

Sermon: DIY - Insert Love into Politics**Scripture: Mark 12:28-34****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: Nov 2, 2024**

We are an in-between people, walking upright flesh of the earth with our heads in the air of the heavens, somewhere between never having existed at all and existing forever, somewhere between the start of life and the end of it, we are an in-between people.

We know more and more of many things but we do not know even a fraction of all there is to know. We are somewhere in the in-between of history, it having begun way back when and ending sometime in the hopefully-not-too-near future. As a people of Christian faith, taking the Apostle Paul's lead we speak of an "already but not yet" reality of the coming of God's Kingdom, in the person of Jesus Christ the Kingdom has come already but it's not quite yet realized.

We say there was the beginning of it all, however we conceive of that beginning to have happened, there is the final culmination, the climax of it all and there is the in-between that we are in the midst of, believing that it is a journey going somewhere or if we sometimes wonder or sometimes doubt, we rely on the proclamation of our faith that it's all going somewhere. And in the midst of this in-between there was at one point in time, a fulcrum point you might say, on which everything else, the past, the future, hinged and that was the Christ-Event - the birth, life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now, what we are doing is living in the aftermath of that cosmic hinge event, working out of its implications towards its glorious conclusion. It's a

mystery when it all ends and where it all ends and what that looks like, a mystery to us and maybe to God Godself if we are truly Co-Creators with God of what is to come. So then the key question of this in-between time is can we live faithfully into what has been revealed by Jesus? Can we continue to en flesh his way, his truth, his life and resist the temptation to think we need to figure this out on our own and save this world all on our own and come up with answers all on our own, cause the answer has been given and it's about how love - not force, domination, violence, exclusion, but how love - saves the world. Love created the world, love sustains the world, love saves the world, love consummates the world. What is the greatest commandment asks the religious leader whose head spins with all the laws and regulations, the dos and donts, the shoulds and shouldnts, Jesus responds "love". Love God. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. The man was trying so hard to get it right, to do this and to do that, and Jesus says "it's not about getting it right it's about loving. God loves you, love God. You need love so does everyone else to survive this crazy world, love others, especially when you least feel like it cause it's easy to love others when they love you and to have a love-fest, but I tell you that you must love when there's a love-famine and no one wants to love anyone else, especially not him, especially not them." Then this lovely light little commandment to love gets teeth and muscle.

Thankfully WE'RE not in a love-famine these days. It's all love for us in our country tis of thee! Right? If only there was an opportunity sometime coming up to practice love where there was none? Hmmm....

Well, there is the election and there's our side and there's the other side. So how do you insert love into a love-starved situation like this? How do you insert love into politics? Well, FIRST of all, you could say you VOTE

and here's how you vote - you vote for candidates and measures that best approximate the directions and purposes of love. And as much as we might like to believe otherwise, both sides of the political aisle have arguments for that, for what is best and optimizes love. From a Christian perspective what we can't vote for is simply and merely what's good for us and to hell with the others, that's not available to us.

SECONDLY, from a Christian perspective we've gotta take into account what the Gospel of Matthew referred to as the "least of those among us", the vulnerable, the outcasts, the marginalized, the voiceless. Love tends to those, others tend to dismiss. To further privilege the privileged by our vote is not on the table if we are to be faithful to Jesus' way and truth.

Thirdly, Christians can't use violence, forceful domination of the other to insist on our way, we've only got to witness to our way. This is the great problem across the centuries, cause Christians have done just this, gotten the power of the state on its side and then acted very un-Christ-like towards those different from themselves be they Muslims or Jews or Protestant against Catholics or what have you. And there are many of those in our country right here and right now who want to nationalize Christianity in our country formally and officially, once again aligning state-craft to this religion and that has been proven to be the worst of ideas, so antithetical to Jesus' love-ethic and the way he embodied the love-force. So if things don't go our way on Tuesday, violence can never be our response or our answer - January 6th and the storming of the capital, with crosses and images of Jesus to boot, was an anti-Christian uprising, as were the assassination attempts on former President Trump. Violence and domination of the enemy-other is not an option open to us.

Which can seem not very convenient when there is so much at stake. But it is absolutely necessary when there is so much at stake.

And FOURTHLY and finally, how do you insert love into a love-starved situation like this? You humbly practice the principles of God's Kingdom in your everyday encounters. You set tables like this one where republicans and democrats are welcome, where racists and anti-racists are welcome, where people who are pro-choice and people who are pro-life are welcome. And you take the small actions and do the small practices that as best as you can figure advance the purposes of love - open the doors of your home to a refuge, serve and meal at the dwelling place, do something generous in a personal relationship that is strained and tense, stick up for someone who is being mistreated even at a cost to yourself, and pray. By all means don't forget to pray, don't underestimate the power to improve things, to change others' hearts and your own heart through prayer.

And I'll end there though I'm sure we could together come up with many more ways to insert love in a love-famine. I'll end there on prayer because that's what we should all hear on this Sunday before election day with tensions rising, fear on all sides mounting, that God has got this (I should have entitled my sermon not DIY - Do it Yourself, but GWDI - God will do it). Right? God's got this. We do believe that, don't we? There is nothing ultimate about electing one candidate or the other. Across the ages rulers come and rulers go and empires rise and empires fall, and in each age the people mistakenly believe their own situation is ultimate and it never is. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't care or be involved and work to insert love ourselves, but remembering that this is not ultimate is important, for ultimately God's got this, God's got us and God's love for the world will prevail. Amen.