

Friday — I Still Disagree!

Yesterday I had us thinking about those times when we can and must disagree with our government and leaders. How and when and under what circumstances we do that is not completely cut and dry. As with so much of our life of faith and following Jesus in this broken world, we're left to struggle a bit with challenges that come our way in the gray areas of life. In Acts 5:29, what was the basis for the disciples' decision to not obey the government? It was on the basis of God's Word. Read Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6, and 2 Timothy 3:14-17. What do these Scripture passages have to say to us when it comes to God's Word? The primary purpose of Scripture is to point us to Jesus as our Savior. In the shadow of that central doctrine of what we call justification, is the fact that Scripture is also useful for us in many other ways as it gives direction to our living out this faith we've been given. The invitation, actually even stronger, the direction we've been given has been to lean on the Lord, to look to Him for all things and to trust in Him. When it comes to issues that we face in regard to our government and leaders, we need to regularly, constantly be looking to God's Word to guide us in understanding how we are to live this life, letting Jesus light and love shine through us in every way. As we face this year's election and various ballot issues, we need to lean on the Lord, look to His Word, and pray for His guidance. And as we do, He calls us back to Himself to remind us who is the true Ruler of this world and our Lord and Savior. Pray for yourself and for God's Word to fill your mind and give you the guidance you seek.

Saturday – Trusting God

It's important that we don't lose sight of our central purpose in being here in this world, in who we are as Christians and in who we are as God's Church. These are important issues and tensions that we need to discuss and understand, but always within the context of God's love and grace for us. Read Numbers 14:17-19. A beautiful reminder is given to us of who our God is – a loving, compassionate, gracious, and forgiving God, and yet a God who is just and fair and recognizes the need to punish those who do wrong. As New Testament people, we know that the Father's love and compassion is shown most clearly in the person of His Son Jesus. It is through Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead that we realize the fullness of His love, the completeness of the forgiveness which He gives us, and the hope we have for life in His name. In the face of the decision and indecision in this election year and with the issues and candidates that we are looking at, remember who it is that has come to bring real hope to our lives. Jesus saves us – not the government, not reforms, not changes, not candidates, not platforms. Jesus. Trust Him to do just what He said He would. He's here for you and for me. He's here to shine His light into our hearts so that we in turn would let it shine in our world for all to see. Give thanks today for that gift of His love in you.

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

4650 Sunview Drive, Loveland, Colorado 80538

970-667-4506 ~ www.immanuelloveland.org

This weeks Bring it Home devotions were written by Pastor Glen Schlecht. This publication may be reproduced and shared.



What Now?

1. As you experience the fireworks this week, let each explosion of color remind you of the true freedom that comes from Christ. Let "one nation, under God" remind you of another allegiance that we pledge. Throughout this week remind yourself of the blessing of freedom, of being claimed in the waters of baptism as a child of God, of the love Jesus has shown and continues to show to you, and that in Him you are free to live and enjoy life to its absolute fullest!
2. Consider memorizing (or re-memorizing) Luther's explanation to the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

If you would like to receive daily Bring It Home devotions by email, please contact the church office: churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org

Monday — Freedom

In worship on Sunday, we continued our I Believe summer series, looking at the 2nd Article of the Apostles' Creed, that large and significant statement about our belief in Jesus. In the United States, Independence Day is a significant holiday and what can be a challenge for us as Christians is making sure that our allegiances are in the correct order – God *then* country. As we celebrate our independence this week, I invite you to reflect a bit more in today's devotion about those freedoms we enjoy. Take a look at Romans 13:1-7, a part of Paul's letter where he helps us to consider the place of government in our lives as believers. As citizens of this country, we have a responsibility to live out our faith and to see God, even in the realm of our government and governing leaders. The men and women who serve under our Commander and Chief in the various branches of the armed forces both at present and in years past, serve to protect and preserve our freedoms. Take a moment and think about what freedoms you most appreciate in your life here in these United States. The blessings we enjoy are certainly not "rights" we have either as citizens of this country or as believers in Jesus. The blessings we enjoy have come to us as gifts from the hand of our gracious God. The blood spilled by men and women who sacrificed in times of war and even in times of peace is blood that, through the vehicle of our government, has brought to us the blessing of the freedoms we've defined in our Constitution, which we value as a country. While these freedoms are not guaranteed, we know as believers in Jesus what freedoms are guaranteed! Freedoms that can never be taken away include the forgiveness, the grace, and life we know as we live daily in our faith and as we find our identity, purpose, and meaning in Jesus Christ. Today, take time to offer a prayer of thanks for those who have served and for those who are currently serving in our armed forces for the sacrifices they make so that we can enjoy the freedoms and blessings we do here in our country.

Tuesday — Independence Day

Today will be filled with parades and fireworks. Red, white and blue will dominate the landscape. We will remember the sacrifices of so many, and give thanks for freedom and its privileges. We'll honor those who preserve and protect, and sing patriotic songs. We'll salute the flag and pledge our allegiance. While July 4th is not a religious holiday, it does beg us to consider what real freedom looks like. Read Galatians 5:13. Real freedom is bought at a price. Real freedom is a gift, and it sets us free to live in a new way. When Jesus died on the cross, God was showing us how much we are loved. That deserves fireworks! It demands that we stop and remember. That is why we sing our songs of praise to God. Let each explosion of color tonight remind you of the true freedom that comes from Christ. Let "one nation, under God" remind you of another allegiance that we pledge. Throughout this day remind yourself of the blessing of freedom, of being claimed in the waters of baptism as a child of God, of the love Jesus has shown and continues to show to you, and that in Him you are free to live and enjoy life to its absolute fullest! And enjoy a safe and blessed 4th of July celebration!

Wednesday — Government as Gift

St. Paul in Romans 13 makes a very strong case for government and the rightful and important place it has in our society. Read Romans 13:1-7 and as you read, hear it from the perspective of what it is saying to you personally and your responsibilities as a Christian citizen. First and foremost, government is a gift, isn't it? We don't often think of government in this way but it is something that the Lord has given to us for our safety and protection. God is the one who has given government and the elected leaders their authority, whether or not they recognize that. As it says in verse 4, the government is God's servant to do us good. Does that always happen? Is what the government does always good? No. And so it is in the brokenness and sinfulness of our world. Must we still honor and respect our government and leaders? Yes. It can be easy to lose the big picture of the good that the gift of our government does for us. Think of the majority of our laws, the first responders, our police officers, our firefighters and all those who serve in the armed forces. Without these in place, our lives would be chaos, scary, dangerous, and unpredictable. Certainly there are areas of our civic life that we struggle with and decisions that cause us to raise an eyebrow or even get angry. But today, as we look at these words from Romans 13, I urge you to give thanks – looking at the bigger picture and the wider spectrum on which we live and operate – for the gift that government is for us and the safety it affords, and the blessings we enjoy in our country. Offer a prayer of thanks for the gifts we enjoy and lift up our governing officials to the Lord.

Thursday — I Disagree

Read Acts 5:27-32. Are there times when we can and should as Christians disagree with our government and elected leaders? This section in Acts speaks pretty clearly to that question and answers it with a resounding yes! What is the criteria for making a decision or determination like that? God's Word is where we must come back to time and again. Martin Luther, as he struggled with this back in the 1500s, tied in our conscience as well, as our conscience is informed by Scripture. So can we withhold taxes, honor, respect, etc., from our government willy-nilly, whenever I feel like I disagree with something? By my wording I think you can probably sense that the answer to this is no. Throughout the New Testament we hear about Jesus and His followers interacting with the government and while there were plenty of disagreements, there are only a few times when we find the "in the face" approach of saying that we're not going to obey the government in this case. This is not a matter to be taken lightly. There are times when we obey, even while disagreeing, and perhaps even working through the appropriate channels to try to make changes. We heard such a statement of strong disagreement made by our church body's president with regard to the new health care reform. We continue to hear this with regard to life issues that we face, which is at the heart of the problem we have as a church body with the health care act. Are there others? Without a doubt. Are those disagreements uniform among all Christians across the world. Not necessarily. More tomorrow on this but for today, pray again for our government to be wise in its decision-making and that those decisions align regularly with God's Word and His desires for us.