

Politically Homeless: Allegiance

John 18:36 - "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest... But now my kingdom is from another place."

I. Setting the Stage: The Challenge of Politics in Today's World

Every election cycle, people hope politics will address the most profound issues facing humanity, only to find that both policies and leaders fall short. The sermon opens by examining this recurring hope and disappointment, urging believers to remember that the ultimate solution does not rest in political figures. As Christians, we are called to be "citizens of heaven" (Philippians 3:20) and to find our identity and hope in Christ's Kingdom.

II. Jesus and Political Power: "My Kingdom Is Not of This World"

Jesus' trial before Pilate is a turning point that exemplifies His stance on political power. Confronted with the accusation of being "King of the Jews," Jesus clarifies that His Kingdom operates on a fundamentally different plane. His movement is defined not by geographical control but by essence—a radically different way to be in the world. His Kingdom does not advance through force but through sacrificial love.

- **John 18:36-37:** "My kingdom is not of this world... I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."
- **Interpretation:** Jesus redefines power, emphasizing that His Kingdom is spiritual and transformative rather than political and forceful.

III. The Church as an Outpost of Heaven

The sermon draws from Paul's metaphor of the church as a "colony of heaven" (Philippians 3:20). In the same way that Philippi was a "little Rome" with Roman customs and values, the church is to be a "little heaven," embodying Kingdom values in a world shaped by earthly kingdoms. This heavenly citizenship compels Christians to live as ambassadors of Christ's love and peace, often in opposition to worldly power structures.

- **Philippians 3:17-20:** "Join together in following my example... many live as enemies of the cross... but our citizenship is in heaven."
- **Key Insights:**
 - Like Rome's colonies, the church embodies the values of a "foreign" land—heaven.
 - Christians are to reflect the ethics of God's Kingdom

IV. The Danger of Enmeshment in Political Allegiances

The sermon highlights the risks of conflating religious and political identity, a tendency that can make criticism of a political figure feel like a personal attack. This enmeshment can blur the lines between loyalty to a political party and allegiance to God, leading to idolatry.

- **Key Points:**
 - When we become enmeshed with a political figure, criticism of that leader feels like a criticism of our values, worldview, and even our identity in God.
 - **2 Timothy 2:3-4:** Paul advises believers to avoid entanglement in “civilian affairs” so they may remain focused on their mission to serve Christ.

V. The Temptation of Power in Church History

Henri Nouwen is cited to illustrate how the church has often succumbed to the lure of power—political, spiritual, and economic—despite following a Savior who rejected worldly authority. This power struggle has historically led to distortions of the gospel, including the Crusades and the Inquisition.

- **Henri Nouwen:** "The temptation to consider power a holy instrument is real... easier to control people than to love people."
- **Key Insight:** The church's mission is not to gain power but to embody Christ's humble and sacrificial love.

VI. Jesus' Witness

Christ's witness to a different sort of power, even unto death, challenges believers to reimagine their approach to power and influence. His refusal to fight for political power underscores the principle that the Kingdom of God is fundamentally different from earthly kingdoms.

- **Key Examples from Jesus' Ministry:**
 - Washing the disciples' feet.
 - Ministering to marginalized groups, such as the Samaritan woman and the poor.
 - Forgiving those who persecuted Him, even from the cross.

VII. Practical Applications: Living as Kingdom Ambassadors

The sermon encourages believers to engage with political structures but without compromising their heavenly allegiance. Instead of aligning with partisan ideologies, Christians are called to model a third way, embodying the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and standing for values such as mercy, humility, and justice.

- **Matthew 5:** “Blessed are the merciful... the peacemakers... the persecuted.” Christians are blessed when they embody these traits, reflecting the values of God’s Kingdom.
- **Rich Villodas:** “The Church is not to be found at the 'center' of a left/right political world. The Church is to be a species of its own kind, confounding left, right, and center.”

VIII. Reaffirming Allegiance to God’s Kingdom

The sermon ends with a challenge to Christians to live out a radical allegiance to Christ, viewing political affiliations as secondary. Instead of being entangled in political idolatry, believers are invited to live as a “non-anxious presence” in the world, trusting God’s sovereignty over human governance.

- **Psalm 33:16-18:** “No king is saved by the size of his army... But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.”
- **Key Takeaway:** Political leaders will rise and fall, but God’s Kingdom endures forever. Believers are thus called to embody this eternal hope in their actions, relationships, and societal engagement.

IX. Concluding Call: A Radical Kingdom Pledge

In closing, the sermon invites believers to make a pledge of allegiance not to earthly nations or leaders but to the Kingdom of God. This pledge serves as a reminder of the church’s mission: to live out the values of heaven as a witness to the world.

A Pledge:

One: Today we pledge our ultimate allegiance to the kingdom of God.

To a peace that is not like Rome’s.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the gospel of enemy love. To the kingdom of the poor and broken.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To a king that loves his enemies so much he died for them.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the global church that transcends the artificial borders of nations.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the refugee of Nazareth. To the homeless rabbi who had no place to lay his head.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the cross rather than the sword. To the banner of love above any flag.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the one who rules with a towel at our feet. To

the one who rides a donkey rather than a war horse.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the revolution that sets both oppressed and oppressors free.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: To the Way that leads to life.

All: We pledge allegiance.

One: And together we proclaim his praises, from the margins of our nation
to the centers of wealth and power.

All: Jesus is LordOne: Who is your king

All: We have no king but Jesus