

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	Yes

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about how our faith relates to politics.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because our faith has much to do with our politics and often we think of them as separate in our lives.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the final week of a five week series. This sermon is adapted from two sermons by Adam Hamilton preached at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection on October 14, 2012 and January 10, 2016.

What are the next action steps?

- Love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
- Care for those in need.
- Do to others what we would have them do to us.
- Keep any foul words from coming out of our mouth.
- Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to be doers of these word of scripture and not only hearers in life and politics.



Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Changing Lives
2. Share
3. Transformation of the World

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Ephesians
2. James

4th Sunday after the Epiphany
FAQ - What does faith have to do with politics?
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/22e4qDr>

January 31, 2016
Mark 12:13-17
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,000
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1mgISpD>

- 3. Luke
- 4. Mark

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist,
UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains,
AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, faith, politics, religion

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Mark 12:13-17, CEB

They sent some of the Pharisees and supporters of Herod to trap him in his words. They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you're genuine and you don't worry about what people think. You don't show favoritism but teach God's way as it really is. Does the Law allow people to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay taxes or not?"

Since Jesus recognized their deceit, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a coin. Show it to me." And they brought one. He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." His reply left them overcome with wonder.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

Series Review

We all have questions. Sometimes the answers are easy. But, sometimes, our questions are complicated and the answers are difficult to see and even harder to articulate. Join us for worship at First United Methodist Church in January as we address some of the most frequently asked questions about the Christian faith.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Democrats, Republicans and the Lord's Prayer

I don't often tell jokes as part of the sermon and I probably need to get better at it. I thought today, when we are talking about religion and politics, it might be helpful to give it a try, so here goes. I heard this from a colleague in the Great Plains.

There were two senators who were having lunch in the dining room – one was a Republican and one was a Democrat.

The Republican said to the Democrat, "You know, you Democrats just don't get religion. You don't understand it, you don't get it, you're just not there."

The Democrat was really offended by this. He said, "What are you talking about? I'm a religious person myself, of course I get religion. I care deeply about religion."

The Republican said, "No you really don't. You just don't get it."

The Democrat said, "No, no, I really do!"

The Republican said, "Okay, well, I'll make you a bet. \$20 says you can't say the Lord's Prayer right now."

The Democrat starts to smile, "You got to be kidding. Really? This is easy money. Of course, I'll bet you \$20 that I can say the Lord's Prayer."

"Okay, so do it. Right now."

"Okay, so let's bow our heads."

They bowed their heads and the Democrat starts to pray, "Now, I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Guide me through the starry night and wake me when the sun shines bright."

He looked up when he was finished and the Republican had a grimace on his face. He was reaching for his billfold and said, "Shucks, I didn't think there was any way that you would know the Lord's Prayer."

Transition

We are at the beginning of a presidential election season. The Iowa Caucuses are tomorrow. I haven't lived through very many elections, yet this one seems particularly filled with anxiety and turmoil.

Email and Facebook

You don't have to look very far to see the tension that politics seems to bring up in us. Take email for example, there are any number of emails that you might receive that paint one side of political aisle as the devil incarnate and the other side as the salvation of the nation. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Then, of course, there is social media. It seems that scrolling through your newsfeed you can find people sharing pictures and videos that do the very same thing. Why do we feel this way?

We feel this way because we care deeply about these topics. They matter to us. Then, to our passion and convictions, you add just a little dose of fear - whether you are on the left or the right - and pretty soon you have yourself saying, thinking and doing things that maybe you never would have done otherwise.

Caricature and Characterize

Consider the way that we characterize the Republican and Democratic parties and how they characterize themselves. You can go to their national party pages and read what they say about themselves. Of course, you know that the way that we characterize ourselves is a way of characterizing the other person without saying it.

Example: Catholic and Orthodox Church

We do this in the church, sometimes it's called public relations. It goes all the way back to 1044. In 1044, the Western church claimed the name, the catholic church. The word catholic means universal. We are the universal church, so what are you, if you're not catholic?

The Eastern church claimed the name, the orthodox church. This means right worship, right glory or right beliefs. So, we are the orthodox church, what are all you people in the West? You are heretics. They didn't have to say it. By the name they chose, they were saying something about the other side.

Political Party Positions

So, consider how Republicans and Democrats characterize themselves.

Republicans

So, here are some of the things that Republicans say:

- We believe government should be smaller.
- We believe individuals should have more freedom.
- We believe there should be less government regulation.

That's great. So, what does this say about Democrats?

They want big government, less individual freedom and more regulations.

Now, if you are a Democrat, would you say this is what you believe in?

Probably not.

Democrats

If you are a Democrat, here is what you say about yourself.

- We believe in caring for poor and the vulnerable.
- We believe that government needs to step in and help.

- We believe there need to be laws because people sometimes do the wrong things.

This might imply that Republicans don't care about the poor or the vulnerable, don't believe there is a need for the rule of law and don't believe government should be involved in these things at all.

Well, Republicans might say, "Wait a minute, that's not it at all." We care about the poor and vulnerable, we just have different ways of thinking about the way that the government is involved in these accomplishing these things.

United Methodist Positions

What about as United Methodists? What are some of the things that we believe? Here are some of our core beliefs as United Methodists:

- We believe in the Triune God, the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- We believe in the Church as the community called to be instruments of God's presence and coming region in Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the Bible as God's revealed Word.
- We believe in the final triumph of God's reign of compassion, justice, generosity and peace.

Now, which political party makes the most sense as United Methodists?
Either?
Both?

Transition

Here's the thing, there are deeply committed Christians and United Methodists that are both Republican and Democrats. Our invitation is let our faith shape our politics and the way that we interact with one another on issues that are really important to us.

Faith and Politics

Give to Caesar... and to God...

This brings us to our scripture passage for today, which tells of an interaction between Jesus and some Pharisees and supporters of Herod who are trying to catch him in his words. It ends with the verse in which Jesus says this in Mark 12:17:

"Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." His reply left them overcome with wonder."¹

Reflection on Scripture

In response to this passage of scripture, one theologian writes this:

¹ Mark 12:17, CEB.

"This story has long been pondered in Christian theological reflection on the problem of Christina citizenship. It was most commonly used to show that Christians could be both loyal citizens and committed believers. It has also been used to justify the separation of church and state. The church does not have to rule in the political order. However Jesus does not set the "things of Caesar" and the "things of God" on the same level. God always has priority."²

Priority Example

[Text here]

Great Commandment

Let's take a look at Luke 10:25:28

A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?"

Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?"

He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."³

We can summarize the response of the legal expert like this - love God and love neighbor. Of course, we recognize that our neighbor is of the other political party.

Good Samaritan

The legal expert wants to justify himself, so asks, "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus responds by telling the story of the Good Samaritan in which a samaritan helps a Jew.

A Democrat helps out a Republican or a Republican helps out a Democrat.

Our neighbor is whoever is in need – those who need our love and care.

Jesus is showing us what love looks like. Somebody needs you and you stop to help them. I believe that people of any political party will do this, it's just that we have to do it on a regular basis. This has to be how we regularly approach things. We are called to love our neighbor.

Golden Rule

Jesus goes on to share another approach to living our faith in Matthew 7:12

Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.⁴

² Leander E. Keck, ed., *Mark*, vol. VIII of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 674.

³ Luke 10:25–28, CEB.

⁴ Matthew 7:12, CEB.

You recognize this as the Golden Rule.
This applies as much to politics as it does to anything else.

How to Speak

Consider these words from Ephesians 4:29 which Paul wrote a church in conflict:

Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say.⁵

Can you imagine how politics would look differently if we all practiced this?

Quick to Listen

Finally, this passage from James 1:19:

Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry.⁶

Conclusion

God gave us two ears and one mouth in direct proportion to how much we are to use them. An amazing thing happens when we stop to listen to people

Good News

The good news is that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to be doers of these word of scripture and not only hearers in life and politics.

Call to Action

Key Quote: John Wesley

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, said this:

"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may."

In life and in politics, we can:

- love our neighbor as we love ourselves.
- care for those in need.
- do to others what we would have them do to us.
- keep any foul words from coming out of our mouth.
- be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry.

⁵ Ephesians 4:29, CEB.

⁶ James 1:19, CEB.

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Invitation

This is what faith has to do with politics.

Closing Prayer

[Text here]

Amen.