

## FAITH AND POLITICS

### MY TESTIMONY...

- I grew up in the Church of the Brethren – Similar to Mennonites in many ways
- I grew up in a Christian tradition that taught = “We live in TWO realms”
  - 1. The Spiritual Realm – Where God is in charge – This is to be our primary focus as Christians
  - 2. The Secular Realm – Where Worldly men are charge – We avoid participation in the world
    - Carnal Christians = are interested and passionate about secular pursuits
    - Mature Believers = are passionate about spiritual pursuits (avoided secular involvement)
- Politics was a Secular Pursuit because...
  - Politicians are worldly, compromised, unspiritual
  - Therefore
    - Activism in political parties or efforts is not spiritual = “worldly”
    - Voting is a “secular activity” = that was not important (“secular duty”)
- When I was first licensed as a minister in the Mennonite Church...
  - I BELIEVED (and taught) that :
    - “Jesus was a spiritual activist who did not get involved in politics”
      - **I believed this because** Jesus told Pilate...
        - John 18:36 (NIV) *“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”*
    - “Activism in politics is not good or necessary – ‘Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s..”
      - Mrk 12:13-17 (NKJV) Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. [14] When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? [15] Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." [16] So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." [17] And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.
      - “Our PRIMARY CONCERN is to be faithful followers of Jesus”
        - Many local pastors believe and teach this...
        - They refuse to talk about “political” or “legislative” issues
          - They say; “we must keep the main thing the main thing!” (spiritual)
    - I BELIEVED that activism in political or social issues = “loving the world”
      - *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. [16] For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”* 1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)
      -
- **I BELIEVED “Jesus was not an activist – He was adverse to social /political activism”**
- **BUT THE TRUTH IS: JESUS WAS AN ACTIVIST!**
  - **He demonstrated and taught his disciples to be cultural “change agents” in society!**
    - Mat 5:13-16 (NIV) "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out

and trampled underfoot. [14] "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. [16] In the same way, **let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds (activism) and glorify your Father in heaven.**

○ **He stood up against wrong and OPENLY – and TOOK DIRECT ACTION**

- Mat 21:12 (NIV) Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He **overturned the tables of the money changers** and the benches of those selling doves.

○ **He stood up verbally & confronted people in power – REBUKED THEM DIRECTLY & OPENLY**

- Mat 23:27, 33 (NIV) "**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean...** [33] "**You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?**

○ **He taught His disciples that “salt and light” ACTIVISM = PERSECUTION and DIVISION**

- Jhn 15:20 (NIV) Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.
- Luk 12:51-53 (NIV) **Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.** [52] From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. [53] They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

- **JESUS WAS NOT A JUST A PEACEFUL TEACHER – HE WAS A NONVIOLENT REVOLUTIONARY**

- Even “THE CHOSEN” doesn’t fully demonstrate how counter-cultural Jesus was!
- Jesus ...
  - ...Teachings were COUNTER-CULTURAL
  - ...ACTIONS were offensive He was to those in power
  - ...dramatically changed the politics of His culture.

- DID JESUS PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS? Was he a member of political party?

- **WHAT WAS THE POLITICS AT THE TIME OF JESUS?**

- Jesus lived in an occupied nation
  - ROME ruled over Judea & Galilee
    - Puppet Kings (Herod Achelaus & Herod Antipas) were directed by Roman leaders
    - The Romans were under the rule of an Emperor
- Jesus lived in a time of tremendous political upheaval -
  - Romans invade – (63 BC)
  - **Zealots Insurgency (63 BC – 66 AD) JESUS LIVED DURING THIS TIME...**
    - A movement of revolutionaries was actively & continually resisting Roman rule
    - Staged resistance events/ riots/ had many Zealot leaders
      - That is why they continually asked Jesus his stance on fighting Rome
    - During Jesus time there were regular resistance events against Rome by zealots
      - One of Jesus disciples was a Zealot
  - First Jewish- Roman War (66-73 AD)
    - 33 years after Jesus death – Judea was a battleground
  - Seige & destruction of Jerusalem – 70 AD
    - Masada was taken – 72 AD

- **What opportunities did Jesus have for Political involvement?**

- NONE!
- Voting? – There was no vote!
- Parties? (Groups in political power)
  - 1. Zealots - Resistance Group – Anti-Rome Insurgency
    - Advocate Violence – freedom at all costs
    - Stage riots, raids, vandalism
  - 2. Essenes - Isolationist Groups – Essenes (4000 people included Qumran colony)
    - Focus on Contemplation/ Law / Purity / Asceticism
    - Violence? – Most are non-violent (some are violent)
    - Insurgent? – Most are non-insurgent (some are actively resistant)
    - Apocalyptic? – Yes! believed that the society/world would soon end
      - It did in 70 AD (during Jewish/roman war)
  - 3. Sanhedrin – Roman approved political (puppet) leadership
    - Herodian (puppet king) – in charge of law enforcement
    - Sanhedrin = Greater & lesser Courts – in charge of social/ religious leadership
    - Rabbis – Traveling Teachers (most are religious, some are more social)
      - “Rabbis” = the public activists who promoted change
- JESUS WAS A “RABBI” = TRAVELING TEACHER
  - He promoted righteous belief and behavior in the face of incredible resistance
    - He was under threat of death for most of his career
  - Jesus PRACTICED NON-VIOLENT ACTISM – This was His “Salt and Light” working
- He had THREE OPTIONS
  - Compliance – with all the laws and rules perpetuated by Ruling Group
    - Jesus taught and demonstrated compliance - as much as possible
  - Violent Resistance – against the laws and rules perpetuation by the Ruling Group
    - Jesus TAUGHT AGAINST all forms of violence (physical and verbal)
  - Nonviolent Resistance - Jesus often chose to break laws and rules peacefully
    - Jesus would openly defy authority when it did not conform to the NEW COVENANT that He was initiating

- **HOW DID JESUS RESPOND TO POLITICAL AUTHORITY?**

- Jesus demonstrated OBEDIENCE & taught RESPECT toward political authority
  - Pay Taxes – Luk 20:25 (NKJV) And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
- Jesus/ Paul taught us to OBEY and RESPECT POLITICAL AUTHORITY
  - Rom 13:1-2,7 (NKJV) **Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.** For there is no authority except from God, and **the authorities that exist are given authority by God.** [2] Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves... [7] Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.
    - ALL AUTHORITY IS FROM GOD & DELEGATED TO HUMANS
      - We must respect and respond to authority as coming from God.
      - This is based on Genesis 1 “Rule over the earth and subdue it..”
    - CHRISTIANS MUST ALWAYS OPERATE WITHIN THE LAW

- **DID JESUS EVER ADVOCATE VIOLENCE?**

- NO! JESUS DID NEVER ADVOCATED VIOLENCE = IN ANY FORM!

- Driving out the Moneychangers was actually “law enforcement”
  - The money changers were not allowed by law to be inside the temple courts
- VERBAL VIOLENCE – No!
  - Mat 5:21-22 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' [22] But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, **'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.**
- PHYSICAL VIOLENCE – No!
  - Mat 5:38-40 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' [39] But I tell you **do not resist an evil person.** But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. [40] If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

- **JESUS MESSAGE AND MINISTRY WERE EXTREMELY POLITICAL**

- CONTRADICTED THE TEACHING OF THE SANHEDRIN
  - When asked to stop = Continued teaching when forbidden to teach
- CONTRADICTED THE RULES OF THE SANHEDRIN
  - When commanded to stop ministering on the Sabbath – He continued to do so
- Jesus taught and believed that RIGHTEOUS NON-RESISTANCE IS BEING SALT AND LIGHT
  - IF JESUS WOULD HAVE BEEN POLITICALLY COMPLIANT
    - THEY WOULD NOT HAVE ARRESTED HIM
    - THEY WOULD NOT HAVE CRUCIFIED HIM
    - HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SALT AND LIGHT (AS HE TAUGHT)
- **JESUS PRACTICED NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE AGAINST AUTHORITY**
  - DEFINITION: Resisting authority without the use of violence
    - Examples: continuing to do forbidden activities, fasting until change happens, refusing to cooperate, “stand-ins,” “sit-ins,” peaceful marches
      - Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. simply followed the example of Jesus
- JESUS PRACTICED NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE – EVEN WHEN FACING DEATH!
  - When He was arrested –
    - HE REFUSED TO FIGHT (told his disciples not to fight too)
      - He DID verbally oppose
  - When He was charged –
    - HE REFUSED TO FIGHT
      - DID VERBALLY OPPOSE
  - When He was convicted
    - HE GAVE HIMSELF UP
      - REFUSED TO FIGHT
- JESUS ALLOWED THE SIN (Injustice) OF WHAT WAS DONE TO BRING HIM VINDICATION!
  - This is the power of Nonviolent Resistance
  - Jesus transformed the WORLD by being Salt and Light
    - By being politically active

- **FOUR WAYS THAT BELIEVERS ARE TO BE ACTIVISTS (ACCORDING TO JESUS)  
WE MUST BE LIKE JESUS BY:**

- 1. “Salt and light” Activism
  - Do what is right and good (GOOD WORKS)
    - Non-violently
    - No matter what the cost is...
- 2. Confronting abuses and wrong-doing
  - “Turning over some tables”
  - Stand up for others who are doing what is right and good
- 3. Speaking the truth to Authority
  - Standing up to Abusive Leadership while respecting the law (non-violently)
  - Speak the truth about immorality and unethical behavior
- 4. Providing an example for others to follow
  - Maintain personal purity and integrity
  - Respond to wrong by ACTIVE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

### CHRISTIANS AND THE VOTE...

- **Should Spiritual Christians vote in a Secular Election?**

### Some Quotes about Voting – (to show my bias)

“The vote is precious. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society, and we must use it.”

— John Lewis, civil rights activist and US House of Representatives for Georgia

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. That is why we vote."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate

“A ballot is stronger than a bullet.”

— Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States

"Bad officials are elected by good citizens who don't vote."

- George Jean Nathan, American Drama Critic and Magazine Editor

"If you don't vote, you lose the right to complain."

- George Carlin, American Comedian

"If we don't vote, we are ignoring history and giving away our future."

- Pat Michell, American Businesswoman

"Each person has the power to make a difference - and choosing to NOT is choosing to NOT make a difference."

— Kylie Jenner, media personality and entrepreneur

### JESUS DID NOT HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED AS CHANGE AGENTS – AS WE DO..

- We live in a Representative Democracy
  - We CAN'T ALL participate in government... INSTEAD...
  - **We choose leaders to represent us = our principles and values in government**
    - VOTING is our CIVIC DUTY
      - Voting is participating in choosing WHO WILL REPRESENT YOU

- Not voting – is allowing others to choose who will represent you...
  - VOTING is **THE WAY THAT WE PARTICIPATE** in our government (one direct way)
    - Every 2-4 years we have the power to choose who will represent us.
      - To choose (as the least) the “lesser of two evils”
- **IN FACT, VOTING IS A PRIVILEGE!!**
  - THE PRIVILEGE TO VOTE IS ONLY GRANTED TO
    - 1. AMERICAN CITIZENS = natural born or naturalized
      - Who don't live in Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa or Puerto Rico
    - 2. Those who REGISTER
    - 3. Those who are GOOD STANDING WITH THE LAW
      - Felons lose the privilege to vote in Virginia
      - Felons are prohibited from voting (in 48 states)
- **WHAT IS VOTING?**
  - It is choosing a candidate to represent you in government...
    - “Who (among the options) will you choose to be your representative?”
  - Your duty is to choose who will follow the example of Jesus (among the options)..
    - Who is the best candidate by...
      - 1. “BEING SALT AND LIGHT”
        - promote what is GOOD and RIGHT
      - 2. CONFRONTING ABUSES
      - 3. STANDING UP TO UNGODLY AUTHORITY
      - 4. PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE for others to follow
  - ALL VOTING MUST TAKE PLACE BASED ON THESE JESUS DEMONSTRATED VALUES
- **What should we do if a candidate is not a believer?**  
**TWO CHOICES...**
  - 1. NOT VOTE: We can abdicate our civic duty
    - Let others decide who will represent us
  - 2. VOTE: We can choose someone who is a nonbeliever to represent us who...
    - Advocates for what is good and right
    - Stands up to evil & confronts abuses
    - Promotes policies that are favorable to Christian values
- **IS “NOT VOTING” OK? WWJD? Would Jesus NOT VOTE?**
  - I TRULY BELIEVE THAT...
    - PARTICIPATION IN VOTING IS...
      - consistent with the character & teachings of Jesus
      - a way of being SALT and LIGHT (ACTIVISM that is a good work)
      - USING THE POWER THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO US AS AMERICANS
- **CAN A BELIEVER VOTE FOR AN IMMORAL CANDIDATE?**  
I TRULY BELIEVE THAT....
  - All leaders have hidden sins.
    - All political leader have personal and professional compromise hidden in their closets
      - Trump has had nearly all of his closets opened
        - ... and maybe some that weren't even his... (everyone has an opinion)
  - All Candidates are Sinners

- We don't have a choice between candidates who are moral and immoral right now...
  - The choice is not between a "Christian above reproach" and a "Sinner that is wicked..."
  - AT THE BEST
    - **We are voting for a sinner that will represent us better than the other sinner**
  - AT THE WORST
    - We are simply voting for the "lesser of TWO EVILS"
- **NO MATTER WHAT...**We must vote for the candidate that (best)...
- Advocates for what is good and right
  - Stands up to evil & Confronts abuses
  - Promotes policies that are congruent with God's law and character
  - Lives as an example for others to follow
- **NO MATTER WHAT...** We must vote for candidates that are BEST in line with Biblical values & principles

### IS VOTING FOR A "SINFUL" CANDIDATE = "APPROVING OF SIN"?

- Some are saying, "I just can't vote for \_\_\_\_\_! He is so immoral!"
- Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership (church leaders) and Civic leaders are not synonymous
- Church leaders are QUALIFIED by Priestly qualities...
  - Tit 1:6-9 (NIV) An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. **Since an overseer manages God's household**, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. [8] Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. [9] He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
- Political leaders are qualified by "Kingly qualities"
- What are the QUALIFICATIONS/ Expectations for a King?
  - 1. Fear God and uphold the law
    - Rom 13:1 (NIV) Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
      - Realize that God has given them authority
      - Rule as those who will be held to account
      - Rule with honor and the wellbeing of their constituency
  - 2. Watch over their constituency to promote what is right and good.
    - Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people. - Proverbs 14:34
    - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. - Psa 111:10 (NKJV)
      - Lead according to the values of God
      - Avoid sin and Do not approve of sinful behavior
  - 3. Be humble, moral and ethical – provide an example for others to follow
    - Pro 16:12-13 (NLT) A king detests wrongdoing, for his rule is built on justice. [13] The king is pleased with words from righteous lips; he loves those who speak honestly.
    - Pro 29:14 (NIV) If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will be established forever.

- A King must demonstrate and uphold what is right
- He must not provide a bad example for his constituency

## **INVITATION**

### **1. ARE YOU A SEPERATIST?**

- You may believe strongly in the separation of the SACRED & SECULAR
  - If you DO believe that Jesus taught and modeled NON-INVOLVEMENT – I understand
    - You are doing everything that you can to be separated from the world
  - if you DO NOT believe that Jesus taught and modeled NON-INVOLVEMENT
    - THEN PERHAPS... change in behavior is needed

### **2. ARE YOU APATHETIC?**

- Perhaps you are tired of all the verbal traffic
  - You don't know what is true and false – and now you don't care!
- THEN PERHAPS... you are in need of strength and wisdom
  - Wisdom so that you know how to engage
  - Strength so that you have the will to engage

### **3. ARE YOU FOLLOWING THE PATTERN AND TEACHING OF JESUS ?**

- Then what does that look like?
  - What does BEING SALT AND LIGHT LOOK LIKE
    - Salt that preserves and Light that illuminates
- WHAT IS GOD CALLING YOU TO DO POLITICALLY
  - VOTING IS ONE THING
  - COMMUNICATING IN SUPPORT OF (more) RIGHTEOUS CANDIDATES

## **ADDENDUM #1**

### **- WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIONS TO VOTING?**

- "God is in control"
  - "I don't vote because God is in control... He will work all things for our good!"
  - God gave authority to reign on the earth to men – Gen 1.
- "I don't like either of the candidates"
  - Is our civic duty to choose those who will represent us based on how we feel about them?
  - We must instead "hold our nose" and discern who we should pray for
    - Who will best serve as my representative
- "Voting for a sinful person would be casting a vote in favor of sin"
  - All candidates in every election are sinners
    - Some sin more openly, some sins are exposed more
  - I am convinced that voting for someone for political office is not affirming or promoting sin. It is electing a sinful person (which all of us are!)
- "I am so tired of politics – I am just going to sit this one out"
  - Perseverance is a Christian virtue



- Heb 10:35-36 (NIV) So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. [36] You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.
- We are taught that if we persevere in doing good

## **ADDENDUM #2:**

### **IS GOD IN CONTROL? – Let’s look at this one...**

- **God DOES owns the earth...**
  - Psa 24:1 A psalm of David. The earth belongs to the LORD. And so does everything in it. The world belongs to him. And so do all those who live in it.
- **God DOES know what is going to happen on the earth**
  - Psa 139:16 (NIV) Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
- **God DOES use all circumstances to benefit those who love Him!**
  - Rom 8:28 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

BUT...

- **God DOES NOT control what men do...**
  - Gen 2:16 (NIV) And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;
    - We have authority to DO WHATEVER WE WANT TO DO
      - We can choose to follow God
      - We can choose to follow ourselves, others, the devil
    - We maintain responsibility for WHAT WE DO
      - All that is happens on the earth based on human decision is OURS!
- **God gave Humans AUTHORITY on the earth – Humans are to RULE and SUBDUE the earth**
  - **God delegated His authority to rule on the earth to Humanity**
    - Gen 1:27-28 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and **multiply; fill (replenish) the earth and subdue it. Rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
      - “FRUITFUL” – MAKE TO INCREASE
      - “MULTIPLY” – GATHER UP
      - “FILL” = REPLENISH
      - “SUBDUE” – BRING INTO SUBJECTION (RULE OVER)
- Paul affirms - ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN DELEGATED BY GOD TO HUMANS
  - Rom 13:1-2 (NIV) Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [2] Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.
- GOD WILL TAKE CONTROL ONCE AGAIN!!
  - Rev 20:1-4 (NIV) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. [2] He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. [3] He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the

nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. [4] I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.