

September 7, 2014
Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Romans 13:1–10

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Romans 13:1–10 (ESV)

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. ⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I'd like to do a little civics survey as we begin this morning. You don't have to raise your hands, but How many of you regularly read the editorial pages of the newspaper?

How many of you only read an editorial if it is someone who usually agrees with you? How many of you listen to Rush Limbaugh on the radio? How many of you watch "The O'Reilly Factor" or "Hardball" with Chris Matthews? How many of you watch televised congressional debates?

How many of you don't read, listen to, or watch any of these because it's just a waste of time? You may feel that everyone who enters politics is ultimately contaminated because the political process is corrupt by nature?

Or to put it another way, how many of you would be proud to have your son or daughter enter politics?

No matter where you go, whether it's to Dairy Queen for morning coffee or to Wednesday night Bible Study, you will probably encounter a basic mistrust of those in government.

It's as though most people consider government to be ungodly. The one exception is, if you know a politician personally. Then it's not unusual to hear, "He's one of the good guys!" Every once in a while, one of them even belongs to the same church body as we do. Then, of course, "he is one of the good ones! But she'd better be careful lest he be contaminated."

Distrust of those who serve in government is so wide spread that you might even begin to think that God Himself would want to stay away from it, lest even He be contaminated.

However, that's not the picture St. Paul presents. No, St. Paul declares that far from being disinterested in government, God is vitally interested. In fact, He establishes all authority.

Really?

All authority?

Even those authorities that bring hurt and pain to others?

Even those who persecute God's people? Yes, all authority!

The children of Israel had grown comfortable with God, who delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh and defeated seven nations to give them the land of Canaan. God, was their national God! Surely He would never leave them, not even if they grew lazy about obeying Him.

Imagine their horror, even their outrage, when Isaiah proclaimed that God was going to use the Assyrians to punish them, His own people!

Listen, *"He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, quickly, speedily they come!"* (Is 5:26)

Can't you imagine the shock when they hear that God whistling for the attention of the Assyrians!

Later, Jeremiah proclaimed that because the leaders of Judah would not *"plead the case of the fatherless"* or *"defend the rights of the poor,"* God was going to use Babylon *"to destroy the Daughter of Zion"* (Jer 5:28; 6:2).

Even Jesus surprised Pilate as He told him *“You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above”* (Jn 19:10–11).

The biblical truth is clear. No matter who is in authority, whether it is the king of Judah, the emperor of Assyria, or the Caesar of Rome, a dictatorship, a monarchy, or a democracy—all authority comes from God.

St. Paul makes it clear that God has a loving purpose in giving this authority. He gives it to bring punishment to the wrongdoer and to commend those who do right.

It was because the leaders of Israel and Judah were turning the purpose of authority on its head, collaborating with evil and mocking the righteous, that God whistled up the Assyrians and Babylonians. At the same time He held those nations accountable. *“Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger,”* Isaiah writes. *“I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes”* (Is 10:5, 12).

Some hold the false opinion that people can be trusted to do the right thing and, therefore, that governmental authority isn't really needed; God sees just the opposite. God sees that people are inherently sinful and will always put their interests before the interests of others. Therefore, He gives governments authority to keep selfishness from tearing societies apart.

Why was a patient's bill of rights debated in Congress? It was debated because there was evidence that HMO profits were placed ahead of patients' health.

Why is there a law requiring corporate packing houses to disclose the price they pay for animals?

It is because large corporations in the past have used their size to gain an unfair advantage over the little guy.

Why do highway patrol officers watch our roads? They watch because some drivers are prone to put others in danger.

Can governments botch their God-given responsibilities? Obviously! Judah did! Rome did! Modern examples are plentiful.

The fact that they botch the job, though, isn't the only reason we resist their authority.

More often than not we resist their authority because our sinful nature doesn't like to be called to account.

God gives government authority to temper our old, sinful nature, but He knows that such authority can't change our nature.

He knows we will act selfishly the minute we think the law isn't looking. (We invented radar detectors, didn't we?) I
Isn't it good enough for God that we behave ourselves as long as we're being watched? But God doesn't just want changed behavior, He wants changed hearts.

It was for this reason that he sent Jesus into the world. He sent Jesus to call us under the authority of a different power; not just His Law, but the power of His love.

Jesus demonstrated the power of love by coming to us, even when we were enemies of God's authority.

Instead of condemning us, as we deserved, He died for us.

He took the punishment the Law assigned to us so that we might not be condemned, but saved. Then He rose from the grave, offering us the opportunity to stand guiltless before our Father through the gift of faith in Him.

No more fighting the impossible demands of godly authority!

No more sneaking off to do our own thing when we thought God wasn't looking!

Forgiven in Christ, we run to God as children run to a loving father. We stand cheerfully before Him, perfect citizens of His kingdom forgiven in Christ!

This love is the reason St. Paul calls us to obey those in authority, the reason he appeals to our conscience.

As Christians we obey, not because governments may demand obedience, but because we have experienced the freedom that loving forgiveness brings.

We obey because Jesus has freed us from blind slavery to selfishness and opened our hearts to loving others as He has loved us.

We obey because Jesus has freed us to see God's good purpose in government, because Jesus has freed us to appreciate that good government is godly.

Under the power of this love we not only obey, but also we actively seek to help government be the good government God created it to be.

We participate in our government functions like elections and paying attention to what our government is doing.

Ultimately, we know that we answer to a higher authority. We answer to the Law of God,... in which we fail utterly.

But even though we fail, we know that we have an advocate with the Father, who has paid for our sins, so that through faith in Him as our Savior, we can face each day until we leave this veil of tears.

Go forth in that knowledge of salvation, that in the name of Jesus, you are forgiven for all of yours sins.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

“There is no authority except from God”
Romans 13:1–10

1. God has established all authority.
2. God has a loving purpose in giving this authority.
3. God gives government authority to temper our old, sinful nature.