

PILGRIM HOME CHURCH

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. There were three "big ideas" in this series about the church state (review them). Which ones do you struggle with? Was anything a new or different angle to you? What other "big ideas" would you have wanted to explore in the series?
2. Read 1 Samuel 8. What do you like about this story? Where do you see common issues today?
3. Why are we tempted to see BIG Glamorous Centralized Governmental "solutions" as answers? Where do BIG 'SEXY' SOLUTIONS often go wrong? Why do we get caught up in this?
4. Where do you think the church has been co-opted, made "chaplain" to the state/political party agendas? What does this do for the church's witness and its own mission?
5. Tearing down walls put up by family (think racial/ethnic identity), economic status, education, and nationality is part of the Gospel. It cuts against many "justice" approaches in the world today. It is centred in love as defined by Jesus. How is this counter-cultural and change how we work for justice?
6. Review the major points of the Seven Ways to Join the Kingdom Revolution. Which ones can we/you start or improve upon as individuals and as a Home Church (smaller units of the local church body)?
7. Other thoughts from the series? Other actions/next steps the Lord might be calling you/us to?

PRAYER:

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

PILGRIM CHURCH CHURCH + STATE

KINGDOM ACTIVIST

Justice is a key theme throughout the Bible. The ultimate shape and final justice is placed in God's hands. In the meantime, we are called to "do good," but with some crucial differences from the secular crusaders of justice in our world. One author put it this way, "...The Kingdom (of God) activist protests with the hope of seeing both the oppressed and the oppressor set free and she knows that hatred and vengeance only intensify the bondage of both." Joins us as we wrap up Church and State series this Sunday. Also a short Q&A conversation.

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8, Ephesians 6:12, John 18:36, Mark 12:13-17; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17, Matthew 5:28-42

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.

"When we recover the first-century context for Christian baptism, we discover its explosive socio political power. Those who were baptized were rejecting Rome's empire built on coercive violence, instead pledging a sacrament (oath) of allegiance to a cruciform king. *Caesar and the Sacrament* is a must read for those investigating salvation in early Christianity." - Matthew Bates, August 26, OnScript review of Alan Streett's *Caesar and the Sacrament*. Listen. Read.

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).

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

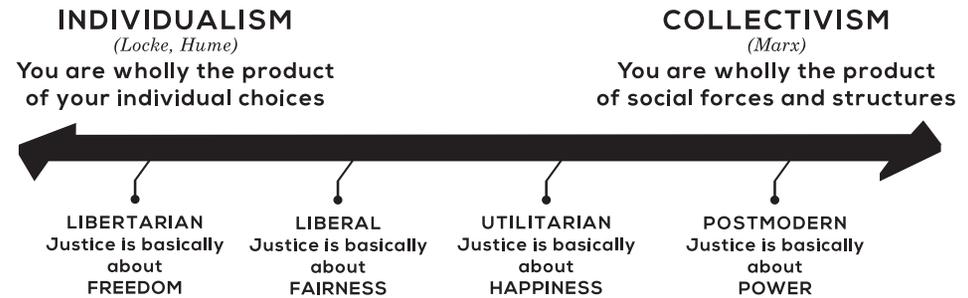
No. 3: Kingdom Political Activism, Jesusy Approaches to Activism

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

FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM WITH NON-JESUSY "JUSTICES": OPPRESSED BECOME OPPRESSOR

The fundamental issue when we have a Jesus-centred approach is our co-option by violent coercion. The sexy appeal to violence (coercion) is that the system has been stacked and the unjust are requiring violence of some kind. The old "eye-for-an-eye" argument to change. The problem being the solution sets up more injustice, so to promote the status quo or to blow it all up are false binary. Become politically non-binary (see what I did there?)!

"Forgiveness flounders because I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners. But no one can be in the presence of the God of the crucified Messiah for long without overcoming this double exclusion—without transposing the enemy from the sphere of the monstrous... into the sphere of shared humanity and herself from the sphere of proud innocence into the sphere of common sinfulness. When one knows [as the cross demonstrates] that the torturer will not eternally triumph over the victim, one is free to rediscover that person's humanity and imitate God's love for him. And when one knows [as the cross demonstrates] that God's love is greater than all sin, one is free to see oneself in the light of God's justice and so rediscover one's own sinfulness." — Miroslav Volf



TWO APPROACHES (FITCH AND KELLOR) TO BIBLICAL JUSTICE

christianitytoday.com/scot-mcknight/2020/august/critical-theory-tim-keller-and-david-fitch.html

- A. An objective truth to be argued for, over and against other versions of justice
- B. A tradition of justice to be worked out in the lives of Christians as a church under Jesus' Lordship, lived before the world (alongside other "justices") as a witness

"A" can become a coercive posture, while "B" asks us to be an advanced community living as a lab of love and justice and then offering it to the world.

"B" allows us to learn from Critical Theory without being written off entirely.

"...In my (not so humble) opinion, Reformed, Neo-Calvinists and/or Neo-Reformed thinkers have often argued that the idea of power itself cannot be avoided (a very Niebuhrian thing to say). They argue often that rule and authority is not a bad thing, it's the wrong use of such power that is a bad thing. I don't know if Tim Keller is arguing this way, but I nonetheless want to point to what I said above about the difference between the worldly power "over," and the way God's power works "with" and "among" (Mark 10:42-45) As such, dissecting and unwinding the effects of worldly power is a good thing and makes space for God's power to work through the church in the world" (D. Fitch).

THE EXAMPLE OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY, OR JUST "CRITICAL THEORY"

- "But from a Christian perspective, extreme versions of critical race theory suffer from an even worse defect—they wrongly place race at the center of human identity. Galatians 3:27-28 declares that "those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus." At one stroke, Paul sweeps away race, class, and sex as controlling identities. It's not that you're a "Greek Christian." It's that you're all Christian."

- "To state this fundamental spiritual truth is not to deny that a broken, sinful world (including an often broken, sinful church) persists in wrongly elevating race, gender, or class and often making those identities primary and central to their perceptions of others. But the role of the church is to oppose that false construct. All human beings are defined most principally by the shared reality that they are made in the image of God. All Christians are defined by Christ.

- In that construct, critical race theory can be an analytical tool (one of many) that can help us understand persistent inequality and injustice in the United States. To the extent, however, that it presents itself as a totalizing ideology—one that explains American history in full and prescribes an illiberal antidote to American injustice—it falters and ultimately fails. Moreover, as a totalizing ideology, it contradicts core scriptural truths."

- Another reflection:

www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality/

"Sin is here the kind of purity that wants the world cleansed of the other rather than the heart cleansed of the evil that drives people out by calling those who are clean "unclean" and refusing to help make clean those who are unclean." — Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation

SEVEN WAYS TO JOIN THE KINGDOM REVOLUTION (BOYD)

1. **Siding with the _____ and _____** (2 Corinthians 8:9)
2. **Anti _____ + Gospel Reconciliation** (Ephesians 2:15)
3. **Women** (John 4, Galatians 3:28)
4. **Classism**
5. **Ending the "Sin-Scale"** (Matthew 7:13, 1 Timothy 1:15-16)
6. **Deliverance, Liberation** (Ephesians 6:12)
7. **Breaking Cycles of _____** (Matthew 5:28-42, Romans 12:20, 1 Peter 2:21-22)

NEXT STEPS: BIG IDEA NO. 1 (REVIEW)

- Name the impulse for control in our lives and world vs. more decentred order
- 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."
- Engage! As a Church and as a believer in those organizations that make it local and relationship-centred.
- 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!)

- **Diagnosis yourself:**
 - Where in your life are you being sucked into seeing the church as chaplain to the state?
 - Where have you put too much hope or worry into political solutions?
 - How do you treat people who disagree with your sense of "right" politics? Less human?
 - How often is it "Us vs. Them"?
- **Regularly learn to tell the Gospel of King Jesus** to yourself and others (in a winsome way!). Immerse yourself in Scripture, Art, poets, the disempowered and margins - look their for truth about the state
- Different power...learn that the power we are told is all important by the "woke" left and conservative right - ignores a different kind of power that the church has (and the left/right when honest understand it enough to know it's a threat to their wars).
- Repent of...giving all your energy to politicians and rulers.

BIG IDEA #3 NEXT STEPS

- Review Boyd's "Seven Ways to Join the Kingdom Revolution"
- Pray and Engage