so expanding the government was, for him, a good thing.

But, not everyone agrees. There are those on what we call the “right wing” who view government expansion as bad and would claim that an increase in the size and power of government may do some good but will ultimately lead to more harm than help. Folks on the right love to quote Ronald Reagan who said the ten most dangerous words in our language are, “Hi, I’m from the government and I’m here to help.” They say that a government big enough to give you everything you want is big enough to take everything you have. They quote Jefferson who said that the natural progression of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground. They point us to places like Tucson, Arizona where the county commission is considering a ban on hiring employees who smoke – even in their own homes. See, they say, the left wants to help people quit smoking and they do so by robbing them of freedom.

So there you have it in a nutshell. This is the major political divide in our republic. This is the big question: Does government expansion solve more problems or create more problems? It is not an easy question. Some may answer one way for domestic issues and another for foreign affairs. Person A wants to expand social programs and cut back the military. Person B wants to shrink social programs and expand the military so we can take on ISIS and Iran and Russia. The Republican party is generally seen as the party committed to controlling the expanse of government but that party is hopelessly divided over the reach of government with respect to defense. In fact, the Democrats are divided over that too. These are really tough issues.

What does the Bible say about the expansion of government? My wife and I recently heard a lecture about John Witherspoon who was the only preacher to sign the Declaration of Independence. The speaker called him the “grandfather of the constitution” because of his terrific influence on James Madison who wrote our constitution in the light of what Scripture says about the depravity of man. Madison and the founders, because of what they saw in Scripture and in history wanted to limit the power granted to any single individual. They designed a government with checks and balances and with a bill of rights that severely limited the scope of the federal government. You read what our founders said and it is apparent they felt that big government was more of a threat than a help to human flourishing. That is how we ended up with a constitutional republic. You like our government? A government that Lincoln described as being of the people, by the people and for the people? Do you think our form of government is close to ideal? Well, I grant that it was created with a biblical view of humanity in mind. In that respect, it is wise and

good; but one can hardly claim it is the Biblical form of government. Churchill once said about democracy that it is the worst form of government ever devised, except for all the others.

Well, this is certainly a very odd Christmas Eve message. Stay with me. There is a form of government recommended in Scripture—and even in the New Testament. It is commended to us even in the Christmas story. And it is a form of monarchy. Call it a Christocracy. We will look at two passages, one in the gospel, the other in the prophets. Luke 1:**26-33** *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."* Those last two verses tell us that little baby Jesus will be given something, what is it? What does Jesus get for Christmas? A throne. Anybody ask Santa for one of those? Game of Thrones maybe, but not a throne. But Jesus gets a throne and who sits on a throne? A King. A ruler. A monarch. Verse 33 drives the point home further because there it says Jesus will do what? He will reign.(R) The historical context of the Christmas story is the promise God made to David about three thousand years ago that a descendant of his would establish a kingdom that would never ever end. This is why the Jewish people were looking for this person they called *Messiah* and one thing everybody knew was that he had to be a descendant of David. Yea!

Now between the time God told David about his plan, around 1000 BC and the time the angel announced the birth of this King, God spoke to another of his prophets confirming and elaborating on the promise. Isaiah chapter nine is one of those passages that often get quoted at Christmas time. Let's read that now. 9:**2** *The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.* Verse **6** *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of*

hosts will accomplish this. Marvelous isn't it?! The promise of a child, a son, a Messiah, who will take on the weight of the government. He will rule on the throne of David. He will come in humility and lowliness but will grow to be a man, the only perfect, obedient man who will proceed to lay down His life for the sake of others, and then, having defeated death on the cross, He will rise again in conquest over the grave. Having done that He ascends into heaven, to the place of all power and is made, by God the Father, the King, the Lord, the Sovereign Monarch of all the world. And then, from His place of power He begins to exert His rule, He begins to transform the earth, slowly, (painfully slow as we see it), but He is doing it. And the promise of Luke 1, the promise of II Samuel 7, the promise of Isaiah 9 is that His government will increase, will expand, will enlarge its scope and influence. And, if you think the expansion of the rule of Christ is a good thing, let me hear you say, "Amen." Aha, you too are in favor of bigger government! You are with me in this. We want to see the rule of Jesus grow more expansive every year. That awesome word in verse 7 says *There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness.* We are for this. We want the peace of Jesus, the justice of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus to fill the earth that is so desperately in need of these very things.

Now we don't elect Jesus as king. Not exactly. He was appointed to His position by God the Father. But it is our place to embrace His kingship, to support it, to live it out practically in our lives, to make sure that the one who is the King is also my king. That is my challenge to you this Christmas eve. Don't just read the lovely verses about the king. Don't just sing the hymns that say, "Hail the Everlasting Lord." Crown Him king in your heart. Your heart is where it has to start. It doesn't end there. No – no. The rule of Jesus that begins in my heart goes from there to my family – where we crown Him as Lord in our homes. Then it impacts our church. We make sure the reign of Jesus is a practical reality in our church, that His government is expanding here. Then we take it to the world. Abraham Kuyper, who was prime minister of the Netherlands at the start of the 20th century famously said: *There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, "Mine!"* Read that again with me -- -all of us together. ® What Kuyper and what the Bible is affirming is an approach to government that may be called *totalitarianism*. Totalitarianism is the most popular form of government in human history. It means that the state holds total authority over the society and seeks to control all aspects of public and private life. It is the government of Stalin, of Hitler, of Nero, of tyrants old and new. It is the

vilest form of government, but it is also the only perfect form of government when the Monarch is *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.*

This evening you can't very well hand over the nations to the rule of Christ. You can't do much tonight to hand over our church to the rule of Christ, but you can hand over your heart and that is where this glorious expansion of the government of Jesus begins. Will you say to the Lord, I will make you my Lord? Will you say to the King, I want you to be my King?" Ruler of every thought, every word, every choice? Perhaps He has been your King for a long time, but can you think of an area of your life that needs to be more thoroughly given over to His control? Can you expand His government over your budget, your schedule, your thought-life? Think of one way you can increase the government of Jesus this coming year and commit yourself to that. Ponder that as we watch and listen to this video built around the words of a preacher named S.M. Lockeridge, offered in Detroit forty years ago.