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**Politically Incorrect: #4**

*“What would Jesus do?”*

November 2, 2008

**1 Timothy 2:1-8**

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**Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8**

**1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.**

**8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. NIV**

*Today I have GOOD NEWS... the election season is almost over!!!!* For those of you who are like me and absolutely sick & tired of all the political posters... campaign commercials... the incessant, 24 hour news cycles that constantly bombard us with the campaign ... it is almost OVER! On Tuesday we can all go back to our normal lives... at least for maybe 6 months until it'll all crank back up again for the midterms two years away. AHHH!!!

*What may be even better... we come to the end of this sermon series on “Faith & Politics” this morning. I have tried to approach this subject very carefully. I can’t think of another sermon series that I have prayed over more, studied more for or thought through more carefully. I hope it has benefited and challenged you as it has me. I’ve tried to do a couple of things... To “break the ice” a bit when it comes to discussing politics in church. Its been something we’ve been hesitant to do... almost FEARFUL of it. I think we’ve allowed that fear to hold us back from being the salt & light to the world that Jesus called us to be. Secondly, I hope to have encouraged you to think about how your faith affects your politics. Whether you consider yourself Republican, Democrat or Independent... I hope I’ve challenged you to reflect on how you make the decisions you do. While the separation of church & state has been a good thing... I do NOT believe in the separation of Faith & Politics because I think our faith ought to be a part of EVERY area of our lives! I cannot separate my faith from my politics because it is the very essence of who I am!*

*Americans are going to go to the polls on Tuesday and make a decision as to who they want to be the next President... Some are going to make that decision based on personality... who they like the best or who sounds more like them. Some are going to make their decision based on party... their not sure about the candidates, but they’ve always voted a certain party and so that what they’ll do. Some are going to make their decision based on their pocketbook... who they think will help them build bigger barns for more stuff in the next four years. I hope that as Christians we will think more deeply than that... that our decisions will be based more on our principles... on the principles God... than on any of those things.*

*People are saying that this is the most important election in our lifetimes. I don’t know if that’s true or not... but it is certainly an historic one! We have the first African American candidate running as his party’s nominee... and we came close to having the first woman. This is a good thing! And if it goes one way... we’ll have the first African American President... if it goes the other we’ll have the first female Vice President! Either way the election goes, its going to make history. This is something (I think) we ought to celebrate. We’ve come a long way from women fighting for the right to vote and African Americans having to sit in the back of the bus! As a culture... we ought to celebrate these things! This is the first campaign in YEARS where neither candidate is either an incumbent President or Vice President. And with the issues our country is grappling with right now... and with the very different visions of the two candidates... of where they want to take our country... this election is no doubt an important one. We should not make our*

decision lightly... it behooves us to think carefully... reflectively... and maybe even to ask... **what do you think Jesus would do?**

*Would he involve himself in the political process at all? I'm reminded of a moment in the primaries when Mike Huckabee was asked about what he thought Jesus would do and he said, "Jesus was too smart to go into politics." I thought 'well said.'*

*To be sure Jesus didn't involve himself too much in the politics of his day and it wasn't because he didn't have the opportunity.. We know in that time that Judaism was divided with different 'parties' somewhat akin to political parties today. Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots... all had their different perspectives... all had their different issues and all vied for control and power. Nothing much ever changes, does it? Yet the Bible doesn't say anything about Jesus belonging to any particular 'party.' In fact, he is pretty harsh on just about all of them. And when they came to him to trap him in his words, to try to nail him down on an issue... he wouldn't allow himself to be drawn into their partisan bickering. He didn't play politics within his own religion... When it came to his government... to Rome, the Empire that ruled over the Jews... he didn't either. He could've very easily been 'political.' He was God... he could have overthrown Caesar and established his administration there on Earth. That's what many of his followers expected him to do. But he didn't. Instead of setting himself up on a throne... he set himself up on a cross and showed us just how different the kingdom of God is from the kingdoms of the world. Jesus showed us another way!*

*In that sense he was profoundly "political"... He wasn't Republican or Democrat... instead he offered us another way... an alternative to those kingdoms of the world! If there is ONE thing this election has taught me... and has been brought home to me through my study for these lessons... its that the Republicans don't have the answers. But neither do the Democrats. Nor do the Libertarians or the Greens! The REAL problems we face aren't so much 'political' but rather 'spiritual' and so I just want to go the way of Jesus! I just want to be a Christian. I don't want to be republican or democrat... I don't know what you should call me??? But I want to ask the question... **what would Jesus do?***

*So I'm not sure how involved Jesus would get in politics today... but I know ONE thing he would do... because its what he told US to do... and its found in the text we read earlier.*

***1 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.***

The number one responsibility of all Christians to our country & our leaders is NOT to vote... it is to PRAY! Its something we can ALL agree on... Republican or Democrat. Liberal or Conservative. Blue or Red... surely we can all agree that as Christians we must first & foremost kneel before the father and PRAY. As the civil war loomed and the nation was divided... what did President Lincoln do? He called the country to get down on its knees and PRAY. In fact he said, *"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."*

## **#1 Pray... and REQUEST God to give us the right leaders.**

*We shouldn't forget this election isn't just about the President... many new leaders are going to result... we want to ask God to give us the right ones. And we may not know who that right one ought to be... we've all got our opinions, but can we be humble enough to admit that maybe we don't always know what's best? Can we be humble enough to ask God to give us the RIGHT guy... even if we're wrong and it's not "our guy"? Not the one we would choose?*

*Does God care who our leaders are? I think so. I think Leadership is important to God. Its been said that the job of President is THE most important job in the world. I don't know if that's true or not, but it*

is certainly powerful. The decisions a president makes can affect an entire nation... even the world! But more than that... his influence and the power of his example... sets the tone for a nation. He is typically seen as a role model and as someone you want your kids to respect, to look up to. We want that person to be the right person!

*Throughout the OT we see God expected much from his nation's leaders. More often than not they failed miserably and the nation never rose above the quality of their leadership... in terms of principle & morality. And in the NT, much is said about the importance of leadership in the church... about Elders & Deacons... why? Its because God believes leadership to be important. Leadership matters. Good leadership can bless a nation and bad leadership will most certainly harm a nation... so let's pray for the right leaders.*

## **#2 Pray... INTERCEDE for God to bless our leaders.**

*We pray ... for God to give them wisdom, discernment and guidance as they make decisions that affect us... but we also pray for them personally and for their families. I cannot imagine the stresses and strain of being President. Constantly under the microscope. Everything you do and say is broadcast on the nightly news? Imagine the strain that puts on a family! I remember seeing pictures of Pres. Kennedy in the oval office with his children playing around him. It was a sweet picture, but just imagine how hard it must be on a President to be a good husband and father, grandfather. I remember hearing Pres. Bush talk about how the prayers of the nation lifted him in the days after 9/11... of how he felt them. They helped him keep on going in those tough days. Do you STILL pray for Pres. Bush? Will you pray for our new president... even if he isn't "your pick"?*

*This is what intercession is all about... its about going before our Father in Heaven on behalf of another person... be it a President, a preacher... or just a friend... and asking God to bless that person. For THAT reason... you may have more power than any president has ever had... because you have the ear of God! And look at the reason WHY we ought to pray for them....*

## **#3 Pray... for the SAKE of the Kingdom of God**

*When God blesses our leaders and our nation... it enables Christians to live **"peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."** We live in peace without fear of coming together for worship... without fear of going out and sharing the good news... without fear of expanding the Kingdom of God! The first century is the perfect example of this. As evil and powerful as Rome was at times... it HAD established an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. Known to history as the Pax Romana... the 'Peace of Rome' allowed for relative ease and safety in travel. And missionaries took full advantage of it... taking the gospel to the far reaches of the Empire within a generation! The church grew quicker and farther in those days than at any other time in history! We need to pray for the same kind of peace... NOT so Christians can sit back and take it easy (which is what most Christians in America have decided to do) but so that we can get busy about spreading the gospel! Everybody wants "peace in the Middle East"... but why? I think the reason to pray & work towards peace in the Middle East is NOT just to bring our boys home... but so that Christians can go back and take the gospel to them! Only the gospel of peace is going to bring lasting peace to that part of the world! So to pray for our leaders is to pray for the sake of the Kingdom of God... NOT our pocketbooks!*

## **#4 Pray... and THANK God for our leaders**

*Now, this is one that I forget most often. It is so easy to get cynical. With all of the constant criticizing, lampooning and making fun of our politicians... its easy to forget that we really need to be thankful for them! I tend to get a little cynical... questioning every politician's motives... take them for granted. We ought to remember that they really DO us a service. Government is here for a reason and I am thankful for it. I remember **Rom. 13** where Paul calls the authorities "servants of God". They give their full time to governing... and so we need to pay them the honor and respect that they are due. Occasionally I get invited to lead a prayer at a county commission meeting or city council and I always remind them that they are not only servants of the people, but also servants of God involved in his work. I am thankful to God for them. If I ever get to meet the President I'll tell him the same thing (or her... you never know:)*

*Regardless of your politics... the one thing I know we can all agree on is that Christians are called upon to PRAY! And that is just ANOTHER way that our faith affects our politics! We're going to have a special evening of devotion & prayer tonite... but before we close this morning let us offer this prayer...*

**A Prayer for our Leaders:**

*Father in Heaven we thank you for this great country and all of thee freedoms that it affords! We are truly blessed and we sometimes take these blessings for granted. Forgive us.*

*We pray today for our nation's leaders... those in leadership right now and those who are going to rise up and take their place in the days to come...*

- We pray that these leaders be the right leaders for this country at this time... with all of the uncertain circumstances surrounding us right now... we know how important having the right leaders is... and we confess to you that we don't know. If asked, we might all have different opinions... and so we ask you to bless this nation by giving us the right people.*
- We pray for each of them. We pray for George Bush.... And all of those in offices of leadership right now... for their wives and for their families. We cannot imagine how tough their jobs really are... the stresses & strains placed upon them and their families simply by living in the spotlight of a nation. Not to mention the burden of the decisions that they make. Bless their marriages. Bless their children. We pray for John McCain and for Barack Obama... One of these men is going to be chosen to lead our country into the next four years and we pray your blessings over these men and their families.... That WHATEVER happens in this election... you will bless them.*
- We pray for the kingdom of God to go forth... we pray for greater opportunity world-wide to spread the gospel. We pray for Christians to get off their pews in America and take full advantage of the freedoms we have by sharing the gospel with those in our own neighborhoods! We pray for this church... that we would be salt & light to Lincoln County.*
- And we thank you for blessing us with the men & women in our world who do give their full time to governing. Regardless of their politics... we thank you for their service.*

*And again we thank you, God, that no matter how this or any other election turns out... you will still be our God... Jesus will forever be our Savior and your Kingdom will always prevail!*

*Amen*