

SERMON GUIDE

A Christian Case for Voting

Matthew 15:1-9



SERMON NOTES

We are days away from a national election. We will vote for President of the United States as well as other races in the House and Senate. Because of this, I felt it important to speak on the subject and try to help us as Christians to think biblically and to take action.

Somewhere along the way over the last 50+ years in our country an idea has developed in our country from both Christians and non-Christians that pastors and churches should not talk about politics. Some even quote things like, "Separation of Church and State." People who use that statement as their argument for silencing pastors and churches show they don't understand what that phrase means. Thomas Jefferson wrote that statement in a letter to someone. It is not written in the Constitution or any official government documents. And what Jefferson was writing about was that framers of the Constitution and government did not want the government to encroach upon the church, not that they didn't want principles of the faith to influence public life. So the statement means the opposite of how it is often used.

Until the last several decades in American history, pastors and churches did talk about politics and preached sermons regarding political issues. There are books with the printed sermons of pastors during the Revolution that show them instructing their congregants on how to think about life in America in the midst of Revolution and War. That makes sense, right? At the end of the day, the role of the church is to equip Christians to live their lives with faithfulness in the world God has put them in. But a shift occurred. If you would have been in a church on a Sunday in the 1850s or 1860s in America, you would have heard some sermons from pastors justifying slavery (and history does not look kindly on them now). And you would have heard sermons from pastors speaking against the evils of slavery. But do you know what you would have found with many churches and pastors, right in the midst of the vilest practice and institution of our nation at that point? Silence. If you would have been in a church in Germany in the 1930s, you would have found some churches speaking against the discrimination against Jews and manipulation of state propaganda/media (like Bonhoeffer). You would have found churches in support of Hitler and Nazism. But you know what you would find mostly? Silence.

This is unacceptable. But it is one of the symptoms of a greater problem that affects many churches and Christians today: functional Gnosticism. Functional Gnosticism is essentially the elevating of spiritual things and diminishing of physical/material things. This plays out in people discounting the importance of work or jobs because there isn't some explicit spiritual purpose or connection in it. It also includes the neglecting of things we ought to do on earth because we spiritualize our actions to be above those things.

Exegesis

Matthew 15:1-9 – ¹ Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” ³ He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” ⁶ he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ “ ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ”

In our passage today, Jesus is interacting with the Pharisees. They ask him why His disciples don't follow the traditions that they (and those before them) created. It was an issue of them not washing their hands when they ate. There is no command to wash your hands before eating, but at some point, they codified it in the tradition of the elders. But Jesus' disciples didn't follow it. So the Pharisees treated that as if they were breaking a command.

Jesus then hammers them on actually explicitly breaking commands while upholding their man-made traditions. He quotes the command to 'Honor your father and your mother.' One of the ways they would have been expected to do that would be to provide for their needs as they got older. Notice that they had instead given that money to God and felt they excuse neglecting the command because they gave to God. And Jesus rebukes them for being hypocrites.

Here's the piece I want you to notice: the duties of the Pharisees were to care for the physical needs and well-being of their parents and they neglected it and excused it because they thought they were doing something more spiritual. They thought doing something spiritual superseded their physical duties. It did not. This was functional Gnosticism.

James says our faith is dead if it doesn't show up in our actual lives. If someone lacks food or clothes and you simply "bless them with words" and don't give them help (when you are able to), you are not being faithful. The Lord cares about the physical needs. Spiritual words don't replace our physical duties.

All of us as human beings have duties and responsibilities.

- To God
- To Wife/Children (family) // Parents (if you're a kid)
- To Church (gather to worship, love one another, give, use your gifts)
- To State (obey laws, pay taxes)

One of our responsibilities and duties as a citizen in this Constitutional Republic that we live in is to vote. A recent study revealed that 41 Million Americans that identified as Christians were not planning to vote in this election. Of that 41 Million, 32 Million of them are regular church attending believers. And they are not planning to vote. Now, I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand if you're planning to vote or sit it out this year, but you should all plan to vote. It is functional gnosticism to neglect it, especially if you create some super spiritual reason why you are above it.

3 Reasons Why Christians Should Vote

1. The country isn't static.

It is moving in a direction. Voting is one way we can participate in where it is going. I don't know many Christians that haven't felt that we've seen major shifts in our country over the last 10 years or so. Things have changed dramatically. Our job as Christians is to help preserve the culture and slow the speed of rot and decay. If we don't vote, if Christians don't participate, then non-Christians will drive where the country goes and that will slow the rot. We will lose our saltiness. Friends, listen carefully, your children and grandchildren and great great grandchildren are going to inherit the world we leave

them. You should participate in helping leave them with a world that is more conducive to their faith and flourishing. A President hires 4-5K government workers once they take office. Ask yourself this question: which of the candidates is more likely to hire people and appoint them in positions of power who share my worldview and convictions? Who will hire the most Christians? (this affects the direction we go) Which of these candidates is most against my worldview and would fight against my beliefs and right to advance them?

2. A vote is not a universal endorsement.

What I mean is this: voting for a candidate is not an endorsement of everything that person has ever said or done. It is not a justification of every action they take. It is not a statement that they are perfect role models. No political candidate on the ballot is going to qualify to be an elder at our church. A vote isn't a universal endorsement. It is a recognition that for this job, they are the one we believe we do the best job. It's not a 'lesser of two evils,' it is a 'best of two options' approach.

3. Politicians shape our policies and laws which affect our families and neighbors.

The politicians of our country shape the laws and policies that affect things like the economy or foreign policy. Decisions of leaders affect whether we go to war. It shapes how much debt we have as a country. It determines the laws of safety and the punishment of crime. These things affect our families. When Jesus says to render unto Caesar what we owe Caesar, he is telling us to do our duty and pay what we owe. He did not discourage us from voting and participating in politics so we can keep more money in our pockets and less in Caesar's. We should do that! We need to look at what these candidates promote, and particularly their platforms, to see which one we believe will help us and our neighbors to prosper and flourish. To not participate in that, and act as a spiritual separatist, is functional gnosticism.

Conclusion

I want to close with this statement: **Christ is King**. He is the only One who gets our ultimate unwavering allegiance and devotion. Political candidates come and go, but Jesus remains. He is the One who sits enthroned over all things this morning. He died for sinners, rose from the dead, and ascended in glory to reign over Heaven and Earth. That is reality this morning. Additionally, He is sovereign over all things, including the rise and fall of nations, and the rise and fall of political leaders. The Lord is the

ultimate decider in who will lead our country. And He has His plans. They are wise. They are good. They will bring about His designs and purposes. However, we are the kind of church that believes all of that, yet knows the means from which God brings about His will on earth is through our actions. God is sovereign over who wins the election. Yet the person with the most votes will win the election and we are told to vote. Our vote is a part of God's plans. He has not revealed to us the secret things (like who is going to win). But He has revealed our duties and we should do them with faithfulness.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**
 - Read Matthew 15:1-9 from the sermon and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - Additional Scripture
 - James 2:15-16
 - Mark 12:17
 - Romans 13:1-7
 - Matthew 5:13
 - Daniel 2:21
 - What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
 - What did this teach you about God?
 - What did this teach you about man?
 - What did this teach you about salvation?
- **REFLECT**
 - What is gnosticism?
 - What does Pastor Erik mean by functional gnosticism?
 - What responsibilities do Christians possess as citizens?
 - Why does the government exist?
- **RESPOND**

- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?
- Have you considered how you plan to steward your vote?

- **MEMORIZE**

- **Matthew 10:16** – *“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”*



- **BUILD UP:** How will you grow in your love and knowledge of the Lord this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
 - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men’s ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
 - **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story, or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
 - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area

by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **PRAYER**

- **Pray over any request from your group members.**
- **Pray for our directional elders:** Scott Marlow (lay elder)
- **Pray for our replanters:** Gracepoint Church
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
 - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
 - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
- **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
- **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>