



Dear Family at Christ Community,

This has been a tumultuous year politically and socially, and many of us have been deeply affected and wearied by various political and social concerns. The stakes are high, and clear information is scarce. All sides seem to be promoting and protecting themselves at various levels. Such can cause anxiety and anger both within our church and without in the world. This threatens to rend the unity of the Church and tarnish our witness in the world that Christ died to make possible. In addition, such disunity deprives us of key protections offered by the means of grace in Christ. Therefore, the goal of this letter and the associated sermon to be preached on Sunday, 2/28 is to help us recognize and establish some of the Biblical banks of the river for wise political engagement and thought.

While not exhaustive, this material will, I hope, facilitate more fruitful political and social discussions. These conversations will require further nuances as we seek to humbly apply the governing principles to various situations while simultaneously growing in our wise listening and speech in the process. Some practical applications of these Biblical banks of the river will be addressed in subsequent letters. In addition, future congregational opportunities will include discussion and application of these principles as we strive for wise political thought and engagement for God's glory and the life of the world.

¹¹ For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹² "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

Isaiah 8:11-15

The first governing principle is that **God is both sovereign and good**. **Isaiah 8:11-15** exemplifies this principle. Judah's political situation compares to ours today, for its people had been blessed with many productive, peaceful years that they hoped would continue. However, challenges arose from both within and without, and these challenges led to irritability with one another and to reactionary political views and decisions. God calls Isaiah to speak into this whirlwind of conspiracies and fears with a clear word on His sovereignty and goodness. His people were not to engage in foolish conspiracy theories or predictions based on perceived earthly circumstances while ignoring God's sovereignty and goodness. Instead, their primary calling was to fear the Lord their God and to rely on His sovereignty regardless of fluctuating circumstances. Serving as a sanctuary for the Lord's children, this foundation would be a stumbling block and eventual snare to those who depended on conspiratorial secret knowledge and unholy alliances.

Likewise, we live in uncertain times regarding America's future. Our realities compare to Judah's and include divisiveness within and hostile challenges without. These realities have provoked multiple conspiracy theories and doomsday predictions that either explicitly or implicitly deny God's sovereign goodness. Even more troubling is that so many professed Christians have succumbed to such theories and predictions. The primary motivation seems to be a desire to avoid suffering, thus contradicting the many Biblical depictions of suffering that enhance union with Christ. We must remember that all earthly kingdoms and political

endeavors promote their own ends while challenging God's sovereignty and goodness. This means that our focus need not be on what is ever changing but on what is eternal – God's sovereignty and goodness to us His people.

As God's people, we should responsibly and wisely confront political and social problems and decry injustice, though such could prove costly to us. We are to do so without compromising our hope in God's sovereignty and goodness as He works out all things for His glory and our good. This does not mean that we haphazardly attach such truths to our angry declarations as if we doubt them. Rather, we should strive to know and to respect our audiences in our various spheres of influence, considering how they will hear us and their conclusions. We must use the means of grace to address our fears and anxieties, while consistently relying upon prayer as our first and most powerful option as opposed to a weary last resort. As God's people, we must clearly and consistently display hope in His sovereignty and goodness regardless of our feelings or propensities to succumb to various conspiracy theories. In political and social discussions and actions, our priority must be to proclaim God as sovereign and good rather than promoting the latest conspiracy or fear.

¹So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:1-11

The second governing principle is that **Jesus is our reigning Lord over God's Kingdom that has come.** Remember: Many of God's people were looking for a militaristic messiah who would triumph over their enemies to bring them earthly power and bliss. However, Philippians 2:1-11 challenges this. Jesus proves Himself the true Lord and King over God's kingdom not by killing His enemies but by humbly dying for us as He suffered God's just wrath for our sins. God eternally receives His sacrifice and exalts Jesus as King. Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension invite the humble confession and submission of earthly political leaders and temporary kingdoms to His lordship. King Jesus awaits His Father's command to return in order to consummate God's Kingdom in the New Heavens and Earth where all things will be made new!

Yes, His return will include judgment, but we are called to invite our neighbors to Jesus as Lord before then so that His family grows. While waiting, King Jesus intercedes for us. He calls for angels and the Holy Spirit to assist us in our earthly pilgrimage as we serve as His ambassadors of reconciliation, battling not flesh and blood but the principalities and powers of darkness with the means of grace. As the citizens of the New Jerusalem that accompanies Christ's return, we are called to show His lordship and the presence of God's Kingdom through our wise words and deeds. We must mortify selfish ambition and conceit and vividly embody humility, righteousness, justice, and equity towards others in our spheres of influence. Our trust must be in Jesus – the King over God's redeemed Kingdom. This means that our earthly affiliations, as well as our words and deeds, should be governed by Christ's lordship not the other way around.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may

proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a coverup for evil, but living as servants of God.

¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

1 Peter 2:9-17

The third governing principle is that **we are empowered in the Holy Spirit in union with Christ to serve as His ambassadors of reconciliation between the Now and the Not yet.** As you may remember from our sermon series in 1-2 Peter, these letters are addressed to God's people who were suffering and would continue to suffer political and religious persecution. In **1 Peter 2: 9-17**, Peter grounds their identity and purpose in God's identity and purpose to show His redeeming acts for the life of the world. Their eternal purpose transcends the earthly foolishness and skirmishes of raging nations that defy God. They were to humbly and honorably engage in politics and social issues as God's redeemed people – not as the fallen representatives of earthly ideologies and political parties. Even their freedom should serve and be governed by this high calling so that they would be the means by which God's enemies would be drawn into His family as children.

This must be our goal as we confront contemporary political and social realities. Our priority must be the eternal lives of those in our spheres of influence. Because God has set us apart for this purpose, we must wisely think about and engage in political and social problems.

Please pray that we, as a church, embody our hope in God's sovereignty and goodness; our faith in Jesus's reign over God's redemptive Kingdom; and our call to be faithful ambassadors of reconciliation through the Holy Spirit's power. Please repent of where you have failed – knowing that you are forgiven in Christ as God's son or daughter. Please actively mortify those fears and behaviors that promote unwise responses to political and social concerns. Please pursue reconciliation with those whom you have offended or who have offended you. Please strive to shape your social and political ideas by the whole counsel of God's Word. Please seek to actively vivify God's glory as we hospitably invite others into our family to receive Jesus's nourishing Gospel.

May the Lord bless our efforts to honor Him by serving as His image bearers as we humbly and wisely confront some of the troubling realities of our day.

With Love in Christ,
Cameron