

## Reformation 2020

One of the beautiful things of our system of government is the opportunity to have a reformation every 2-4 years; a chance to reset our government if we don't like the direction it is heading in. On this Reformation Sunday, I want to take some time for us to contemplate how to redirect our lives and that of our nation if we so choose.

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> many of us in the United States will have the occasion to vote, either by mail in ballots or by physically going to a voting booth. Many of us throughout the world have already voted by mail. I say throughout the world because American military personnel and ambassadors have voted by mail, from all corners of the earth, for decades. However, whether we vote by mail or in person, I hope we take some time to pray that phrase from the Lord's Prayer – "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven."

As Christians, our main concern is that we are doing the will of God in order to participate in building the kingdom on Earth. But how can we know if we are doing the will of God? How can we know if we are picking the right person to lead us or choosing the right position when we vote yes or no on a proposition? You have probably heard people say, "I chose the lesser of two evils." In a way, they are correct because no one is perfect. Our scriptures say we all have sinned, we all have missed the mark when it comes to perfection.

For Christians, the best we can hope for is to follow in the Way of Christ Jesus. So, yes, no candidate or proposition is perfect. We can only hope to choose the best person or position as viewed through the lens of scripture and the Way of Christ.

If we look at the overall message of our scriptures, we see a theme of what and who is important in the eyes of our Creator.

As Jesus proclaimed in today's reading from Matthew 22, the love of God and the love of our neighbors are the two most important requirements. If you are wondering who your neighbor is, I suggest you take some time reading Matthew 5:43-48 and Matthew 25:31-46. I'll give you a quick hint though – your neighbor is pretty much everyone.

Another primary concern for God is how we take care of widows, children and poor people. This is a theme throughout the old and new testaments of our Bible. We

are commanded as individuals, and as a nation, to take care of those in need, those within our walls and beyond our walls.

It has been said that we are a nation of immigrants because, other than Native Americans, most of us have our origins from other nations. Our God has a few things to say about how we, as a people, should treat immigrants or strangers. If we look at Deuteronomy 10:18 it says God “executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.” In Leviticus 19:33-34, we find God commanding, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself....”

In today’s reading from Micah 6:8 we are told what God expects of us as a means of supplication for our sins, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Justice, kindness, humility. Micah was written at a time when the lower kingdom of Judah was under attack by the Assyrians. The people had turned from God and so he was bringing charges against them. A section from the God’s Justice Study Bible says that “With enemy armies at the gate, extreme sacrifices to placate God might seem appropriate. God is not interested, however. What does he want? His mercy and justice redeemed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and carried them to the promised land (6:4–5). They should show the same mercy and justice to others, and walk humbly alongside God as he continues to set the world right.” It goes on saying, “Micah criticizes an economic system where those in control—who set standards for weights and measures—introduce phony measures that undercut those not in the know. Anybody who complains is threatened with violence. Beginning at 6:13, God pays back the cheaters in their own kind.”

I encourage you to take some time to read Micah. It is a short book with only 7 chapters that will take about a half-hour to read, but there are many parallels in it that seem to match what is happening in America today.

Let's review some of the key points of our sacred texts:

- Love God, by loving your neighbor. Who is our neighbor? Everyone.
- Take care of the poor, particularly widows and children.
- Treat immigrants, or strangers, as you would your neighbor.
- What does God require of us: to seek justice, mercy and humility towards God and others.

Now, let these key points from our scriptures guide you in selecting the people you vote for and the policies they wish to put in place. Are they in alignment with God's kingdom or do they deviate from it? If they deviate from the Way of Christ Jesus, from the scriptures that he followed, then you have the guidance that you need.

Pray with me. God, grant us the desire to seek your wisdom that we may discern what is the good and right way for us to live. Let us be instruments of justice in our families, our congregations, our communities and the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.