

GOD'S TRUTH AND THE 2020 ELECTION
(SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2020)

Scripture reading – Daniel 2:20-23; Rev. 19:11-16

INTRODUCTION

In my library I have a very fat book of almost 1600 pages entitled, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730 - 1805*.

This collection of sermons is published by the Liberty Fund.

It is an amazing insight into American religious life and the sermons of this age.

The last sermon in the book is from 1805 preached by a minister named Joshua Hargrove.

Hargrove preached a sermon on the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment before both houses of Congress in Washington D.C.

Now unfortunately I don't believe that the minister Joshua Hargrove was orthodox in his belief because he was a follower of Emmanuel Swedenborg, a mystic and heretic who still has a following today.

[There is a school in Glenview, IL connected with the heretical teaching of Swedenborg.]¹

The early history of our nation was blessed with many who were faithful to God's truth, but we also see from our early days false teachers and heresy.

Do we not see the same thing today?

We know that God has a people, a remnant that He calls, protects, and preserves.

There are also those who falsely take the name of Christ and seek to lead God's people astray.

And there are true believers who are confused, even misled by false teaching and ideas on politics.

¹ <http://glenviewnewchurchschools.org>

In light of the election already taking place in our nation, I want us to consider from Scripture a number of basic principles that we confess and must practice as God's people.

We come before God with reverence, thankfulness, and trust praying that God will give us a faithful witness in a time of great uncertainty and challenge.

1) REVERENCE BEFORE GOD'S MAJESTY

We begin with the subject of reverence because that I believe is the appropriate place to begin when we think of human government.

Satan's temptation to Adam and Eve was that they could be like god.

The desire to be like God is found in ancient and modern governments.

Scripture does command that we give proper respect and that we seek to be obedient to civil rulers, but we alone give worship and ultimate reverence to our great God alone!

When God called men to serve as prophets, we find in a number of cases that they were given powerful visions of His majesty and holiness.

The prophets were given a very difficult calling of bringing God's word to those who did not want to hear.

How could they persevere in this almost impossible work? It is was only as they realized the awesome God who called them and gave them the strength to proclaim God's truth.

The book of Daniel is an amazing testimony to God's power and the courage that God gave to His people to stand before the most powerful rulers of the day with fear of God and not fear of man.

We read earlier from Daniel 2:20-23.

The most powerful king of the day, Nebuchadnezzar, was given a dream that so deeply troubled him that he was going to kill all of his wisemen if they could not tell him both the dream and its interpretation.

Daniel and his friends earnestly sought the mercies of God so that they might not perish.
And God gave Daniel knowledge of the dream and its understanding.
Daniel was filled with awe and praise to our great God.

Dan. 2:20 Daniel answered and said:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.

21 And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.

22 He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what *is* in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.

23 “I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”

We know that in a very special way God humbled Nebuchadnezzar. For seven years he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven and his hair grew out like eagle’s feathers, his nails became like birds’ claws.

What a grotesque picture!

When God restored his mind at the end of this testing, Nebuchadnezzar gave praise:

Dan. 4:34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion,

And His kingdom *is* from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing;

He does according to His will in the army of heaven

And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.

No one can restrain His hand

Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

The words of Nebuchadnezzar parallel the beautiful words of Isaiah 40.

Is. 40:15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop in a bucket,

And are counted as the small dust on the scales;

Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.

16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn,

Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.

17 All nations before Him *are* as nothing,

And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

2) PROFOUND THANKSGIVING TO OUR FAITHFUL AND PATIENT GOD

It is very difficult for us to appreciate all that God has given to us.

Remember a few months ago when it was somewhat challenging to get toilet paper?

I was talking recently to someone who grew up in Ukraine and that was an everyday experience.

Unless you grew up in a communist nation, it is difficult for us to appreciate the incredible bounty and provision we have been given.

In line with this we consider, how does our nation continue to hold together when we have almost entirely rejected our heritage as a nation and given ourselves to almost unimaginable perversion?

How have we not been judged like Sodom and Gomorrah?

Listen to Psalm 103.

- 8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
- 9 He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
- 12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
- 13 As a father pities *his* children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
- 14 For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.

We know very well the story of Jonah. We focus often on Jonah's disobedience and we should not miss this, but Jonah is a story mainly of God's sovereignty and mercy.

God first showed His mercy to a wicked, powerful city by sending a messenger in the first place.

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, **2** “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

Isn't this amazing?

God could have wiped out Nineveh in perfect justice.

God sent to this great city a prophet. And God made sure that this prophet eventually made his way to bring a message.

I find almost humorous how Jonah brought the message. In light of the messages we find in other prophetic books, Jonah went around Nineveh apparently with just a one-sentence message.

Jonah 3:4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

Did Jonah say more than this?

Perhaps this was all that they needed to hear in light of what they knew.

The bottom line is that this was God's great mercy to an undeserving city.

Jonah 3:10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Jonah 4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. **2** So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Let us be filled with profound thankfulness for God's patience with our nation.

May His mercy bring many to faith and repentance.

3) WE RECOGNIZE AND CONFESS THAT WE ARE PILGRIMS. WE DON'T PLACE OUR ULTIMATE HOPE IN THIS AGE BUT IN CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM.

Next month we remember the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock on November 11, 1620.

1 Peter was written as we see in the opening verse of his letter "to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia..."

Later we read in 1 Peter 2.

1Pet. 2:11 Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, **12** having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Peter uses the words sojourners and pilgrims, I believe, for three reasons.

First, these same words were used to describe God's people in the OT.

Abraham identified himself using these same words in Gen. 23:4.

David used both of these words in Psalm 39:12 describing himself and all his forefathers.

We also then share in this identification as being sojourners and pilgrims.

Second, Peter likely used these terms because they were a fairly accurate description of the condition of his readers.

As Christians they would have been on the margins of society. Not that they didn't have any rights, but their status would have been uncertain in some cases.

And in much of the history of the Christian church, God's people literally have been like sojourners and pilgrims. We live in age where some of our rights are also being taken from

us. We may not be exactly like sojourners and pilgrims now, but this may be an accurate description for us in coming years.

Third, Peter uses this language as a continued challenge that they live in such a way. The more that we follow Christ, the more that we should identify that we are sojourners and pilgrims in a foreign land.

This doesn't mean that don't seek to bring a witness to our perverted culture or that we are just seeking escape.

In terms of the values and pleasures of the world we are and should be strangers.

Especially today in our perverted and pagan culture, we should feel very much like we are strangers.

When John Calvin began his work in Geneva, it was a very hostile and even perverted place. And for most of Calvin's life, he lived as a stranger, though as one who worked for the reformation of the church and state.

Some foolishly say that Calvin was the dictator of Geneva.

The truth is that Calvin became a citizen of Geneva only later in life at the age of 50.²

He died at the age of 54.

William Bradford in his book, *History of the Plymouth Settlement*, wrote about the departure of the Pilgrims from Leyden, Holland.

Of course, they would be called Pilgrims only many years later.

“So they left that good and pleasant city, which had been their resting place for nearly twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and lifted up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.”³

² http://vlib.iue.it/carrie/texts/carrie_books/gilbert/14.html

³ William Bradford, *History of the Plymouth Settlement*, p. 49. This edition may be accessed using the Google Search Engine. Click on the option of searching for books.

What a blessing this small group of faithful believers has brought to us!

How thankful we should be for the witness that they left to us.

As God's word declares in verse 11, you must avoid or abstain from the fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

Our sinful nature seeks the desires and pleasures of this world.

Is there a fight in your life against this?

Do you recognize the war you are facing?

One commentator has written concerning the idea of being a pilgrim that, "It refers less to the notion of Christians disdain the temporal because of their longing for their eternal, heavenly home, with its implications of withdrawal from secular society, than to the notion that despite such treatment, **they must nevertheless continue to practice their faith in the midst of those who abuse them.**"⁴

The idea of being a pilgrim then is in terms of the spiritual battle and conflict that we find ourselves in. We are not at home, not simply because we will go to heaven one day, but because while we are given time on earth, there will always be a conflict and a separation that we are to have with the world around us.

To be a pilgrim is to realize you have been sent by Christ for a reason and a purpose which means that there must also be conflict with the evil in the world around us.

We want to see the good of this nation and our own communities, but we recognize that as we live faithful to our God, we can expect the harassment and hatred of the world.

4) WE FAITHFULLY MUST PROCLAIM GOD'S LAW AND GOSPEL TO ALL

Since the time of the NT, there has always been a satanic attempt to pervert the truth of the gospel and the authority of God's Word.

⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, p. 82.

Turn the gospel into a good works message.

Turn the gospel into a self-help, self-esteem, man-centered message.

Turn the gospel into a social justice message.

The authority of God's Word as a whole has also been under tremendous attack from so-called science and philosophy and religion.

A number of years ago I preached a series on the faith and practice that we confess as a church.

I stated in terms of this issue that we believe that God's Law and Gospel are the foundation for standing for God's truth in our evolutionary, so called tolerant age.

As a result:

We must not be ashamed of God's truth; we must boldly and lovingly declare what God's Law states concerning sin and seek to share with sinners the only hope of salvation in the message of the gospel. This is how we stand against the false message of tolerance. We also must be careful that we are not exposed as hypocrites.

I believe this focus and balance is not just my own musing, but is what we see clearly in God's Word.

We are very familiar with Romans 1.

At the end of the chapter, Paul shows the different ways that men and women in rebellion against God behave. **In verses 29-31, he gives the longest listing of sinful behaviors and attitudes that is found in the New Testament.**

What is the purpose of such a long listing?

First, it emphasizes that the rejection of God leads to many different but related sins. There are many fruits but a common root.

Second, this list emphasizes how the sins of verses 24, 26, and 27 are not just private sins. We often hear about how the government should stay out of people's bedrooms. I am in agreement that governments generally speaking should stay out of people's bedrooms. But the problem is that the sins here described invariably lead to sins that move from the bedroom into the public square. When such egregious sins are tolerated and promoted it leads to many other problems.

Third, Paul through this listing is again showing how there is absolutely no place for self-earned salvation.

Men and women apart from Jesus Christ are not just a little bit lost.

No, this listing shows how serious the condition is.

Some would say, well I have never committed the more serious sins of verses 26 and 27, but there is something on this list that every person at some time in his life has committed.

Listen to another relevant passage from 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

1Tim. 1:8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, **9** knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, **10** for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, **11** according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

This passage again shows that God's Law is simply not just the standard for those in the church.

It identifies the sin of all men and women who stand before a perfectly holy and righteous God.

How could we ever read such a listing and then say, well it doesn't matter what our state or country says about such matters?

Now we confess that the homosexual movement is not the only issue of importance. But if we won't take a stand on this issue, when will we ever take a stand?

It is certainly the case that Paul lived in a much different society than we do. But to say that we should not be concerned about matters related to marriage or education because we don't see Paul or the apostles making an issue of them would be to misread Scripture.

We desperately must seek to hold to this truth if we ever hope to withstand the incredible forces of compromise that we see spreading even in what have been conservative churches.

I recently noted that Calvin College recently elected for the first time an open lesbian as student president.

Now we know sadly that Calvin College has been off the rails for many years.

What grieved me as I read not only the statement by this new student president but the comments of support by many former students and others.

We can say this force of tolerance for perversion is continuing like a glacier.

It might appear to be moving slowly, but it is seeking to crush and reshape everything.

Are we standing for God's Law and Gospel or giving in?

5) IN LIGHT OF WHAT WE DESERVE AND WHERE WE ARE HEADING AS A NATION WE PLEAD FOR MERCY AND RESOLVE TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH AND TRUST BEFORE OUR GREAT GOD.

In light of the choices that we have for President, I believe strongly that the election of Joe Biden will only lead to greater judgment for this nation.

The agenda that Joe Biden and the Democratic Party represent is essentially anti-Christ from beginning to end.

I am grieved that there are those suggesting that they can be pro-life and pro-Biden at the same time.

I think that is a complete contradiction.

I also recognize that a victory of President Trump does not mean all our problems are solved as a nation. If we can only get President Trump elected we have won!

So, although we don't place our hope and trust in any man, we can see that some situations are easier in terms of our own lives and the lives of others and give greater opportunity for the work and calling that God has given to us.

Of course, in the end we must all say, Thy Will Be Done!

Whatever God does ordain, we will seek to submit to His Will.

And so now is the time that we earnestly seek for God's mercy.

I don't believe that if we just get enough Christians to pray or if we spend hours in prayer, then things will go our way.

We are not trying to manipulate God.

We are not trying to impress God with our piety or devotion.

But knowing our own weakness and frailty, knowing what is at stake for this nation, we do seek God's mercy.

We looked at this verse several weeks ago from Hab. 3.

Hab. 3:2 O LORD, I have heard Your speech *and* was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known; **In wrath remember mercy.**

Let us come before God with reverence, thankfulness, and trust praying that God will give us a faithful witness in a time of great uncertainty and challenge.

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 580

BENEDICTION - JUDE 24-25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, *Be* glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.