

What Now?

Last Sunday we explored three spiritual principles that might help ground us and guide us after last week's contentious election came to a close. As we dig deeper tonight, let's be careful to discuss all this in a way that's respectful of our potential differences.

1. Warm-up Question: How was your voting experience this year? What word best captures how you feel about last week's election?
2. Joe Biden received more votes than any candidate in American history. Donald Trump received the second most votes in American history. Altogether, more people voted on November 3rd than ever before. Why do you think that is?
3. Democrats won the presidency and retained narrow control of the House. Republicans appear likely to retain control of the Senate, depending on what happens in Georgia. It was a split decision, leaving us with divided government. Is that a good or bad thing?
4. Malachi 4:2 predicted that the Messiah would "rise with healing in the fringes [of his garment]." Jesus came to us as a healer, and he expects us to be the same. He commanded his disciples to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out the demons. Freely you have received, freely give." Matthew 10:8. From these passages we get our first spiritual principle for times like these: **As followers of Jesus, we're supposed to be passionate healers.** This principle applies not just to the healing of individuals, but also to groups of people and our nation.
 - a. Margaret Mead said the first sign of human civilization was a thighbone recovered from the ground that had been broken then healed. Why do you think she made this choice? What do you think she meant?
 - b. Jeff shared a short list of areas where he is passionate for healing in our nation. What's at the top of your list of things you're passionate about seeing healed in our nation?
 - c. Galatians 4:18 says, "It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing. . . ." In other words, it's good to be passionate! On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your personal passion for political progress? Do you believe political action is a core part of our discipleship?
5. When we're passionate about politics, it's easy to get aggravated and lash out at our political opponents. There's something odd, though, about seeking to create political healing by being a political slasher. There must be a better way. For guidance, we looked to how Jesus interacted with his primary religious and political opponents, the Pharisees. The Pharisees were into elitism in religion and politics, whereas Jesus was into egalitarianism. For an example of how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees, read Luke 7:36-50.

- a. If the Pharisees were the political and religious antithesis of what Jesus stood for, why do you think he agreed to have dinner with Simon the Pharisee?
 - b. Not long ago, George W. Bush invited Ellen DeGeneres to be his guest in his skybox at a Houston Astros baseball game. Ellen accepted, but was then harshly criticized for being a sell-out for socializing with Bush. If you were in her position, what would you have done – and why?
 - c. Simon was outraged that Jesus welcomed a woman they regarded as a “sinner” and said it to her face. Simon’s response no doubt appalled Jesus. Jeff invited us to imagine Jesus responding to Simon by saying, “You jerk, you idiot, you heartless pig. How can you call yourself a son of Abraham?” Can you imagine Jesus saying something like that? Why or why not?
 - d. Instead of “going off” on Simon, Jesus said, “Simon, I have something to say to you,” then paused, awaiting Simon’s permission to say what was on his heart. What can we learn from that? Why was this such a shrewd move on Jesus’ part?
 - e. In an effort to persuade Simon, Jesus tells him a story and asks him questions. What can we learn from that? Why was this such a shrewd move?
 - f. From all the foregoing, we drew a second principle: **Like Jesus, we should dare to engage our political opponents passionately, humbly, and respectfully.** Do you think it’s ever appropriate to call our opponents names, make fun of them, use harsh words, or be snarky toward them? If so, when?
 - g. Galatians 5:15 says, “If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.” Jeff challenged us as a church family to do a better job of how we interact with people in our congregation about our political differences, especially online. How good or bad do you think our congregation does when addressing politics online?
6. The painstaking process of persuading our political opponents sounds exhausting – and often it is – which brings us to our last principle: **Creating change is really hard and requires great endurance.** Cheetahs can pursue their prey at 70 miles per hour, but quickly tire because they have small hearts. We often pursue political change like cheetahs; we want it to be quick and easy. When it’s not, we get discouraged.
- a. Suppose God gave you a vision of the future and you realized it will take another 50 years to root out racism in America. Would you still passionately throw yourself into the struggle against racism now? Why or why not?
 - b. Suppose, for example, divided government means that only modest police reform can be accomplished in the next few years. Would you want legislators to come together to enact that modest reform? Why or why not?
 - c. Being as honest as you can, are you at risk of becoming discouraged and giving up on politics?