



First Principles Project

American Awakening | National Association of Evangelicals | Christianity Today

Sermon Outlines

PART 2. Citizens of Our Country

SERMON OUTLINE:

1. *We are not agents of love and reconciliation, voices of reason and grace, known for charity and vision, among our neighbors in the public square.*

Are conservative or progressive Christians demonstrating more humility, grace, and truth, in the public square than our non-Christian counterparts? Are we known for bringing love and generosity into the public discussion? Even if we disagree with the policies we support, is the world so struck by the Christ-like nature of our public witness that they desire to learn more about Jesus?

If we are honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that the answer is no, and the same division runs straight through the heart of the church. Christians are no different than the rest of Americans — we feel like we are not understood, and are expressing animosity and suspicion toward those on the other side of the aisle.

2. *Government and Politics are ordained by God.*

In his letter to Christians living in Rome, the capital city of a pagan empire, the Apostle Paul tells us that government is a good idea, and a part of God's plan for human flourishing. He is NOT saying that God approves of every ruler or regime; simply that government exists to preserve order and promote the common good.

3. *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [people] are created equal..."*

For the first time in human history, the concept that we "all are created equal" was articulated in a governing document — an ideal our founders in ways stood condemned and fell short of from day 1, but also marked different from everything that had come before it. This revolutionary concept came from our anchoring Christian tradition and principles:

- That we are all made in God's image;
- And that our neighbors are to be loved as ourselves — no matter the people category, skin color, ethnicity, or political commitment.

This supposed anchoring principle was set against the real lived experience of women, slaves, Native Americans, and others who were entirely excluded by these promises of the Declaration. On the one hand, in the Declaration we had the greatest governing aspiration ever articulated. On the other, we had the on-the-ground realities or harsh and barbarous inequality.



4. *“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion ... Avarice, ambition, revenge ... Would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net.”*

In this well-known statement from John Adam (another of our insightful but complicated founders), the American social compact comes with a huge responsibility to act with what are effectively Christian principles in our interaction together. Without people of love, grace and truth, the entire American democratic experiment would unravel.

Therefore, what group of people should we have the greatest expectation and highest hopes of acting with these principles? Why not the Church?

5. *The Great Disruption of 2020.*

Since Clayton Christensen introduced the theory of “disruptive innovation” in 1997, the concepts of “innovation” and “disruption” have gone hand-in-hand, at least in the business and management world.

The founders faced their Disruptive moment with innovation in governing, more aligned with Christian principles, and our principles of freedom, than governments that had preceded it. And Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Frederick Douglass, and President Lincoln faced their disruptions with innovations to greater align us with those same principles of freedom.

How do we, the Church, innovate in this Great Disruption, to get us more aligned with the principles for the God of the universe, to speak freedom to our burdened land?

6. *Living free from fear, and obedient to our Lord’s command to “love our neighbor as ourselves”.*

For all of us, there is fear — fear of the unknown. We declare that while this is natural and human and understandable, this is a device of our spiritual adversary, and it is to be rejected. The world will prey on our fear, but our Lord told us time, and time again — Fear not!

The love of God — the defining dimension of who we are as people of faith — casts out fear, and is the transformative power that can be channeled through the church to heal our country.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES:

Romans 13:1-7

1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring



punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Luke 4:18

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free