

The Babysitter (who to NOT vote for)

Matthew 27:15-26, Galatians 3:23-24

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-babysitter/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

Prayer

So Lord, we thank you that you are taking us on a journey right now; we're on the journey. And we thank you that, Lord God, you're teaching us to love you. And I pray that we would love you with all of our heart, with all of our mind, with all of our soul, with all of our strength. I pray that you would speak your Word to us now, Lord God. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Message

I have *not* been excited to preach on this topic...but I suspect I'm supposed to preach on this topic. Looking back in my files, I was surprised to see how often I have preached on this topic,¹ although some have complained that I haven't preached on this topic.

After the last election, some left the church saying that I avoided this topic. I don't think I have avoided the topic; I just haven't told you who to vote for.

[Image: slide on screen depicting words: "I won't tell you who to vote for..."]

This morning, I will *not* tell you who to vote for, for four reasons... But I will tell you who to *not* vote for... for one reason. And maybe we should begin by taking a vote right now:

If you would like Jesus —(I'm not even asking if you think he exists)—If you would like Jesus the Christ to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, on the count of three, raise your hand (in your heart): "1, 2, 3."

OK, I think that was almost everyone here.

Now, how many of you would like Joe Biden to be President of the United States? On the count of three, raise your hand (in your heart). "1, 2, 3!"

I'm guessing that was not everyone.

Now, how many of you would like Donald Trump to be President of the United States? On the count of three, raise your hand (in your heart). "1, 2, 3!"

I'm guessing that was not everyone ...and that's a problem.

If Jesus is *our* King, it appears he hasn't told us who to vote for? (I know he has the power to do that and to make us listen.) So maybe he wants us to figure it out. That is, figure out: "Who should be leading the way?"

So, let's try: When I'm going on a trip or working on a task, *and* I want someone to lead the way, I want someone with the most knowledge about the task or trip. So, all things being equal, who thinks we should elect the candidate with the most knowledge regarding the task of president? Raise your hand. (Now, I know you'd all raise your hand, but you think I'm trying to trick you.)

How many think that the person with the most knowledge is Donald Trump? Raise your hand (in your heart). ...And how many think that that person is Joe Biden? Raise your hand (in your heart).

It seems we know that *we don't know*. It seems we know that there are problems with knowing who knows, ya know? Because:

1. To judge a person's knowledge, you need to have more knowledge than the person that you are judging. (That's why math teachers grade the homework of their students, and it's not the other way around.)

I'm not an economist, epidemiologist, climatologist, or political scientist, and I sure don't get briefings from the CIA. And even if I were one of those things, I still wouldn't know how to balance that thing with all the rest of those things.

1. So, I don't have enough knowledge to judge the president's knowledge...and
2. A person may have all sorts of knowledge and choose to use it for their own selfish purposes.

Well, all things being equal, who thinks we should elect the person who is most trustworthy, that is honest, for the office of president? Go ahead and raise your hands... I think that's everyone.

To be honest, a person has to believe that there is such a thing as objective Truth. If you think truth is entirely subjective, then truth is just another word for what you think, and there is no such thing as honesty. Honesty is a person's subjective commitment to objective Truth. And if a candidate is dishonest, there's really no point in voting for him or her, for you really have no idea who he or she is.

So how many think Donald Trump is most honest? (In your heart...)

How many think Joe Biden is most honest? (In your heart...)

Now, if you raised your hand for Biden, you probably began to recite some stories you heard on MSNBC or CNN, or maybe thought of some promises he kept while in office as Vice President. If you raised your hand for Trump, you thought of some promises that Trump has kept and thought of some stories you heard on FOX news.

Hopefully, y'all have just listened to each candidate talk and just asked, "Is this guy telling the truth, or did he just lie?"

If you raised your hand for Trump, maybe you thought, *I hate the way he brags, exaggerates, and speaks in hyperboles, but I love the fact that he just speaks his mind without hiding his thoughts under a pile of politically correct mumbo jumbo.*

If you raised your hand for Biden, maybe you thought, *He is awfully cautious about towing the political line, but that's because he wants to bring us all together, rather than rip the nation apart, to save his own ego."*

Whatever the case, don't you have to kind of admit that we really don't know much about secret arrangements possibly recorded on laptops, threats made to strippers in parking lots, and the intentions of hearts having conversations through translators with folks in the Ukraine? I can't even judge my own heart; how do I judge a candidate's heart filtered through opposing media outlets? ...Yet, Jesus did say, "You'll know a tree by its fruit."

We do know that Trump hasn't followed through on several marriages—that is, several wives haven't been able to trust him, and he has been caught on tape saying some rather unfaithful things while married to the lovely young woman to whom he is married right now... But on the other hand, some would say, *"OK fine... but he hasn't sat idle or actively encouraged the abortion of millions of babies, while professing to be a good Roman Catholic."*

And that brings up another issue doesn't it? A president might know about the Way, and speak some Truth, but not do anything to protect Life—human life. If you've been at the Sanctuary for more than an hour, you know that we profess to believe that every human life is an eternal treasure, for it bears the very breath of God in even the most hideous of earthen vessels.

So let's vote: How many think the president should be all about protecting, nourishing, and cherishing, human life? (pause) I think all of us. See? We all think the President should be about finding the Way, speaking the Truth, and guarding human life. We all agree on the deepest level.

But how many think Donald Trump would be best at doing these things? How many think Joe Biden would be best at doing these things? That's where we disagree—our judgments of these two men.

Personally, I find it horrifying and more than a bit insane that in my country, right up to the moment of birth, a doctor can kill a baby on one side of the cervix (or even partly on one side of the cervix)... and get paid for it. And yet, a moment later, and on the other side of the cervix, if that doctor did the same thing, he would be tried for murder. Something is not right.

I'm concerned that we have sacrificed far more babies to the gods of our own sexual desire and convenience in the clinics of this country than were ever sacrificed to Molech in the valley of Gehenna. I'm also concerned that if you've had an abortion, you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Molech or Satan does not have your baby. If it was, in fact, a baby, I'm convinced that Jesus has your baby; *and* if you didn't know it already, you have already been forgiven.

I'm convinced that Jesus has the babies, but I want the practice to stop, for I think it does tremendous damage to young women, men, and the collective psyche of our nation.

But some would argue that it isn't best stopped through legislation, but through other means, including social services and health care. And some would point to statistics from various times and places that would seem to indicate this may, in fact, be true. And some would say, even if this is true,

it shouldn't be legal. And some would say, "*Well, it's a decision that shouldn't be entrusted to someone like Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or any government agency.*"

Solomon wrote, "*...You do not know how the Spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child.*"ⁱⁱ

I'm thinking Solomon was right—I really don't know exactly when "human life" starts, and neither does Joe Biden or Donald Trump. In Jesus's day, it was the practice to stone a woman caught in the act of adultery, and they didn't seem to worry about a possible pregnancy. Today, even our presidents are serial adulterers, and then claim to care about the unborn... and the whole thing is highly unbiblical, and confusing.

Well, I'm concerned about unborn human life. I'm even more concerned about human life that's already been born.

Some would argue that based on terrible theology and bad intelligence, we've gotten ourselves into foreign wars or started foreign wars, particularly in the Middle East, that have resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians just since 9-11. Others would point out that respect for the Sanctity of Human Life would most certainly include illegal immigrants and their separated children. It most definitely would include people of other races and classes. If we think we're more valuable to God because of our nationality, race, sexual desires, or level of income, we surely haven't spent much time at the foot of the cross.

Jesus actually never mentions abortion in Scripture, but he talks a lot about racism, and he talks incessantly about caring for the poor. It's weird to argue that the government should care about unborn babies but ignore the poor, or care about the poor and not unborn babies. And just as with unborn babies, there's a whole lot of debate about the best way to care for the poor.

Some would argue that government intervention only creates a society of victims crippled by dehumanizing and degrading government programs. Others argue that that argument only hides corporate and individual greed. Then others argue that this argument, against the argument, only masks government agencies groping for power.

Then someone says, "Well, shouldn't we all just love one another?" And that's true—who would vote against that one? But what does Love look like?

In Acts 2, The Spirit fills the church and they share everything in common. You say, "*That sounds like communism.*"

Yep, sure does.

In 2 Cor. 8, Paul takes an offering and writes, "...that there might be equality." You say, "*That sounds like socialism and those Democrats.*"

Yep, sure does.

In Galatians, Paul writes, "For freedom Christ has set us free. Let us not submit to a yoke of slavery." And Jesus tells parables about stewards and investments. You say, "*That sounds like free market capitalism and the Republicans.*"

Yep, sure does.

In Acts 2, they shared everything in common because they wanted to. “*That’s free market communism.*”

Yep, sure is! And yet, I don’t think we’re supposed to wait for everyone to speak in tongues before we feed the poor and care for immigrants.

And now, you may say, “OK Peter, but if we elect Biden, he could give into the radical left; church institutions might be replaced by social services, and political correctness could one day mandate the renunciation of Jesus.”

Yep, that is absolutely correct. In fact, just about one hundred years ago, that very thing happened in one of the most Christian nations this world has ever seen. And it was responsible, and still is responsible, for absolutely immense suffering and a great shroud of darkness in the former Soviet Union, China, and indeed, all over this globe.

Now, you might also say, “OK Peter, but if we re-elect Trump, he could so easily be seduced by fascists and racists on the radical right; He could start a war and even commit a genocide to soothe the wounded egos of white American males that have felt disenfranchised.”

Yep, that is absolutely correct. In fact, just about eighty years ago, that very thing happened in perhaps the most advanced Christian and reformed culture that this world has ever seen. My dad fought in that war, so in my family, Hitler wasn’t an abstraction. And my dad used to remind me, “Peter, that was Germany; we’d be profoundly foolish to think the same sort of thing couldn’t happen to us.”ⁱⁱⁱ

So, you may be thinking, “Peter wouldn’t you tell us not to vote for Hitler?”

Well, I sure hope so, *if* I knew Hitler was Hitler... At that time in Germany, many thought their choice was between Hitler and Stalin. So, which is worse: Hitler, who kills six million, or Stalin, who kills sixty million?

I don’t know who you should vote for—I have an opinion, and I’ve already voted—but I don’t know who Jesus is telling you to vote for. And it seems that God isn’t interested in telling me what he’s telling you. I’m convinced that he’s told me all sorts of things, (and I’ve got a bunch of fascinating stories as evidence), but I don’t think he’s told me that. I’ve found that there are some questions that he just doesn’t seem to be interested in answering in any sort of obvious way.

However, some do say, “Well, God chose this particular candidate, so we have to vote for his candidate.” But unless I’m misunderstanding Scripture, God chooses every candidate, and “[Jesus] is (present tense) the ruler of the kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5). God chose Nebuchadnezzar, to sack Jerusalem and take the Jews into bondage. God chose Caesar, Pilate, and Herod all to play their part, but that doesn’t mean that I should vote for them.^{iv}

And if God chooses a person, his vote is not dependent on my vote—Isn’t that the point of God electing in the first place? It’s the very idea that *if* God elects, he’s not dependent on our election.

So anyway, I’m not going tell you who to vote for *because*...

[Image: Slides on screen with following numbered reasons]

1. It’s illegal... (But I don’t really care about that) So...
2. I don’t know who Jesus wants you to vote for.

I have my opinions, but I don’t know who you should vote for because I don’t think Jesus has told me who you should vote for.

And now, you may be thinking, “OK I get it! It’s because God has ordained the American democratic process as the correct means of discerning his divine will... Right?”

Well... actually, something very close to our modern American democratic process does show up in Scripture, at a profoundly critical moment. But I don’t think it tells us who to vote for, so much as who we should never, ever vote for. And I’m not so sure that it validates the process.

It’s recorded in all four Gospels; we’ll begin in Matthew and reference John.

Matthew 27:15 · **“Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas.** [Now some ancient manuscripts don’t include the name “Jesus,” and some do. “Jesus,” which is really “Joshua,” was a common name in that day *and* it means “God is salvation,” *and* sounds just like the noun “Salvation,” in Hebrew.^v “Barabbas,” most likely means “Son of Rabbi,” that is, “Son of a Teacher of the Law.”^{vi}]

Verse 17: **So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?”** [The Christ, ‘the anointed.’”]

Pilate is asking, “Which ‘Jesus’ do you want?” And I think Matthew is beautifully pointing out the difference.

- Do you want Salvation through legislation (that is the law)?... or
- Do you want Salvation through God’s Anointed?—Which means something like “His Chosen One,” his choice.

Verse 17: **So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” ¹⁸ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.**

In other words, they thought Jesus was first, and they wanted to be first. So, they wanted to take his life and make it their own life. Which is thoroughly ironic, since Jesus wanted to give them his life and make them his own.

You see, the choice reminds me of the Tree of Knowledge of Law (good and evil) and the Tree of Life. On each tree there is “a Jesus,” and whether or not everything lives or everything dies depends on how you take him. And how you take him depends entirely on how you see him: as Dead law or as he truly is, Living Love. That’s something for you to ponder later, when you get the notes and have read my books on Genesis and have some time to get philosophical.

[Image: still photo from *The Passion of the Christ* depicting Barabbas and Jesus the Messiah before the crowd with Pilate]

For now, just note that Pilate is calling for a vote: Jesus Barabbas or Jesus the Messiah. He’s asking humanity: “Which one do you think is Salvation; what is the Good, and who gives you Life?”

Verse 19: **While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal**

because of a dream about him.”²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds [through social media] to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.²¹ The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”²² Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!”²³ Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

All of them—every one of them—voted for the wrong guy.

And now you might be thinking, “OK, duh, I got it; we should vote for Jesus!” But here’s the insanely obvious problem: *Jesus isn’t running for office.*

Remember: At the start of his ministry, Satan tempted Jesus with his ability to make bread from stones (which could be quite a welfare program), miracle stunts to silence his critics, and all the kingdoms of this world... And Jesus told Satan to be gone.

Later, in John 6, perceiving that his followers were about to come and make him king, Jesus ran away. At the start of this week, great crowds had lined up for Jesus as he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. They chanted, “Hosanna to the king of kings!” But now five days later, realizing that Jesus refused to run for office and drive out their Roman oppressors, they chant, “Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!”

He refused (and refuses) to run for office. And yet, he’s the king of kings, and Lord of Lords... And yet people don’t recognize him, for they do not yet comprehend Love—who is their Father—and what he does—who is his Word and their salvation.

They all vote against Jesus the Messiah, but by the end of this Sixth Day, Jesus—God’s Chosen One, King of Kings and Lord of Lords—will vote for them. They all vote to take his Life, ...and God votes to give his Life for all.

He lifts his head on the tree in the Garden and cries out: *“Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.”*

Understand? Jesus is a radically different kind of leader.^{vii} And to even throw his name into the race, feels like an abomination. Probably because it is—it’s the abomination of desolation that takes its place in the temple of your soul. It’s the imitation Christ, the Antichrist, Jesus Barabbas—*Salvation by Legislation.*

So, am I saying that you shouldn’t vote? *No...* absolutely not. I’m saying, “Remember what it is that you’re voting for.”

In Galatians 3:23, Paul writes, **“Now before faith came...”** (see he’s talking as if faith is a person that come to you, not a decision you make in your head. Last time we saw that faith in us is Christ Jesus in us.)

—**“Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law”**—(That’s the notion that the knowledge of Good and evil could save you—like “Jesus, son of the Rabbi,” Pilate, Herod, and Caesar, with all their political legislation, or the Scribes and Pharisees with all their religious legislation.)

“Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. The law was our guardian (paidagogos: literally child instructor, or babysitter)...

The law was our [babysitter] until Christ came, in order that we might be justified [made right] by faith.”

Faith, Hope, and Love in us is Christ Jesus in us, sitting on the throne in the temple of our souls. Christ is not *knowledge* of the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life—He is the decision to love in any and all situations. You don’t make Love; Love makes you, and is making you, all the time.

Once Love comes to reign in your heart, you no longer need exterior restraints to make you choose *the Good*; your nature is *the Good*. And you don’t need anyone to guard your freedom, for you will do what you want to do, for *what you want to do* is who you are and what you do.^{viii} That’s a long and fascinating conversation, but if you think you need someone to guard your freedom, you’re not free, and you don’t yet know what true freedom is.

Until Christ comes to reign in your heart, there is a *paidogogos*—a babysitter. In the Old Testament, for Israel, God provides the judiciary branch, legislative branch, and executive branch in the form of prophet, priest, and king. He even provides something like that for other countries as well. But all of these forms are fallen, just as humanity is fallen—the babysitter isn’t much better than the babies it babysits—but at least for the most part, the babysitter keeps the children from killing each other and setting the house on fire.^{ix} In the New Testament, Paul refers to these entities as “*the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.*” ...human entities and angelic entities.^x

The office of the president is the office of *the paidogogos*—the babysitter.

Not many people know this story:

One night, in my first marriage, my wife and I wanted to get a babysitter for our children, in order that we could just go out to dinner and celebrate our great love for one another. My wife suggested Margaret, and I suggested Jannette. She said, “Peter, I heard that Janette got busted for smoking pot... and, frankly, she just rubs me the wrong way.”

I said, “*Honey, I know for a fact that Margaret doesn’t care about our kids.*”

My wife screamed, “Maybe you don’t care about our kids; what could be more important than the babysitter whom we choose to watch over our children? It’s a sacred task!”

I said, “*Precisely. And that’s why I am hereby, and forthwith, declaring you an idiot.*” ... She punched me; I punched her; it turned into an all-out war.

The police came and took our children away... And we got a divorce because we thought the babysitter was that important.

And now, let me say that not many of you have heard that story because I just made it up—I’m still married to my first wife, Susan, and we never divorced over the babysitter. That’s absurd! *It never happened, and yet, it happens all the time, doesn’t it?*

If you break fellowship with another believer in Jesus the Christ because you disagree over Joe Biden or Donald Trump, isn't that *exactly* what you are doing?

You are the Body of Jesus the Christ...

If you tear that body apart because you disagree with someone else about the best person to be employed in the office of the babysitter, I think you've just crucified Jesus the Messiah, because you have chosen another Jesus to be your salvation; you've chosen the babysitter over the Word of our Father. That's idolatry, an abomination, and the worship of the imitation Christ, the antichrist—a sin that we've probably all committed in varying degrees, but one from which we—the American church—need to repent.

"So, should we vote?" you ask.

Yes! Yes! Yes, for the babysitter.^{xi} We should all get together, argue, debate, and investigate, because the babysitter matters... just not in the way we're tempted to think that the babysitter matters.

So, will I tell you who to vote for?

No, No, No,... for:

[Image: slides on screen depicting following reason:]

1. It's illegal...^{xii}
2. I actually don't know and
3. Even if I did know who to vote for, I wouldn't tell you—at least not now and here—for you might think it matters...

...And it really doesn't matter, not in the way you're tempted to think it matters. Actually, the worse the babysitter is, the better the children of God often are...

All my favorite stories come from houses governed by the worst babysitters. I'm thinking of people like Watchman Nee, who died for Jesus in Communist China; Richard Wurmbrand, who suffered for his faith in Communist and fascist Romania. People like Corrie Ten Boom, Maximillian Kolbe, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who suffered under the Nazis. People who look like Jesus the Christ, who suffered under Pilate the Roman, and Herod, the Jews.

Have you ever thought about how you would've voted that day? I mean, they must've thought the vote really mattered.

You know, the Jews believed that the unborn were sacred, but the Romans not only practiced abortion, infanticide was the norm. Communicable disease was an everyday occurrence for which the Jews had the most advanced regulations, and the Romans violated and despised. And talk about unjust wars—the Romans basically invented the concept. Rome devastated the Jewish economy with an entirely unjust system of taxation... and most definitely dabbled in racism, class warfare, and slavery. The roads into Jerusalem were literally lined with crucified Jews, and in forty years the Romans would utterly destroy Jerusalem. It was truly a life and death situation.

And Jesus could've stopped it; they all knew it that day—He could've literally mobilized the crowds on Palm Sunday and led a revolution. It appears that's exactly what Jesus Barabbas had already attempted to do. Luke tells us that he led an insurrection in the city, and John refers to him as a

“lestes;” he was a political revolutionary... like Simon Bolivar, George Washington, or anyone who runs for office and promises change.

And then, just so we get the point, John includes one more election that day 2000 years ago. After Pilate called for the election of Barabbas or Christ, he scourged Jesus, dressed him up as a king; and while the Jews chanted “Crucify him! Crucify him!” he said to the Jews, “*Shall I crucify your king?*”

And the High Priest responded, “*We have no King but Caesar.*”

[Image: Still image on screen from *The Passion of the Christ* depicting Barabbas]

I think that John is pointing out that whether it’s an insurrectionist, like Barabbas, who led a riot in the city like those occurring in our cities today...

[Image: On screen is showing sculpture of Caesar]

Or it’s an emperor, like Caesar, or Trump, or Biden...

[Image: Still image on screen from *The Passion of the Christ* depicting Caiaphas]

Or even a high priest, like Caiaphas, or maybe even a religious leader like me... Listen closely, to any one of them, and you’ll probably discover that they’re all pretty much saying the same thing:^{xiii}

- They’ll make you a promise: They’ll say that they will help you save your life.
- They’ll appeal to the same method: They want power; they’ll take power through some form of legislation, adjudication, and enforcement.
- They’ll speak the same motto: They will say, *Rome first, Israel first, Democrats first, Republicans first, Us first*, which usually means *me first* and appeals to *me first* in you—it’s a coalition of selfishness.

But now... listen to God’s anointed. What does he say?

[Image: Still image on screen from *The Passion of the Christ* depicting Pilate and the bloodied and beaten Jesus the Christ]

He says: *The last will be first and the first will be last. The humble will be exalted, and the exalted will be humbled.*

How? Well, this is his method. Look at him: He’s doing it right now. He’s giving up all power to reveal the Judgment of Love. And he doesn’t only make promises; he is the Promise: In Him, you will lose your life (how’s that for a campaign promise?) You will lose your life, and find it forevermore.

He’s not the babysitter; he’s the heart of your Father in Heaven, and the head of everything that’s anything including you. His Kingdom is not of this world (or his servants would fight), but once he sits with you, on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul, you will see that you are His Kingdom, and you are always just one heartbeat away from an entire New Creation—His Kingdom come, his will that’s done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

“So, I won’t tell you who to vote for” ... *because*:

[Image: Slide on screen depicting the following reasons:]

1. It’s illegal... and
2. I don’t actually know... and
3. If I did know, I wouldn’t tell you—at least not in a worship service on Sunday morning—for you might think it matters... and it really doesn’t matter, not in the way you’re tempted to think it matters.

Do you understand what I’m saying? If you vote for Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or any other candidate because you think that they can save you...I think you just voted to crucify the one who actually does. For you cast your vote for Barabbas: Don’t vote for Jesus Barabbas.

But now this is also the Gospel: Even though we all have already voted for Jesus Barabbas, King Jesus has always, and will always, voted for you. That’s number four...

[Image: Slide on screen depicting the previous reasons along with #4 below:]

4. You don’t vote for the King, but the King of kings, votes for you.

He lifts his head on the tree in the garden and cries, “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*” And he delivers up his Spirit, the Spirit that descends upon each of us, romancing our hearts and teaching us to say, “*Abba Father.*” And that’s how he does more than fix the economy; that’s how he gives you a new heart and makes all things new... and he’d like you to join him in that task.

One of the most brilliant and beautiful things that I’ve ever read is Dostoevsky’s “Myth of the Grand Inquisitor”—it’s a story that one brother tells to another brother—in the middle of Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan, the atheist, tells it to Alyosha, the devout. In the story, Jesus returns to earth during the Inquisition in Seville, Spain, and Jesus does what Jesus did—he heals the sick, touches lepers, and loves the outcasts. But the Grand Inquisitor finds him and throws him in prison.

And while Jesus refuses to speak, for twelve pages, the Grand Inquisitor hurls accusations at Jesus... And the heart of all his accusations is this: that Jesus refused the evil one’s offers in that desert temptation long ago. He says, “Instead of seizing men’s freedom, you gave them even more of it.” He tells Jesus that if he had only turned stones to bread, impressed critics with his miraculous power, and taken authority over the kingdoms of the world, he would’ve rid humanity of the burden of love, the burden of learning to choose the good in freedom. He tells Jesus that the church has corrected his work by accepting Caesar’s purple and that humanity is now thankful. In other words, they love church, for the church tells everyone exactly who and what to vote for.

“Our Kingdom will come,” rails the Grand Inquisitor. “...Tomorrow You will see obedient herds, at the first sign from me, hurry to heap coals on the fire beneath the stake at which I shall have You burned, because, by coming here, You have made our task more difficult. For if anyone has ever deserved our fire, it is You, and I shall have You burned tomorrow. *Dixi* [I have spoken]!”

“The Grand Inquisitor falls silent,” says Ivan Karamazov, “and waits for some time for the prisoner to answer. The prisoner’s silence has weighed on him. He has watched Him; He listened to him intently, looking gently into his eyes, and apparently unwilling to speak. The old man longs for

Him to say something, however painful and terrifying. But instead, He suddenly goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips. And that is His only answer. The old man is startled and shudders. The corners of his lips seem to quiver slightly. He walks to the door, opens it, and says to Him, 'Go now, and do not come back . . . ever. You must never, never come again!' And he lets the prisoner out into the dark streets of the city. The prisoner leaves."

"And what about the old man?" asks Alyosha Karamazov.

"The kiss glows in his heart . . ." replies Ivan Karamazov. "But the old man sticks to his old idea."

"Alyosha stood up, walked over to him," writes Dostoevsky, "And kissed him on the lips."^{xiv}

I'm saying, it's great to argue about the babysitter, *if* you remember it's the babysitter that you're arguing about. But if you want to change the world, you'll need something far more powerful—you'll need *the kiss*.

This is the kiss. (Peter motions toward the communion table.)

Communion

He took the bread and he broke it, saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat." And in the same way, he took the cup, saying, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you."

So in this point in the service, we invite you to join us. Take your wine or your juice and your bread, and then this is what I want you to do: I want you to just concentrate...on the kiss. (Peter holds up his piece of bread.) And receive the kiss. (Peter puts the piece of bread in his mouth.) It's the kiss of your Father. Receive the kiss into the very depth of your being, into the very center of your heart, and let the kiss burn you. Let it burn away your anger, and your fear, and your anxiety, and your sorrow, and your shame. ...And then you give that kiss to everyone you meet. It's not the babysitter—it's the heart of your Father. Amen.

Benediction

So Father, we thank you that you're good. And we thank you that you're sovereign, and that you actually never left the house, we only thought you left the house, you're watching everything on video or however you work that out.

And so Lord God, one day, if some descendent of some fascist Republican looks at any one of us in the face and says, "Don't you know that I have the power to take your life?" thank you that with all seriousness we can look back and say, "You have no power over me, except that which has been given you from above—my dad."

And then Lord, if some communist Democrat descendant of whoever sits on a throne and says, "Don't you know I have the power to take your life?" we could look at that person and say the exact same thing: "You have absolutely no power over me...except that which has been given you from above—and that one is my dad. And he's good."

So God, I pray that you would forgive us for our fear. And I thank you that you give us your courage. Your heart. In Jesus's name, Amen.

In Jesus's name, believe the Gospel...and you will be the Gospel. Amen.

Endnotes

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/how-to-battle-the-beast-politics-and-religion/>
<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-election-the-beautiful-thing-iv/>
<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/talking-politics-with-solomon/>

ⁱⁱ Ecclesiastes 11:5 RSV

ⁱⁱⁱ If there is one fact we really can prove, from the history that we really do know, it is that despotism can be a development, often a late development and very often indeed the end of societies that have been highly democratic. A despotism may almost be defined as a tired democracy. As fatigue falls on a community, the citizens are less inclined for that eternal vigilance which has truly been called the price of liberty; and they prefer to arm only one single sentinel to watch the city while they sleep.

- G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, reprinted 1993), pp. 58-59

These three people, Pascal, Blake, and Dostoyevski, illustrate perfectly what I have long believed to be the case, that history consists of parables whereby God communicates in terms that the imagination rather than the mind, faith rather than knowledge, can grasp. You know, there are many pleasures in being old and gaga. One of the greatest of them is to realize that history is largely nonsensical. How does this come about? Because when you get to be into your middle seventies, events and situations and circumstances that you very vividly and clearly remember are already history. Yet when you read them written as history they are completely and utterly unconvincing, with no possible resemblance to what you remember as the original on which they are based. So you have the pleasure of knowing that you need not bother in any way about history. The only reason for studying what goes on is to get at this parable that it conveys. Otherwise it is just like an interminable soap opera whose situations endlessly recur although the characters change.

- Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 9

^{iv} Acts 4:27-28

^v *Yeshua* is the common Aramaic form of the Hebrew *yehoshuah* (transliterated "Joshua," in English). *Yeshua* is transliterated into Greek and then English as "Jesus." The feminine noun translated "salvation" is basically pronounced in the same way.

Yeshua, from *Yahweh* and *Yasha* (v. "to save") means "God is Salvation" or "God saves."
Yeshua is pronounced *yesh-oo-aw*, which is how one also pronounces the noun translated "salvation."

3444 יְשׁוּעָה [*yáshuw'ah* /*yesh-oo-aw*/] n f. Passive participle of 3467; TWOT 929b; GK 3802; 78 occurrences; AV translates as "salvation" 65 times, "help" four times, "deliverance" three times, "health" three times, "save" once, "saving" once, and "welfare" once. 1A salvation, deliverance. 1A welfare, prosperity. 1B deliverance. 1C salvation (by God). 1D victory.
- Enhanced Strong's Lexicon

^{vi} "Barabbas," might mean "son of abba," that is, "son of dad," which is every son—every son is a son of a dad—and so, it's rather pointless to say "Barabbas."

So "Barrabbas" most likely means "son of rabbi," that is, "son of a teacher of the law"

^{vii} It is again clear. . . that the divine state is quite incompatible not merely with the wicked totalitarian state but with every conceivable human regime. . . .

In all these dimensions the world is concretely violated by God Himself in the fact that the man Jesus came into it and is now within it. . . .

We do not know God at all if we do not know Him as the One who is absolutely opposed to our whole world which has fallen away from Him and is therefore self-estranged; as the Judge of our world; as the One whose will is that it should be totally changed and renewed.

- Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, p. 109-110

viii Whom the son sets free is free indeed; you will, will what God wills, and what God wills is called reality.

You will look Pilate in the face and say, "You would have no power over me except that it had been given you from above... and that place "from above" is the throne room in the sanctuary of your soul."

ix For a good description of the babysitter, read Romans 13:1-7, remembering that the fellow who wrote this, often wrote from prison and also wrote Ephesians 6:10-20.

x In the Old Testament, kings of countries are often integrally associated with the "god" or "gods" of that country—they appear to be fallen spiritual principalities.

xi I enjoy getting together with friends and arguing over the relative merits of the babysitter; but I hate it when I sense that because of the babysitter, our relationship may be in jeopardy.

xii It's illegal for a 501 (c.3) non-profit organization to promote a political candidate.

xiii These three people, Pascal, Blake, and Dostoyevski, illustrate perfectly what I have long believed to be the case, that history consists of parables whereby God communicates in terms that the imagination rather than the mind, faith rather than knowledge, can grasp. You know, there are many pleasures in being old and gaga. One of the greatest of them is to realize that history is largely nonsensical. How does this come about? Because when you get to be into your middle seventies, events and situations and circumstances that you very vividly and clearly remember are already history. Yet when you read them written as history they are completely and utterly unconvincing, with no possible resemblance to what you remember as the original on which they are based. So you have the pleasure of knowing that you need not bother in any way about history. The only reason for studying what goes on is to get at this parable that it conveys. Otherwise it is just like an interminable soap opera whose situations endlessly recur although the characters change.

- Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 9

A Jesuit once wrote a note to Father Arrupe, his superior general, asking him about the relative value of communism, socialism, and capitalism. Father Arrupe gave him a lovely reply. He said, "A system is about as good or as bad as the people who use it." People with golden hearts would make capitalism or communism or socialism work beautifully.

- Anthony De Mello, *Awareness* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1990), p. 151

xiv Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brother's Karamazov, Translated by Andrew MacAndrew* (Toronto: Bantom Books, 1981) pp. 302-317