

**Luke 4 " 16 So [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." "**

## ***“Bowling to the Authority of King Jesus”***

**As Jesus began His ministry in the Gospel of Luke, He read from the 61<sup>st</sup> chapter of Isaiah, proclaiming among other things that Messiah had come “To proclaim liberty to the captives.”**

**Almost two thousand years later in 1776 a group of men put their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor on the line by signing the Declaration of Independence on July 4<sup>th</sup>.**

**As we have begun to study God’s Kingdom as it is presented by Luke, we have learned that it impacts individuals and communities. It impacts those in the Church and those outside the Church. As God showed King Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, “the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”**

**As our nation celebrates the 4<sup>th</sup> of July this week, I thought it would be appropriate to consider how the coming of Jesus has changed the world in the realm of civil government.**

- **This is the controversial cutting-edge today just as it was in Rome!**
- **The early Christians understood that they were NOT a new religion which could simply be accommodated like the others: They refused to acknowledge Caesar as God, because Jesus was on the throne!**
- **Advancing Christ's Kingdom today does not mean entering the political arena wanting a seat at some civil table: It means proclaiming that ALL Kings and magistrates must bow to the authority of Jesus, just as we do!**

**In the history of our nation, the pulpits of America have loudly and boldly proclaimed the truth about God's Kingdom: We will do that today in part responding to one of the presidential candidates.**

- **However, it is important to remember that God Himself will advance HIS Kingdom!**
  - ✓ **This does not necessarily mean that America will be advanced**
  - ✓ **Or the California will be advanced**
  - ✓ **Or that Sacramento or our local communities will be advanced.**
- **God's Kingdom will advance according to His plan, but Christians will still impact, for good or ill, the political process!**

**When it comes to considering how Christians should be involved in politics today, again I would suggest that we have two cliffs to avoid:**

**On the one side we could simply say it is best to just ignore what goes on in politics: This is certainly supported by most of the views about the end-times that are popular today:**

- ✓ **Jesus is coming back SOON**
- ✓ **Why polish the brass on a sinking ship**
- ✓ **Satan is the prince of this world**
- ✓ **Or that saying that voting is always just choosing between the lesser of two evils.**

**The other equally dangerous cliff is to think that it is our JOB to advance God's Kingdom by grabbing the reigns of world's political power and simply dominating all those around us.**

**This cliff has ruined Christians on the left, right and middle as we have seen attempts in our nation to use the power of the state at various levels to encourage good "moral" choices, whether it is government education, welfare or telling parents how to raise their kids on the one hand, or mandating prayer in school, prohibition or exporting American "values" on the other hand.**

- **Both inaction and improper actions are wrong for the faithful Christian**

**We must remember that the actions of those men in 1776 have given us as Americans liberties and responsibilities that many others don't share and God will hold us accountable for what we have been given.**

**Jesus said He came "To proclaim liberty to the captives"**

- **There are three ways that we can better understand how the Kingdom is developed and practiced in the area of civil or political liberties – priorities we must practice and pass on to our children!**

### **1) We should understand the foundation of true civil liberties**

**The Bible is full of examples of good and bad government and the Book of Proverbs spends much of its time teaching how a good King would rule. This is not simply "filler" material, but vital instruction for God's people.**

**We must understand the difference between believing that our rights are God-given rights that are to be protected by the civil magistrate and the humanist view that our rights are derived by man's wisdom and directed by government force: As the French revolutionary philosopher Rousseau said, "In order that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free"**

**This stands in stark contrast to the Declaration of Independence which flows from solid Biblical foundations where it says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by**

**their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”**

**We should also understand the importance of knowing and believing the doctrine of the depravity of man from which flowed the concepts of divided government and other checks and balances. Again in contrast to this we have the humanists who demand that we accept the inherent “goodness of man” AND that “good” people could be trusted with unlimited power!**

**These humanists gained vast power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, leading to the slaughter tens of millions of men trying to help them be “free”!**

## **2) We must be ready to defend and advance true civil liberties.**

**I want to cite the Apostle Paul as our example to ponder as we seek the Lord’s will in what should be done today by individuals or as a church.**

**Whatever problems we may think we face in America today, they would certainly be matched or exceeded by what the Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century faced under the Roman Empire.**

**The Apostle Paul was a Roman citizen giving him certain privileges: We find in Acts 16 an account of Paul using these rights to chasten civil magistrates who had abused their power: It follows after the account of the conversion of the Philippian jailer**

**Acts 16 “35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." 36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."**

**➤ Paul is free to continue his ministry to the Gentiles!**

**37 “But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly?**

**No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." 38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.”**

- **The Apostle Paul could certainly have argued that he had more important things to do rather than wasting his time trying to hold some local officials accountable for their poor actions**
- **He could have said “what difference will my making a little noise make anyway!” As many American Christians might say today, “the important thing is to preach the Gospel!”**

**The reality is that he DID take the time and this is something we need to consider when we think about whether we should take the time to make sure our voter registration is current; take time to find out a little about who is running for the offices we are allowed to vote for; and then to actually take the time to vote!**

**There is much more that could be done with our time and talents in this area, but if all the Christians in America simply did this, it would make a significant difference! The impact would be as shocking as the statistics we considered about the impact of covenant faithfulness a few months ago!**

- **There are also times where we must respond as a community of believers, as the Church, as well.**

**This is one such week with a Presidential candidate going before the members of the United Church of Christ to attack the Christian faith” The very faith which this apostate church has long since abandoned. Barack Obama told those in attendance, “Somehow, somewhere along the way, faith stopped being used to bring us together and started being used to drive us apart. It got hijacked.”**

**Well, Senator Obama needs to understand that the same Gospel that Peter and John preached divides today in the same way it divided then: Some believed that Jesus was the risen savior who was to be believed and trusted. Others wanted to keep their power and rejected Him: Refusing to bow before the authority of Jesus – just like Senator Obama and the United Church of Christ do today!**

**Today there are those who believe the unborn should be nurtured and brought to full term, while others believe they can be killed at will. Senator Obama is certainly in the later camp, voting against even measures that would have required care for a child who survived an attempted abortion! Yes, genuine Christian faith demands that we defend life and strongly oppose those who would destroy it.**

**The same could be said for giving sodomites the right to marry: God demands that we take sides and has demonstrated some pretty harsh judgments on cities and nations who made the wrong choice in the past. And even most Republicans will cower before so-called science and the national media if asked whether they believe the world was created in six days by a sovereign and loving God or whether we are just chemical accidents bouncing around a chance universe. We need only read the later part of Romans chapter one to see what happens to individuals, or nations, that “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”**

- **Again, IF every Bible-believing church used its pulpit to drive home just those three simple truths over the next year, America might well be headed in a MUCH better direction after the 2008 elections.**

**There is much more that individuals or churches can and should do, but I don't see how we can say we are being faithful to our Lord and the Scriptures if we don't at least take these minimal actions.**

**3) However as we do all of this, we must remember the third & most important principle: We must live in the liberty that Christ has given us before a watching world!**

**The true liberty that we have in the Gospel: Where Jesus challenges us in John 8 saying, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”**

- **This will be the ultimate test of how we confront the world and the example that we set for others to follow: We ARE the new creation!**
- **In Acts 4, Luke shows us how to walk this Biblical path and to avoid the cliffs of inaction on the one hand & improper actions on the other**

**John and Peter are arrested for preaching and healing in the name of Jesus: In verse 8, they bring their defense:**

**“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor**

**is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

- **The Gospel is boldly preached and then we see how the Christian community reacted to what happened**

**Acts 4: "24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' 27 'For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**

- **They understood the nature of the battle and WHO was in control!**

**29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.**

- **Luke will now weave the bold proclamations with bold living of the Gospel on this Biblical path...**

**32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need."**

- **This is the balance that we must have if we are serious about carrying out God's Great Commission. We must boldly confront the world with the truth when we have the opportunity and we must BOLDLY live out this truth before that same watching world.**

- **Lord-willing we are doing this faithfully this morning as we gave an answer for the faith that lies within to Senator Obama and will shortly take up our special offering for the Spences to care for those among us with needs.**

**And all the while we must not forget the BIG picture: God is in control and has promised in Psalm 2 to bring all the kingdoms of this world unto subjection to His Son Jesus.**

- **As we rightly worship and serve Jesus He will use US to advance His Kingdom: As Erik explained two weeks ago, this is what we pray for and we must learn to see this in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation!**
- **We see the Kingdom in the Psalms: This is why we need to sing them, learn them, study them and teach them to our children!**
- **Any of our daily readings this week could be an example, but let me quote a few verses from Psalm 145 in closing:**

**Psalm 145: “10 All Your works shall praise You, O Jehovah, And Your saints shall bless You. 11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, And talk of Your power, 12 To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, And the glorious majesty of His kingdom. 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations. ... 17 Jehovah is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. 18 The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them. 20 Jehovah preserves all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy.**

- **[Senator Obama may think that I am being divisive here, but that is what the text says!]**

**21 My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.”**

**David is proclaiming the same promise that God made in Daniel 2: “44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”**

**Or as we shall now sing as our hymn of response:  
“Christ shall have dominion!”**



**Communion meditation:**

**Last week we studied our battle against demonic forces and now this week it is the battles in the civil realm: As we approach the Lord's Table it would be timely to meditate on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:**

*1 A Psalm of David [the shepherd].*

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.**