

Can Followers of Christ Influence the Nation?



I believe that we are all in agreement with the observation that we live in a charged political environment these days. The question is can we followers of Christ do anything to influence the nation? Christians have tried, haven't they ... I can think of different organizations on both the left and the right throughout history that have all tried to use Christian or Biblical morality to influence political action. They have done so with mixed results.

We can go all the way back to things like the prohibition movement where some Christians tried to impose their view of things, which in that case was a disaster. But, much of the laws of this country also have, as their root, the Judeo-Christian ethic, which has been a blessing to many, many people. The Ten Commandments, especially 3 through 10, are foundational to so many of the laws of this nation. The Bible contains other clear teachings that we as Christians want to uphold, because many of the truths are not just a blessing to us, but to all.

Being salt and light in the world, as Jesus said in Matthew, chapter five; is to do our best to see that God's values are honored in our nation and in our communities. Respecting life, for instance, is a Biblical mandate and it has been a blessing to many, many, many people, even those who don't believe in Jesus.

Jesus also said **"My Kingdom is not of this world"** (John 18:36). That's where we need to make a very important point about the role of the Christian in our nation. On the one hand we respect and submit to the governing authorities, as the Apostle Paul talks about in Romans, chapter 13. Christians do need to be good citizens no matter where they are. On the other hand, we do need to obey God rather than men as Peter and the apostles declared in Acts, chapter 5-especially if the governing authorities are acting that's really the only way things can really change! I am so thankful for all the good folks at St. John congregation who walk with the Lord in their everyday life and put their efforts into our service organizations, putting the Gospel in to action through their service projects ... specifically the LWML, the Ladies' Aid, the Outreach Team to name a few.

At the same time, we're called to vote, to vote our conscience, as good citizens. God's people can be the greatest influence in the world-not just by joining the political fight, but by showing the blessing of being a new creation in Jesus. In all things; business, politics, whatever vocation...Christians seek to be a positive influence for all people. And that's always more than just making new laws.

contrary to God's clear Word. More and more we see government and the culture bringing pressure to bear on religious liberty. Therefore, we must engage through prayer, writing our congressional representatives, casting our votes.

However, there is a greater role for the Christian in the nation. That role is to be the bearer of all that transcends earthly kingdoms. Think about it. What stood out to the Roman officials when they encountered Jesus? And what about the followers of Jesus in the first-century Roman Empire; what made that impression on so many of those communities? We have accounts of Roman officials who came to Jesus in order for loved ones to be healed and they acknowledged Him as Lord; and the centurion at the crucifixion said, **"Surely, this was the Son of God."** People were moved and influenced, not because Jesus pushed legislation or constructed a political system to make a sinful world a little bit better; no, their lives were transformed because He brought God's power and grace through humility and service. Jesus brought the presence, the love of God, not with coercion. He was crucified, rose from the dead, and He did it for all people, even His captors and even His enemies.

After Jesus ascension, His disciples made a similar impression on people. People were amazed by the way the disciples proclaimed the Gospel, how they lived. Here is an excerpt from Acts, chapter two: ***"Awe came upon every soul.... And all who believed were together....they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God, sharing all things, having favor with all the people"*** (Acts 2:43-47 ESV). They did this stuff freely!

People saw this new life God gave through faith in Jesus and it made a positive impression. People loved each other because God was doing things to change people's lives. That's the way Christians can ultimately influence a nation. We are God's servants to bring the love of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and the certain hope of eternal life. That Gospel message and action breaks the chains of lovelessness and aimlessness. Laws can "force" people to do what is right ... but more powerful than even good laws, Jesus changes hearts. And those changed hearts want to give honor to God and walk in His ways.

That's the view from here.

Pastor Bill Winter