

## NEXT STEPS: BIG IDEA NO. 1 (REVIEW)

- Name the impulse for control in our lives and world
- Advocate for policies that push power downward. The practice, the politics, the advocacy for decentralizing power - subsidiarity. "a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level."
- Build the local church as a place of imagination "I have come to the rather simplistic notion that imagination is the capacity to image a world beyond what is obviously given. That's the work of poets and novelists and artists—and that's what biblical writers mostly do. I think that's why people show up at church. They want to know whether there is any other world available than the one that we can see, which we can hardly bear. I have subsumed a lot of those ideas under the rubric of "imagination" for my own work" (W. Brueggemann).

## BIG IDEA NO. 2 NEXT STEPS (NEW!)

- Regularly learn to tell...
- Different power...
- Repent of...

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## THE TOOL AND TRAP OF CIVIL RELIGION

What happens when the church and state are brought together? What can possibly go wrong? A lot it turns out from history. We are STILL recovering from the damage of this collusion and co-option in the West. We've already explored Big Idea No. 1: Too much centralization/concentration of power is not good for humanity; and also, Big Idea No. 2: The church is to be an alternative politics by its very life. We will build on understanding why the church must remain in tension with governments and other powers, while we as individuals may be engaged with both. When a politician utters the words, "God bless Canada" which god is being invoked, is it Jesus?

Revelation 13:4, CEB

<sup>4</sup> They worshipped the dragon because it had given the beast its authority. They worshipped the beast and said, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

Matthew 5:13-16, CEB

### Salt and light

<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It's good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people's feet. <sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

Mark 10:35-45, CEB

### A request from James and John

<sup>35</sup> James and John, Zebedee's sons, came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

<sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

<sup>37</sup> They said, "Allow one of us to sit on your right and the other on your left when you enter your glory."

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "You don't know what you're asking! Can you drink the cup I drink or receive the baptism I receive?"

<sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered.

Jesus said, "You will drink the cup I drink and receive the baptism I receive, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left hand isn't mine to give. It belongs to those for whom it has been prepared."

<sup>41</sup> Now when the other ten disciples heard about this, they became angry with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around. <sup>43</sup> But that's not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant. <sup>44</sup> Whoever wants to be first among you will be the slave of all, <sup>45</sup> for the Human One didn't come to be served but rather to serve and to give his life to liberate many people."

**NAB STATEMENT OF FAITH:** In continuity with our immediate forefathers and the larger fellowship of Baptists throughout history, we seek to practice and propagate by God's grace the following convictions:

- We believe religious liberty, rooted in Scripture, is the inalienable right of all individuals to freedom of conscience with ultimate accountability to God. (*Genesis 1:27; John 8:32; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21; Acts 5:29*).
- Church and state exist by the will of God. Each has distinctive concerns and responsibilities, free from control by the other (*Matthew 22:21*).
- Christians should pray for civil leaders, and obey and support government in matters not contrary to Scripture (*1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-16*).
- The state should guarantee religious liberty to all persons and groups regardless of their religious preferences, consistent with the common good.

## SERIES BIG IDEAS

### No. 1: The Forgotten Evil of Centralization (Concentration of Power)

*1 Samuel 8, Mark 10:35-45, Matthew 5:13-16, Revelation 13:4*

### No. 2: The Church IS An Alternative Politics

*Matthew 5:13-16, Psalm 20:7, Revelation 13:4*

### No. 3: Kingdom Political Activism, Jesusy Approaches to Activism

This may look similar at a fly-over level but crucial differences. (E.g. Anti-Racism is not enough, reconciling local community).

### An interesting aside: Acts 12:21-23

What hinders No. 2? One BIG elephant in the room: Civil Religion, the problem of Co-op-tion. Civil religion Christianity is not Christianity.

Politically the church (Salt, Light, Deeds) is to be another power, decentering the state. The state often wants to claim god-like powers, but when it does it oversteps.

*The church is God's answer to individualism and centralization. "...the church as a pioneering community, which takes a new path different from the world, goes out ahead of the world, and provides leadership to the whole human family through its own faithful following of God's will" (KE, 202).*

## CIVIL RELIGION VS. AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

*"Throughout history most cultures have been influenced by some religion or other [Or statist atheism, which functions religiously often more so than traditional religion!...]...the religion plays an important role in providing the culture with a shared worldview, shared history, shared values and practices, common holidays, and so on. In short, it helps bind the culture together. We might think of this as the role of civil religion... (Myth of A Christian Nation, 113).*

## PROBLEMS OF CIVIL RELIGION CHRISTIANITY

- Global missions harm
- Illusion that a Christian civil state is good, actually Jesus-centred, vs. Pagan
- Distraction - a waste of your energy and time from kingdom of God work.
- Forgetting power-under prayer. Intercessory prayer is a distinct Kingdom of God form of social-action. Old Testament and New Testament emphasize the power and urgency of prayer as dictating the fate of a nation, not what society or politicians did, but whether or not God's people prayed (Boyd, MYTH 117). Ezra 22:29-31
- Jesus style social activism - better than wokeness and SJW (social justice warrior) approaches. Ephesians 6:12, not against flesh and blood