

## A Pastor's Perspective — On Preaching Politics

“A Primer for Preaching Politics from the Pulpit” by Jeremy Wike.

I was crazy when I decided to preach a three-week series on politics. What should I say? What should I *not* say? How will people receive it? Will *anyone* be happy?

Never have I sensed greater eagerness from my people to hear a fresh word from God to help them navigate this unending, utterly terrible election cycle. So, what did I say? I told them who to vote for, of course. Just kidding. Quite the contrary. In three weeks I challenged political myopia, addressed the church's loss of power, and celebrated Kingdom values. Pastors must rise above simple calls to civility and give principles for approaching the current political climate in our embattled country.

The first week revisited Israel's demand for a human king (1 Sam. 8). This story shines anthropological insight that we often forget. We see Israel's myopia and God's allowance of her choice. God would allow Israel to endure the natural consequences of her political short-sightedness, but not without warning them. Politics should matter to God's people because policies affect people, and people matter to God. But we cannot blame God for the poor choices of the masses.

The second week juxtaposed the early church with the current church in America. The early church exploded with growth as many Christians faced martyrdom for proclaiming one simple, political message: “Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not.” Operating on the margins of power, the early church was a force to be reckoned with.

In contrast, the church in America in the last 60 years has seen a loss of power and influence. Politically, evangelicals are in the midst of what I call a “massive temper tantrum.” The secret to restoring the potency of the early church is in proclaiming, “Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not.” We must learn to live as dual citizens of earth and heaven. We eagerly await our Lord Jesus Christ who will come again and fully usher in His Kingdom. In the meantime, God's Kingdom—not the mock kingdoms of party politics or special interests—command our focus.

The third week was a gritty look at Kingdom values. What is the filter through which we ought to engage in political discourse and, heaven forbid, we vote this November? For starters, we look at the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus told those first hearers to “repent” because the Kingdom of God was near (Matt. 4:17). King Jesus came with a new set of religious, economic, and political values (e.g., the Beatitudes), requiring us to unlearn conflicting ones we've absorbed along the way. For example, how often do we allow fear to form stereotypes about others, based upon skin color, country of origin, socioeconomic status, religious background, or... (swallow hard) sexual orientation?

People want help sorting through the political windstorm. What if pastors had the courage to lead people through these tumultuous times with conviction and biblical acumen? What if our churches became known for our Kingdom values, rather than our political predictability? What if the Beatitudes became our calling: “blessed are the merciful...the pure in heart...the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:7-9)? Perhaps, then, America's church could be great again.

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