

Victory of the Lamb
October 25, 2020
Sermon series: United: In Jesus we trust
Sermon: United in Christ

When you see a political ad on TV, how do you respond? Do you quickly mute the sound or change the channel? Or do listen in with clenched fists? Why do you do think we have such strong reactions to politics this year? Those political ads play on our emotion. They tell us how much we could lose if our candidate is not elected. They tell us how much we would gain, if only our candidate was elected. And so, for most of us, we are filled with fear, anxiety, and anger when it comes to the election. I do believe a lot is at stake in this election. And no matter who wins, our world is going to look different. But here is the good news: The election doesn't need to make or break you.

We are starting a new series called **United: In Jesus We Trust**. We called this series "United" because we live in the United States of America. But we are hoping that, through this series, you will see that Christians we have a much deeper and richer unity. And in this country, we say, "In God we trust." But as Christians, we have a much more focused faith. We don't just trust in some undefined deity. We trust in Jesus Christ.

Here is the statement I want to defend with God's Word: **Why doesn't this election need to make or break you?**

To answer that question, we are going to the opening section of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul is a prolific Christian ministry, who wrote 13 of the 27 books of the NT. He is writing this letter from prison. He is in prison because of the Roman Empire and their attacks on Christians. But Paul doesn't seem to be anxious or afraid. In fact, he opens this letter with the theologically rich song of praise.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Paul praises God for the spiritual blessings that he has in Jesus Christ. You see, Rome could stop him from traveling and preaching. Rome could throw into prison. But no matter what the Roman government did, there were some things that Paul could not lose.

Politicians today are warning us that if we don't vote for their candidate, we will lose somethings. I'm not sure what you are concerned with losing. And guess what? You and I might lose somethings because of the election. But Paul says that he will keep praising God because we are still blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. And no presidential candidate can touch what we have in Christ.

Paul goes on to name the blessings we have in Christ that are untouchable: **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.** Paul says that before we choose our next president, God chose us. In fact, God chose us before the creation of the world. He says that we were chosen *in him*, that is, in Christ. Because of Christ, we will stand before God holy and blameless.

One of the hardest parts of the political process for me, is how hard everyone tries to dig up dirt on the other candidate. Each candidate scours their opponent and their family for all the sin they can find. Then they spend big money publicizing the sins of their opponent.

Just think if each of us went through that process. If millions of dollars was spent to investigate everything you have ever done and everything your family has ever done. Well, God knows what we've done and what we will do. But instead of rejecting us he chose us. And on the last Day, we will be covered the holiness and perfect of Jesus so that we can stand for God as if we had a perfect record. How could that possibly be? It's all because of what Jesus did for us. There is nothing that will happen in the election to take that away from us.

Next Paul says, **In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.** God predestined us. That means he had a plan that he put in motion to adopt us into his family because of the work of Jesus. Paul said that God was pleased to do this. God wanted us in his family.

Sometimes I wonder if God has had enough of me. That he is just exhausted and sick of my failings. But Paul says that God wanted to adopt us. Once you're in the family, you're in. The only way to get out of the family is to run away.

We are in God's family because of Jesus and there is nothing that will happen in these next few weeks that can take that from us.

Finally, Paul says, **⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us.** We have been redeemed. That means Jesus bought our freedom from the slavery of sin. And what did he use to pay for our freedom? His own blood. God doesn't just put up with us. He forgives us and gives us the riches of his grace that he lavishes.

I remember what I was little my uncle Harvey taught me how to butter banana bread. He lavished the butter on both sides and on the edges, just leaving a little room for your fingers. That's how God has lavished his love and grace on us. And nothing that will happen in the next few weeks can take away God's love and forgiveness.

Remember: **Why doesn't this election need to make or break you?**

Because **In Christ, you have nothing to lose.**

The stuff that really matters: God's gift of holiness and adoption and redemption are spiritual gifts that can't be taxed or fined. There is nothing that the next candidate could do to take from you what really mattered.

Paul goes on to explain what we gain in Christ. Presidential candidates all make promises to create jobs and lower taxes and usher in an era of peace and prosperity. And some presidents have been able to deliver on their promises better than others. But all the presidents have come up short. But that is what makes Jesus different.

Look at what God promises to do in Jesus Christ: **. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ...** God has revealed to us his plan that is mystery. That means if he didn't tell us his plan we wouldn't be able to figure it out on our own. This plan he is going to carry out through Jesus Christ.

When is he going to carry out this plan? ¹⁰ **to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment**— ... On the Last Day, God is going to completely fulfill this plan.

So, what is Jesus aiming to do? What is his big plan for his creation? **to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.** We are called “The United States of America” and that is not only the name of our country but our mission. The founders so the division in Europe that led to endless bloodshed. When they started this country they got a do-over, a chance to try something different. They understood that his country would never be perfect because the founders believed that people were by nature sinful. So thankfully they put term limits for the presidency and checks and balances built into the three branches of government. And they made sure we had a country run by the people and not by a king. And we have tried to be united as a country. And there has been times in our history when we are more united than others.

But what we have never been able to fully accomplish, Jesus will fulfill on the Last Day. Paul says that he is leading this world towards unity. And when he returns, he is going to unify ALL THINGS. Our bodies will be resurrected and unified with our souls. Heaven is going to come down. And Heaven and Earth will be unified. He is going to unify his church that his made up of humans from every tribe, language, nation and people. And most importantly, God will come down again and walk among his people. We will be unified with God.

I know that the candidates say that if we would just follow them, then we would have everything to gain. But even the best of presidents can't always deliver on all their promises. But Jesus is different. If you believe in him, if you follow him, you will one day be united with him and all of his people throughout the world.

In other words, **Why doesn't this election need to make or break you?**

Because **In Christ, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.**

So what should we do now? If we have nothing to lose and everything to gain in Jesus, what should we do today?

Paul tells us what he is doing: ¹⁵ **For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people,** ¹⁶ **I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.** ¹⁷ **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.**

What is Paul doing? He is praying. And what is he praying for? Is he praying to be released from prison? Is he praying that they get a kinder Caesar who will be a better leader? No. He prays that he congregation would know Jesus better.

He goes on to explain what he means by that: **I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,** ¹⁹ **and his incomparably great power for us who believe.**

Paul prays that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened. That is an interesting picture. He wants us to see spiritual realities with our heart. We can see all sorts of stuff with our eyes. We can see the Twitter wars going on over politics. We can see videos of social and political unrest. We can see the mess of our

world. But Paul wants us to look with the eyes of our hearts to see two things: *Hope* and *power*. Paul prays that we see God's hope and power. But what is our hope? And what is our power?

Paul goes on to explain: **That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he **raised Christ from the dead** and **seated him** at his **right hand** in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.**

Our hope is in the resurrected Savior. And we have access to power because Jesus ascended into heaven and is now seated in a place of power over all the rulers and powers and above every name. Paul prays that we would see that Jesus defeated sin and death and now sits in charge over all countries and kingdoms and presidents and rulers. He is the king of kings and president of presidents.

²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be **head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

Paul prays that we would see that all things are under Jesus' feet and he is the leader over everything. That means no matter who is elected, he will have to answer to the Lord. Whether they understand or believe it or not. President Trump is reelected, he will have to answer to King Jesus. If former Vice-president Joe Biden is elected, he will have to answer to King Jesus. King Jesus sits over all and is ruling over all for the good of his church.

But we can often forget this. So Paul prays for us. And we need to pray for ourselves and for others. So here is the practice that we are going to follow this week. Our Life Groups that are gathering are going to practice this. And I hope we all practice this:

Pray that we believe that Jesus reigns.

The prayer could go something like this. Every morning before you do anything else you could pray: *Lord, today, politicians and leaders will tell me stories that might trouble me, making me feel anxious, angry, or afraid. Open the eyes of my heart to see and believe that you are still king over all kingdoms and ruler over all rulers. And you will use all things for the good of your Church. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

We have a couple more weeks leading up the election. Some of you are really going to dive in to all the reports and stories. Some of you are going to take a break. But no matter how involved you are in the process, I hope you see that this election can't rob you of what really matters. In Christ, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. We all are concerned in our own way about what might happen this year. And that's why we pray that God would lift our eyes to look beyond the election to see Jesus seated in a place of power far above every politician. Amen.