

Broken World, Broken Politics

On Sunday we continued exploring the consequences of the Fall of humanity, focusing on how human brokenness affects politics – and how we should respond to that brokenness.

1. Warm-up question: Who is your favorite political leader of all time?
2. Sunday's sermon was triggered by a note from a congregant to Pastor Jeff saying: "I find myself in a struggle – I know that hating the hater isn't going to help anything, but I am so disappointed in mankind right now. . . . I can't even look or listen to [the President]. I've prayed, I've talked, I've listened. I feel like God is sad and I can't seem to find a direction to go, or the peace to stay. That need not sound so dire – just my little brain trying to figure out how to help and positively channel my energies." Bearing in mind that we are a diverse congregation, and being respectful of others who may differ, how do you feel about the current state of politics in our nation? If you had to pick one word to describe your feelings, what would it be?
3. The stories told early in the book of Genesis are meant to illustrate the impact of the Fall of humanity. One of those stories focuses on the impact on government and politics. Read Genesis 11:1-9.
 - a. This story is rather enigmatic. At first blush, it seems hopeful because it depicts all of humanity working together under a unified government. The potential for good boggles the mind. If you had been present in Babel at that time, what are some of the visionary initiatives you would have wanted to see your government and its people undertake?
 - b. Instead of rallying the people of Babel to work together for the common good (feeding the hungry, helping the sick, housing the homeless, etc.), the powers-that-be in Babel rallied the people to build "a tower with its top in the heavens" so as to "make a name for ourselves." Why do you think the political leaders chose that as their great initiative? What may have been their motives?
 - c. Jeff said, "United people, led by good leaders, can do great good. But there's another side to that coin. United people, led by bad leaders, can do great harm." Imagine if in the whole world had been unified in the 1940s into one nation under Adolf Hitler. How might history have been different? And what might the consequences be, even to this day?
 - d. One of the themes of Genesis 11 seems to be that, given our human brokenness, it's better to have many nations with many different languages to create a system of checks and balances that prevents any one nation from gathering too much power and going bad. What do you think of that premise?
 - e. Jeff cited our experience with internet platforms like Twitter as a modern example of the Tower-of-Babel phenomenon. When Evan Williams and others invented

Twitter, they had high hopes. Williams said, “I once thought that when everybody could speak freely and exchange information and ideas, the world would automatically be a better place. I was wrong. I think the internet is broken.” Do you think the internet is broken? Why or why not? And how should that affect how we, as individuals, behave on the internet?

4. Our spiritual ancestors in the Bible often had to live under, and deal with, broken political systems. From their experience, we can draw valuable lessons for how to respond in our era. Jeff highlighted three core concepts he feels captures the biblical strategy for responding to broken politics. **Step 1 – Choose to have an attitude of Hopeful Endurance.**
 - a. Read James 1:2-4. This passage implies that an attitude of joyful/hopeful endurance is the ultimate mark of a spiritually mature person. Why is hopeful endurance so important – in our personal lives and in times of political upheaval?
 - b. In “The Hunger Games,” President Snow says, “Hope . . . is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective. But a lot of hope is dangerous. . . . So contain it.” Why is a lot of hope so subversive?
5. **Step 2 – Hopeful endurance leads to Patient Prophetic Action.** In both the Old and New Testaments, people of faith who are filled with enduring hope are inevitably inspired to keep doing things that will move them toward deliverance – one simple act at a time, patiently, painstakingly, joyfully! Do, don’t stew!
 - a. Read Deuteronomy 22:1-4. What is the core principle here, and how does it apply to matters of justice and politics? Give some examples.
 - b. Instead of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of what needs to be done, we should patiently do simple things to make our political environment better and more just. Let’s brainstorm together. What are some things we can do? What do you personally feel called to do?
 - c. Are you registered and ready to vote on November 6?
6. **Step 3 – Transformational Kindness.** Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” Matthew 5:44. Dr. King said, “Hate cannot overcome hate. Only love can do that.” King, Mandela, Gandhi, Lincoln, Ginsburg and (most importantly) Jesus all showed gracious kindness toward their opponents – and they all prevailed!
 - a. Jeff said that loving our political enemy is the opposite of weakness. Why is that? Why is loving our enemy such an act of power?
 - b. In a recent documentary called “The Notorious RBG,” Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg talks about her deep, warm friendship with Antonin Scalia, the most conservative judge on the Supreme Court before he died. How does their friendship make you feel? Do you think we should imitate Ginsburg? On a practical level, what does that look like for us?