

On "Politics" and Our Faith.
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In the sermon for Sunday June 2 –the **Marks of the True Christian** – one of the sub points was about how the church of Jesus must be political. *Political!!!??* That assertion is Biblically based; for instance, consider this verse: Galatians 6:10 *So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all . . .* Paul makes it clear that the community of Jesus is speaking about everyone, not just the people of faith by adding *and especially for those of the family of faith*. He is not just talking about caring for the faithful in the community, but rather to seize our opportunities to help everyone. (Jesus makes it clear that our care for others must be more than just for our own community in his definition of the neighbors we are to love. Luke 10: 25 - 37.)

So on the next Monday some of the friends at the WWWF group asked me what I meant by "politics." That's a great question and something that needs some explanation. Well, we talked about it and I thought others might be interested.

First of all, "politics" is just not about political parties and elections. It is a big word which refers to any and every collective decision humans make. Yes, it is about government politics, but it is also about business politics, school politics, community politics, family politics and, yes, even church politics. Whenever we humans make decisions together, politics are involved.

Yes, we generally hate politics. But let's remember that means that we hate to work with each other! I know that it is hard, but it is necessary, like exercise or eating right (two things that when practiced well become joyful parts of life.) It is commonly said that the two things polite people do not do is to talk about religion and politics. What does that mean for citizens of a democratic republic? What does that mean for followers of Jesus? In both cases, to not talk about religion and politics means that we are to surrender our duty as citizens and to refrain from witnessing to the Lord who has saved us.

As a follower of Jesus and as one who, as a follower of Jesus, loves his country, this idea that we not talk about the most important stuff, religion and politics, is extremely frustrating. Both of our faith and our nation only do their jobs only when we work together to make that happen. So I am constantly attempting to find ways to have good conversations. I think we should be able to be rational with each other, to strive for objectivity together, to be able to look at our own self and understand our own biases and prejudices and be able to laugh with each other about the common ignorance we share.

But we are so untrusting of each other. Everywhere. In every political category I mentioned above we do not trust. In government, obviously, but in business, schools, communities, families and in churches we are scared of losing to each other. We are fearful of the other person getting the upper hand and over powering us. And it's true, sometimes they do. But the amount of fear is not warranted. Much of it comes from the ignorance which comes from expecting politics to be easy and not doing our homework to learn about the issues and how politics works in America today.

One way we avoid dealing with politics and religion is to focus on our own personal attitudes. We say things like, "you can't change the world, but you can change yourself." And so we work to create within ourselves the best of attitudes. It is a good thing to work on having good attitudes. Sometimes they are the key to situations. But, not always. Working on attitudes is a partial truth, but, not the whole truth.

Going back to Paul's words from Galatians, we ask the question of "how" and it forces us to ask political questions. Paul is talking to the whole church. Not just to individuals, but to the gathered community at Galatia. How do we, as a church, work for the good of all? Interesting question. Answering that question and answering it together is the main issue of our church politics.