

I will vote on Tuesday. It is a privilege and a responsibility. I hope you will vote Tuesday. I hope you have considered carefully the qualifications of both men who aspire to be President for the next four years. I hope you will moderate both your hopes and fears for the next four years in one important way.

Many of us would agree with Professor Michael Sandel of Harvard that “two concerns lie at the heart of democracy’s discontent. One is the fear that, individually and collectively, we are losing control of the forces that govern our lives. The other is that, from family to neighborhood to nation, the moral fabric of community is unraveling around us.” (Democracy’s Discontent, 3) A Republican in the White House for 28 of the past 44 years has not changed that. It has not even slowed it. President Obama’s term in office has not changed that, and it may have deepened it.

The government can make just laws, but people in their life together at the grass roots weave together or unravel together the moral fabric of neighborhood and nation.

Moral Meltdown

Our troubled times offer the Church a chance to display its proposal for human flourishing with great clarity. I want to say a word about how we might display our vision for human flourishing. But first, I want to say a word about our troubled times.

Professor Sandel said that “the moral fabric of community is unraveling around us.” We hear other people say that America is experiencing a moral meltdown. Neither way of putting it quite catches what troubles our times the most. Here’s what I mean.

“America is experiencing a moral meltdown.” Really? Says who? Do you think gay and lesbian organizations with their deep pockets and political influence think America is experiencing a moral meltdown? They think supporting gay marriage is the moral equivalent of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, and it is immoral to oppose it. Do you think the loan officers who sold people subprime mortgages they couldn’t afford thought they were behaving badly? They thought they were behaving morally by putting people into their own homes with a share of the American Dream. When we buy any food we want any week of the year, do we ask if illegal immigrants harvested that food? Would we refuse to buy it if they did? Do we even want to know? Would our refusal to ask make us part of the nation’s moral meltdown? What troubles our times is the freedom of people to choose moral values with no moral standards to guide them.

Do I think America is experiencing a moral meltdown? Yes, I do. But Christians have a moral standard provided by the New Testament and reinforced by 2000 years of experience. We have something to measure by. That’s why we know a moral meltdown when we see it.

Neither political party has such a standard. “Rather than promote a particular conception of the good life, liberal political theory insists on toleration, fair procedures, and respect for individual rights – values that respect people’s freedom to choose their own values.” (Sandel, 7-8) Neither President Obama nor Governor Romney will change that.

Christian Citizens

In these troubled times the Church have a chance to display its proposal for human flourishing with great clarity. Romans 12:2 challenges us not to conform to the pattern of this world. Well, let’s not conform. Let us say that our nation doesn’t flourish when they treat moral values like items on the aisle of a supermarket. “Just pick the ones

you like; it doesn't make any difference." Christian teaching is at cross-purposes with liberal political theory.

This conflict highlights the importance of this present series of sermons. These sermons are a summons from God through me to you to **offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual worship**. If there is a moral meltdown in our nation, then offering our bodies to God matters more than ever. Christian teaching and Christian behavior will be at cross-purposes with liberal political theory at many important points. Let's be sure we are on the right side of that conflict, whatever happens on Tuesday.

However, that conflict does not change our desire to work for the peace and prosperity of our nation. Romans 13:1 anchors that desire in the will of God. **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God**. That's why we vote. Democracy has given us a share in the authority to govern, not least by our right to vote.

The apostle wrote these words to Christians living under a totalitarian regime that could at any time turn violent in its treatment of the Church. Those who govern do so by divine gift and may do so in ways that displease the divine Giver. But unless the authorities try to compel us to violate our conscience, Romans 13:7 is very clear.

Whether we have President Obama or President Romney on Wednesday morning, verse seven tells us how we who **offer our bodies as living sacrifices** to God are to behave amid all the emotions of a presidential election and a discontented democracy. **Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor**. Later Paul would write to Timothy: **I urge . . . that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness** – 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Here Where Our Souls Are Fed

Now, as we commune with Jesus Christ, whom we have not seen and yet we love, let us determine to heal the polarization that afflicts our nation, to stay away from unguarded language in public conversation, to pray for those in authority, and to declare and demonstrate the goodness and friendship of God in public ways.

If you have not tasted the goodness and friendship with God, then believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and join with this congregation in saying publicly that Jesus is Lord. He is good, and of His friendship there is no end!