

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

Psalm 33:12; Proverbs 14:34

Two weeks from Tuesday millions of Americans will go to the polls and elect a new president, a new slate of congressmen and 1/3 of the senate. It could be a pivotal day in our history, a day in which our country takes a new direction. Or it could be a day when we decide to stay the course of our current direction. But either way, it is a day in which every one of us needs to participate as responsible American citizens. And as you've seen in your bulletin; that is the topic of my message this morning – Christian citizenship.

Scripture makes it perfectly clear that believers in Jesus Christ must live in the world and yet not be a part of the world, that we dare not cover ourselves with a holy shell every day when we leave our homes and only come out again when we return at night. Jesus told His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth", and, "You are the light of the world?" But we will never be salt if we keep a lid on the salt shaker, and we will never be light if we hide our light under a basket. We will never change our culture unless we engage our culture. And that's exactly what the saint's of old did. Isaiah was a prophet in the highest circles of government, admonishing and encouraging several of Israel's kings. Nehemiah worked as king Artaxerxes' cupbearer and it opened a door of great benefit to God's people. Esther 2:19 says that Mordecai sat within the king's gate, that is, he was some sort of governmental official. And as a result he gained information that saved the king's life, and later through Esther's intervention, the life of the whole nation.

Furthermore, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 8:2, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God". Amos 5:15 says, "...establish justice in the gate..." In other words, get involved in government and make it what it ought to be. In Jeremiah 29:7 God told His people who went into Babylonian captivity, "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace". Jesus prayed to His Father in John 15:17, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one". Paul wrote in Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers". There is just no doubt that God says that as believers we must strive to be good citizens.

But God says something else concerning citizenship that Christians must not ignore. God says that true believers in Jesus are citizens not only of an earthly country, but we are also citizens of Heaven. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:19, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and member of the household of God". He says in

Philippians 3:20, “For our citizenship is in Heaven...” Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham dwelt in tents as a sojourner on this earth, but that he was looking ahead to inhabit a city whose builder and maker was God (Heb. 11:10).

Abraham knew that he had a citizenship not of this world, but in Heaven, and he was longing to go there. And beloved, we must not miss this truth – **while God calls on us to be good citizens of our earthly country, He calls us first and foremost to be good citizens of Heaven.**

Now, what does this mean? It means that our highest purpose in this world is furthering the cause of Heaven. We are not like Napoleon, or Hitler, or Khrushchev, whose highest purposes were world domination for France, Germany, and the Soviet Union. We are not like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose highest purpose is world submission to Sharia (Sha-ree´-ah) law. We are not like Barak Obama and Mitt Romney, whose highest purpose is a better America. All of their purposes are like mole hills surrounding our Mt. Everest. Our purpose is, “Lord, let Your kingdom come, let Your will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven”. And this leads us to two conclusions. First of all, there will be times when the purposes of America and the purposes of Heaven will be in conflict. And secondly, when this happens, if we are true to our purpose of advancing Heaven’s cause, we must oppose the purposes of our country, not only in words but also in actions. And beloved, this includes how we vote.

So today I want us to look at some major issues that are currently facing America. I want us to see Heaven’s position on them, which is what God says about them. And beloved, this must be our final authority! If the Bible is not our final authority we have no moral compass, we have no good news for a broken, lost world.

First of all, I want to say that most Americans do not understand what the greatest issues facing America really are. We all know that the major issue that has driven most every presidential campaign in our history is the economy. Yes, foreign policy has been a big issue at times, and to a lesser degree, education. But when you get right down to what most Americans are most concerned about, it is their pocketbook. We say to the candidates, “Assure me of a good job and a secure retirement and you’ll get my vote”. But this thinking is fundamentally flawed. Jesus said, “What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26) We can all live and die like Bill Gates, but if all we have at the end of life is a fat bank account we will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone forever and ever. No, the greatest issues we face are not economic, they are spiritual and moral.

And beloved, when you look around, would you not agree? Certainly there are those who live in poverty in America, and certainly we need to address their needs. But we all know that America is the most economically blessed nation in all of the world. Every one of us who is here today lives as a king or queen

compared to most of the world. But what about America's moral and spiritual condition? We all know it. America is in a free fall away from the spiritual moors that made us great. And the vast majority of Americans are living and dying in the black midnight of spiritual darkness, plunging into an eternity of darkness. Friends, it is surely not rocket science to know that as a nation our greatest needs are moral and spiritual. But here is the beauty of us grasping this truth: when we make our spiritual and moral needs our top priority, God will automatically take care of the economy. For Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you". In other words, "I will meet every need you'll ever have. Just seek Me first."

Well, let's talk about a huge moral issue about which America desperately needs to seek Christ and His Kingdom first, and that is the issue of homosexuality. Until a generation ago the vast majority of Americans had no scruples on the matter – homosexuality was a sin. But the landscape of thought has undergone a major shift since then.

This change began with two actions that took place back in 1973. That was the year that the American Bar Association called for a repeal of all laws that declared homosexual activity between consenting adults to be a crime. But perhaps even more significant was the decision by the trustees of the American Psychiatric Association to eliminate homosexuality from its official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual; which simply means that this national body of psychiatrists now declared homosexuality to be a normal expression of sexual behavior. And then back in 2003 the Supreme Court struck down a Texas law banning sodomy and opened the door for the legalization of gay marriage. As a result Massachusetts swiftly became the first state to do so in 2004. And since then seven more states have sanctioned gay marriage, the latest being Maryland on March 1, 2012. And the most recent Gallup poll indicates that 50% of Americans now believe that homosexual marriages should be legal. And beloved, with such divided opinions there needs to be no doubt in our minds where God comes down on this issue.

Well, beloved, God has clearly spoken His mind on the issue of homosexuality. Here are three passages:

Leviticus 20:13 – "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them".

Romans 1:26-27 – "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the

woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 – “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous....will inherit the kingdom of God”.

Friends, from these scriptures there’s just no wiggle room for anyone to come to any conclusion other than in the sight of God, homosexuality is a sin. Homosexuality is a sin because it is a perversion of God’s perfect plan for companionship and procreation, which is one man for one woman (Genesis 2).

Now, some research suggests that genetics or abnormal hormone distribution in the womb gives some a predisposition to homosexuality. And this is what many gays proclaim: “We were born this way. Homosexuality is who we are”. But even pro-homosexual researcher Dean Hamner admitted, “There is not a single master gene that makes people gay...I don’t think we will ever be able to predict who will be gay”. And we know from Psalm 139 that God has personally woven each one of us in our mother’s womb. And beloved, as the old saying goes, God don’t make no junk. God would never create someone whom He loved to be trapped in a sinful condition from which they could never break away! That flies in the face everything we believe about a loving God.

Now, we do not have time to go into all of the misery and destruction that the homosexual lifestyle brings upon individuals and upon nations. But let me share just one observation. A number of years ago anthropologist J.D. Unwin studied 86 different empires of history, and discovered that of all those empires that rejected premarital chastity and monogamy in marriage, not one of them survived more than one generation. And as an example, God says in 2 Peter 2:6, look at Sodom and Gomorrah. “....turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly...” Beloved, this is the present course of America! And we desperately need politicians who will seek to turn us around.

There is a second moral issue that is in the forefront of American culture we need to understand, and that is abortion. Since the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, American women have aborted around 55,000,000 babies. Let me put it in another way to give you a clearer picture. For every 100 babies born since 1973, 45 more have been aborted.

I have a vague remembrance of the Roe vs. Wade decision 39 years ago. I remember the outcry of some against it. But my main thought at the time was, “What is abortion? And why is it causing such a ruckus?” Well, I have learned

what abortion is since then, and it is causing more ruckus than ever. And here is the key question around which the ruckus swirls, “Just when does life actually begin?”

You see, we read in scripture of the horrible practice of infanticide. The heathen would regularly throw their babies into the fire as sacrifices to their gods. And the practice even spread to God’s people Israel (Jeremiah 32:35). Can you imagine God’s people straying so far from Him to do such a thing? What would you think if someone told you that some strange religious group was building bonfires once a month somewhere right in Tuscaloosa County, and they knew for a fact that some of them were throwing their babies into it? Why, you would be on the phone calling the sheriff’s office the next second. So can you see the firestorm that the issue of abortion stirs up? Some say that the fetus in the womb is no more than developing tissue, not arriving at personhood until the fetus is born. Others stick their heads in the sand and just don’t deal with the question. But others say that from the instant of conception the zygote is fully human, undeveloped, but still fully human. And if this is true then the deduction is no less sickening than the Tuscaloosa County bonfire scenario. Every time an abortion occurs, so does a murder.

Let me ask you a question. How do you think that God felt about the Holocaust, when six million Jews were slaughtered in the Nazi concentration camps? Beloved, if life does begin at conception, then the sobering fact is that America has been guilty of the Holocaust nine times over. So you see, just like the issue of homosexuality, we must know what God’s opinion is of abortion, for we desperately need to be on His side.

We will see what God has to say about abortion in a few moments. But first I want us to know that abortion is not just a “religious” issue, it is also very much a scientific issue. And here are just two quotes from the scientific world:

Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth of Harvard Medical School: “In biology and in medicine, it is an accepted fact that the life of any individual organism reproducing by sexual means begins at conception.”

Dr. Jerome Lujeune, world renowned professor of genetics at the University of Descarte, Paris France: “Each individual has a very unique beginning, the moment of its conception.”

But perhaps the most damaging testimony to the pro-abortionists came a number of years ago from Dr. Bernard Nathanson, who was America’s most prominent abortionist in the early 70s. After hands on involvement with 15,000 abortions and overseeing 60,000 more as director of the world’s largest abortion clinic, Dr. Nathanson walked away from his job. The reason was the invention of

ultrasound technology. When he actually saw with his own eyes the life of a pre-born baby in the womb he was horrified at what he had been doing for all those years. And he became one of the strongest advocates of the pro-life movement, producing a documentary called The Silent Scream that exposed abortion's brutal procedure

We could say much more about the scientific evidence concerning life in the womb, but let's move on to what God has to say. And beloved, just as God has spoken loud and clear on the matter of homosexuality, so He has spoken on abortion. Now, you will not find the word "abortion" in the Bible. But what you do find is the answer as to when human life actually begins. Let's begin by looking at Jeremiah 1:5. God says, "Jeremiah, I knew about you before you were ever born. And I not only knew about you, I created a plan for your life". And notice that God did not say, "Before you were formed I knew you". He said, "Before I **formed you** I knew you". God was not a mere observer of a purely physical conception. **He** was the one Who formed Jeremiah in his mother's womb.

God did the same with David. Psalm 139:16: "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them". God saw David yet unborn, and in verse 13 David declares, "For **You** formed my inward parts; **You** wove me in my mother's womb". And beloved, so it is with you! God saw **you** when you were yet unborn. And God formed **you** and placed you in your mother's womb. What a blessing to know that God cares that much for you!!

But I want to share with you another passage that absolutely settles the question as to when life actually begins. Turn to Genesis 18:14. You remember the story of Abraham and Sarah, how God had promised them a son in their old age. Well, Abraham laughed in unbelief at God's promise in Genesis 17. And in chapter 18 God repeated His promise and this time it was Sarah who disbelieved and laughed. Verse 12 says, "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" Now look at God's response to her in verse 14. Notice God's words, "I will return to you 'according to the time of life'". Now, according to Hebrew scholars the word "time" in this phrase means "the time of pregnancy". And the word "life" in the Hebrew means "alive, living, lively, and vigorous". So beloved, when you put those two together, it is end of discussion. Isaac's life began when the Lord came back and miraculously caused Sarah to conceive. And Isaac, and David, and Jeremiah, and every one of us, are all special, unique creations of God.

So what if, ladies? What if you found out that you were pregnant with your fifth child, but your husband had syphilis. But not only that, you are dying with tuberculosis. But not only that, your first child was born blind, your second child died, your third child was born deaf, and your fourth child, like you, is also dying with tuberculosis. Would you consider abortion, would you consider destroying a

special creation of God? Well, this is not make believe; it is reality. But this mother didn't have an option, for abortion was not legal during her pregnancy. And the world should rejoice, for her fifth child was Ludwig Von Beethoven.

So what if, ladies? What if you fell into a coma with a serious disease. You were given mega doses of strong drugs to fight off infection, and then you found out that you were pregnant with your fifth child. The doctor immediately stopped treatment and told you that your baby would either die or have serious problems. And then he said, "An abortion is the only way to save your life." Would you consider an abortion? Well, this mother did have an option, but as a committed Christian she really didn't have an option, so she refused and said, "I'll trust in God". And the world should rejoice, for she survived and her fifth child was born safe and sound. And his name was Tim Tebow.

Friends, I cannot think of a greater tool for destruction in the devil's toolbox than the murder of unborn babies! And God hates it. He hated the practice of child sacrifice in Israel so much that He condemned His people to a horrible, bloody conquest and slavery in Babylon for 70 years. And He hates abortion not one iota less. And I ask you, how can we ever think that we can continue to murder our unborn and escape the same fate? I tell you we cannot! And neither can we continue to tolerate the practice of homosexuality and escape God's wrath, just as Sodom didn't escape. And if there was ever a time that God's people need to stand up and vote as Heaven's citizens and for Heaven's agenda, it is now! If there was ever a time that we need politicians who will lead us to bow to the moral laws of God again, it is now. But there's only one way we will get them, and that is if we vote them in.