

4th Sunday of Easter (Jubilate): May 12, 2019

“Politics and the Christian”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

On this Jubilate Sunday, a Sunday of shouting for joy, we wonderfully hear St. Peter, “**1 Peter 2:16.**”

Context is important to this verse, and our reading from 1 Peter addresses the tension of the Christian life – saint and sinner at the same time. You are right now, a poor in spirit sinner, who lives in the miserable state of temptation, pain, sickness, and death; at the same time, you are a child of the Most High God, inheritors of eternal life, and possessors of heavenly peace won by the blood of Christ, sanctified, set apart, holy people of the Lord, forever forgiven through the death of Jesus. Peter speaks to you, Son’s and Daughter’s of Adam. You have been washed in the blood of the Lamb which indicates – the Old Adam in you should be daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man, daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. To this end, St. Peter speaks on three things: the slaying of the Old Adam, and for the New Adam – good conduct and obedience. What does this look like? First, abstaining, that is refraining, not participating, in the passions of the flesh. Second, being subject and obedient to every human institution, power, and authority. Third, servants being obedient to their masters.

These three things are descriptive of the Christian life, and each are a necessary component. Are you ready for the kicker, none of these are done for your own, personal benefit. There is nothing personal to be gained from the abstinence of sinful passions. It is not for your benefit that you obey the government. It is not even for the personal welfare of the servant to follow the commands of the master. All of these things are done for the good of another.

Consider this, by God’s grace, you are built by faith upon the true Rock, Jesus Christ. In Him you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. In Him you have complete justification. By His wounds you have been healed. The Lamb has been slain, and has begun His reign. He has purchased and won you from sin, death, and the power of the devil. You are His own and live under Him in His kingdom.

Yet, God still has you living here, on this created earth, which is also corrupted with sin. Your flesh and blood have not died and been resurrected, and so the sinful passions continue to wage war. You feel their evil desires and suffer their rampant wickedness. In thought, word, and deed, the vile head of the wicked one manifests itself in your flesh, and so here, you live, a poor, miserable sinner. Armed with this knowledge, the adversary cackles, “Ha! You call yourself a Christian? Did you hear yourself? Look what you’ve done.”

This letter, these words of Peter, are written to you dear Christians. This is not for unbelievers; it is for believers. You are justified. Christ has died for your sins, totally and completely. There is nothing left for you to do to earn favor from your God. You have eternal life. God doesn’t need your work, but your neighbor does. This is the very reason you are called to abstain from those sinful desires, those vile passions that arise so very frequently. You are sinners, just like everyone else. The difference is you actually know about forgiveness.

You are truly free to do many things. You have been given a whole host of First Article gifts that were created by God to serve man – body, soul, eyes, ears, hands, feet, tongues, reason, thought, clothing, shoes, food, drink, house, home, wife, children, grandchildren, fathers, mothers, land, animals, money, goods, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the list can go on and on and on, much like my sermons. My point is this – all of these gifts have been given to you for you to be sustained in life and for you to use in service to your neighbors. The gifts don’t serve you. You use them to serve others. These gifts are to be used, not idolized. They are not gods, they are goods.

Peter calls you sojourners and exiles. Luther says, *“Because we are guests, strangers, and pilgrims in this world, and citizens in heaven above, and are grafted into Christ our Savior through faith, we should not use the goods of this world in any way except for the glory of God, the help and comfort of our neighbor, and our own necessity. We should act like a pilgrim and traveler who, reaching his lodging in the evening, takes for his necessity room and board, and in the morning wakes and goes his way...Dear Christians, you are staying at an inn run by the devil, who is a liar and murderer, and continually thinking of ways to kill you: physically with the sword, fire, water, and poison; spiritually with false doctrine and error. So open your eyes, beware, lest he fall upon you suddenly and subdue you.”* While Satan

tries relentlessly, where do you look? Lift your eyes to hills. On the Hill of Calvary, he was defeated.

Brothers and sisters, why do you care so much about what others think? Do you not care what God thinks? What God says? You worry much about your reputation, and many times you are slow to speak and quick to be silent in discussions of faith in the world. What if someone hears me speaking of Christ and thinks....what...that I am weird? Different? Christians have always had a bad reputation with the world, in fact the teachers of Christians are referred to as, well, there are kids in the room – scum, refuse, human excrement to the world. The world inherently hates Christianity because it teaches a God that is greater than itself. A Christian who already has eternal life given freely by the death of God’s Son, lives differently to the world. You live as a light in a dark place. Jesus says, ***“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”***¹ Everything you think, say, and do is so that others will hear and see you and give glory to your Heavenly Father.

One of the clearest places this can be seen is in the public square. Peter exhorts Christians to be obedient to the secular authorities.

There is a rule that says preachers should not preach about politics. Is that a good rule? Not necessarily. If the Bible teaches us something about politics we should teach what the Bible teaches. What we should not do is to promote our own political philosophy and say that God said it. God doesn’t belong to a political party. He’s not a Republican or a Democrat. He doesn’t vote in elections. But where the Bible speaks God speaks and so should we. The Bible addresses the relationship between Christians and the government, and in our day and age, it is something that needs to be proclaimed.

The Bible teaches that the government works for God. In whatever form it may take, it serves God. It is not god, it serves God; this you find clearly expounded in Romans 13. While we know Paul and Peter didn’t always get along. They both do say the Christian rightly must submit to the government, because the government is God’s servant to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do what is good.

¹ Matthew 5:16

Whether we have kings or presidents, whether our leaders are chosen by their bloodline, by a small group of electors, or by a large group of voters are questions the Bible does not address. Whatever kind of government we have has authority over us by God's will.

What does this mean? We submit to the laws established by the government. Submitting to the government is submitting to God. The First Commandment teaches us to obey God. The Fourth Commandment teaches us to honor His representatives. We are to honor our father and mother, and the father manifests itself in four places – the biological father, the household father, the state father, and the spiritual father. The state, or the government, receives its authority to govern from the God-given authority of parents. Just as children are to obey their parents as God's representatives, so also, are the citizens of a country to obey the laws established by their government. Anarchy is not an option for a Christian.

It is a great blessing when those who rule are virtuous, but we are duty bound to honor the government whether or not those who hold office in it are virtuous. They may be venal fools. They may be incompetent and corrupt. They may not have the slightest notion of what makes for peace in the world or prosperity at home. Still, we are to honor them. We honor them, not because of who they are, but because of who they represent. They represent God whether they know it or not.

The purpose of the government is to punish those who do what is wrong and to defend those who do right. There are certain policies that Christians should support, regardless of their political philosophy. We should favor laws protecting the unborn. The killing of the living but unborn is not only a sin against God; it is a crime against humanity. Christians act as good citizens when they oppose abortion on demand and make their views known publicly and respectfully.

Christians should also support laws that defend the family, human life, marriage, private property, and so forth. For this is clearly taught in the Ten Commandments. Even those who do not accept the Ten Commandments know from their own conscience that the family, human life, marriage, and private property need to be protected. As citizens we do not appeal to the authority of the Bible. We appeal to that law which is written in everyone's heart.

When we submit to the government we make a public confession to the world. We take good citizenship seriously. We obey the laws of men. We do so, not because

we like the laws or even agree with them, but because this is how we want Christ's people to be seen. We are law-abiding. This promotes peace and harmony in this world.

Jesus was falsely accused of opposing the government of Rome. He taught submission to that government, even though it was both godless and corrupt. A corrupt government is better than no government at all. When the only law is the law of the jungle, or marital law is asserted, might makes right. This results in the weak at the mercy of the strong. Much history can be read on the martyrs who died at the hands of corrupt human governments. Many examples can be read today of Christians who live in environments and systems of government just like our Lord. Our own country, our own state, our own cities, are fraught with corruption in government positions.

We read each year in Lent and Holy Week how Jesus handled His life in a shady and warped governmental system. What did He do? When He was reviled. He did not revile in return. When Christians present themselves as good citizens, those who would slander Christianity are silenced. The freedom we Christians enjoy is not a freedom to do whatever we please. It is rather a spiritual freedom too precious to be confused with mere license.

Christ has set you eternally free. No human government can take this freedom away. Freedom means forgiven of all your sins. St. Paul writes, "***All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus***"² We are redeemed, that is, we are set free from sin on account of Christ offering His life for us. This is genuine freedom because it makes us free before God himself.

When the secular government commands us in matters of faith, or in matters against the Word of God, we can, and must, disobey, as there is only one source and norm for faith and life; however, when they serve as God's representatives and use their goods, their gifts, in purely secular matters, we are duty bound to obey.

² Romans 3:23-24

Whether it is a bad boss, or a bad government, they still bear responsibility for you. They will answer for their conduct or misconduct. It cannot be an excuse for you to misuse the position, and gifts, God has given you to use in service for His glory and the benefit of others. You live free, but do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil.

There is no such thing as a small work or a great work. There is faithful works and wicked works. Fellow sinner saints, brothers and sisters in Christ, you are in God's kingdom. You look not to the rudeness of others, you only look here – the cross. Here is His love poured out for you. Here the love of God is beheld for you. Here is justification done. Here is payment for your sin made. Here the one who abstained from every sin was crucified for you. Here all things are given for your eternal good. God Himself has bled and died, not for Himself, but for you. Through those blessed waters of baptism, through the hearing of His word, and through this very supper on this altar, you wonderfully can shout with joy – Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayer of the Church
Fourth Sunday of Easter (Jubilate)
12 May 2019

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. *Brief silence*

For the baptized children of God, that we would shout for joy to Him and sing the glory of His name in response to the awesome deeds He has done toward us in sending His Son to accomplish our eternal salvation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all pastors in Christ, that they would be diligent in their studies, faithful in their prayers, steadfast in their faith and compassionate toward the children of God they serve; and for an increase in the pastoral vocation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For our children and young people, that they would be brought up by faithful parents, receive a good education in the schools of our land and grow into fruitful maturity, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the vocation of motherhood, that mothers would love and care for their children, and that children would cherish and honor their mothers, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all those who have been entrusted with earthly authority, that they would be given the spirit of wisdom to rule according to Your will, so that justice and peace would flourish throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who suffer in this vale of tears, and for all those who have requested our prayers, [*especially Amber, Dennis, Larry, Philip, Greg, and those we name in our hearts,*] that they would be comforted with the sure and certain hope of life eternal through Christ, their Lord, knowing that a day is coming when no one will be able to take their joy from them, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the birth of *Oliva*, let us give thanks to the Lord; and that as she has been added to the earthly family, may she be added to God's heavenly family by the waters of Holy Baptism; for those who celebrate another year of earthly life, especially His servants *Emma, Amanda & Denise* that God would cause them to grow in wisdom and grace, and that they would be strengthened to trust in God's goodness all the days of their life; let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who have gone before us with the sign of faith and now rest in Jesus, let us give thanks to the Lord; that we would be enlivened by the Gospel and sustained in the one, true faith until our last hour comes, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**