

# Church and State

## Luke 3:18-20

**INTRODUCTION:** For many years now, this church has celebrated the birth of our Nation and its independence by the singing of patriotic hymns and reflection on those who have faithfully served our country in times of war and peace.

This year, we are taking an additional step and more clearly defining what it is we are celebrating. It has been said that, “***what gets celebrated, gets repeated***”. This year, we are answering the question, “what exactly do we want to repeat?”

So, we are calling this day - **Christian Heritage Sunday**. You may have noticed a little drama ensued on social media because of that nomenclature. That was not unexpected. In fact, the **vocal opposition** to suggesting that we dare dawn “Old Glory” and speak of this Nation’s **Christian heritage** is evidence enough of the concerted effort to abolish the influence of Christianity off of the public square.

**LAST YEAR** - we pointed out the rise of Cultural Marxism and its pervasive influence on **education, entertainment, government,** and even the **church**.

The intention of Cultural Marxism is to identify the **hegemony** (those with power) and bring about a pervasive cultural revolution that will NOT flip the script, but rather, cause enough social disorder that the state is able to step in and seize authorization control. The perfect storm arrived in 2020.

- **Racial conflict** was stoked in wake of the deaths of men like George Floyd and Ahmad Arbury.
- **Gender conflict** was stoked by the June 1, 2021, presidential proclamation of U.S. President Joe Biden in recognition of the LGBTQ community for **Pride Month**. The media quickly began to declare that gender was nothing more than a **cultural construct**. Biological males began to undergo hormone therapy, change their names and walk proudly into the ladies locker rooms of major Universities. Heroic figures like **Riley Gaines** began to emerge and speak out against the madness.
- **Social conflict** was stoked as COVID provided the perfect opportunity for governmental over reach in every sector of society.
- **Religious conflict** was stoked as denominations began to divide over these issues and new efforts began to modify the doctrinal convictions that had been held for over two millennia regarding qualifications for the biblical office of Pastor. And folks,

recognize that the issue at hand is rarely the real issue.

- **Physical Conflict** - was stoked as riots broke out in cities across our Nation. Just this week major cities in France are in flames as they experience a similar social upheaval.

Welcome to the chaos that has been intentionally created by **Social Marxism**. What is the end game? Is it to seize control and to turn our Nation into some sort of Soviet Republic? Not exactly - that was the game plan that worked for Russia, the developing of a strong Marxist host. That is no longer the intent.

**Today the goal is globalism.** Funded by the immense coffers of men like **George Soros** and now his son - **Alex Soros** who has declared that he intends to be more engaged in political change than his father. An intense, global strategy is underway to erase national borders, and to bring economies and institutions under the sway of a powerful global federation that has yet to be revealed.

None of this comes as a surprise to Christians. The Word of God has predicted the coming of a one world government that emerges from the ruins of the old Roman Empire since the days of the Prophet Daniel. Then ultimately, the revelation of this Satanic Superman we know as Anti-Christ who will seek to lead this one world government.

Several names are given to him in God's Word - The Man of Lawlessness, the Little Horn, The Man of Sin, the Prince who is to Come, the Willful King. All referring to the same individual.

The only thing standing between AntiChrist and World Domination - **is this book (hold up bible), and you people (refer to the congregation). That makes you a problem.**

So why Christian Heritage Sunday? We are owning that fact that, in the words of that great theologian Taylor Swift, *"It's me, I, I'm the problem, it's me".* :)

The true church, committed to the book, is as Christ said, Salt of the Earth - Salt both seasons and preserves. You are that which God uses to preserve our world, our nation, and our community from further degradation. In the words attributed to Hillel the Elder, **"If not you, then WHO? If not now, then WHEN"**.

*WELL HOW ARE WE TO DO THAT?*

**CONTEXT:** Our text today in the book of Luke speaks to the churches duty toward the state from non other than the Prophet John.

Now - before we get into the text, it is important that we clarify what we mean by state and government.

**What is a Government?** According to the Oxford Dictionary - a Government is that group of people who are responsible for **controlling a country or a state**. **Government means control.** That is not necessarily a bad thing.

You see, before the fall control was not necessary, mankind was as free as they would ever be. But then man joined in that cosmic rebellion with Satan and they were cast out of Eden, settling to the East.

Remember what God did to keep them from returning to Eden and eating of the tree of life?

### **Genesis 3:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a **flaming sword** that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Notice that - the first weapon mentioned in scripture - a sword. In other words the power of life and death over man. Paul would later use that phrase to describe human government when he says,

### **Romans 13:4b (ESV)**

<sup>4b</sup>. he **does not bear the sword in vain**. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

What government did Paul have in mind in Romans 13? The Roman government and it's Emperor Nero, certainly not a Christian government. But Paul suggests that even the Roman Government had been brought into power under God's Divine providence and they the people should pray for them because **order is vital to HUMAN FLOURISHING and the SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.**

**Why would God institute the AUTHORITY, the Power of Control, of one group of humans over another?** Well, here is the idea...

When sin infected the human race, then spread to all men for all have sinned... **THE AFFECT OF THE SIN WAS UNIVERSAL, THE EFFECT WAS PARTICULAR.**

In other words, every human was **affected** by the fall in the same way. That is the doctrine of total depravity, every persons capacity to seek God as an act of the will has been devastated by the fall. Thus, requiring an intervening work of the Holy Spirit for one to come to faith. The AFFECT was universal - this is true of every human.

The EFFECT however was different. Both Cain and Able was AFFECTED by the fall. But the EFFECT was greater on Cain, leading to the first human murder, a FRATRICIDE.

So, if you survey all of humanity - all are AFFECTED by the fall, but the EFFECTS are substantially different. **The Goal of human government is that those more noble**

***souls among us would have the power of the sword over those on whom the fall had greater effect.***

Solomon said it this way in **Proverbs 29:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, **but when the wicked rule, the people groan.**

- **In Biblical History** - you see the constant resetting. A bad King comes into Power, leads the nation astray... God judges them and raises up a good King. It happens over and over again.
- **Extra Biblical History** - is no different. We don't have the option of perfect leaders, unaffected by the fall... there is only one of those and one day He will be King. Till then, we seek to 1. Appoint Good Leaders, 2. Influence the Leaders we have.

*With that in mind, see how that is done in our text...*

**TEXT: Luke 3:18–20 (ESV)** speaking of John the Baptist, Luke writes...

<sup>18</sup> So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.

Note that John is demonstrating the mainstay of Christian influence, the faithful preaching of the Gospel to people. Day after day, week after week, never underestimate the power of the preached word to change the world.

But there is another duty that we have to those in power, look at verse 19.

<sup>19</sup> But Herod the tetrarch, **who had been reproved by him** for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, <sup>20</sup> added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

Now, Luke mentions this, almost in passing and moves on. Matthew and Mark give us further insight into what exactly happened.

### **Matthew 14:3–5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, <sup>4</sup> because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

Remember - When Herod the Great died, his Kingdom was divided into 4 parts, with 4 of his sons being made Tetrarch over 4 separate regions. Herod **Antipas** was made Tetrarch in Galilee [GREEN ON MAP]. **Philip** was made Tetrarch of a larger but less influential region on the west bank [LIGHT BLUE ON THE MAP].

Herod Antipas had an affair with Philip's wife.



Antipas divorced his wife and married Philip's wife, which was wrong on multiple counts. John publicly addresses the issue calling it both immoral and unlawful.

<sup>5</sup> And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet.

Now that is the danger of immoral and unjust men being in power. They are willing to use the power of their office to attack their opponents.

LISTEN, when I was **ordained** to ministry, I gave up the right of using this sacred desk to attack people I had a personal problem with. That is an abuse of the office. In the same way - when a man or woman is sworn in to political office, they don't swear allegiance to a political party or an special interest group, they swear to protect and defend the constitution of the United States. If they use the power of the office to attack a political opponent unjustly - they have abused their office and are no longer worthy of such power.

**Mark 6:20 (ESV)** indicates that the relationship between Herod and John was complex...

<sup>20</sup> for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, **and yet he heard him gladly.**

Interesting effect John had on Herod. Herod seemed to **like** John, he heard him gladly, he also feared him. That in itself is indicative of the balance of power between the Church and the State.

The **State** is to be respected by the **Church** because the **State** bears the **SWORD**, the power of life and death.

The **Church** is to be respected by the **State** because the **Church** holds the **KEYS** to a greater and ultimate Kingdom.

How the story follows is a sad account that indicates the pitiful things that happen when fools are in power.

You see there was a lot of drama already in Herod's household without John's preaching adding to it. Herod wanted to get rid of John, Herodias wanted to get rid of John. And then it happened...

**Matthew 14:6–12 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, <sup>7</sup> so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. <sup>8</sup> Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." <sup>9</sup> And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given.

See how fickle the integrity of his man? He cared little about his oath to his first wife. But this oath, he must keep.

<sup>10</sup> He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, <sup>11</sup> and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. <sup>12</sup> And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.

Herod would be haunted by the murder of John for the rest of his life. In fact, when word of Jesus's miracles reached Herod, he was convinced that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead.

In light of this text, how ought we understand our duty toward our nation and government?

## 1. Defend our Christian Heritage

John the Baptist knew that the Nation of Israel had been around much longer than Herod Antipas, or Rome. His preaching reflected the fact that God was the ultimate authority and that even Herod was subject to a higher King than Caesar.

Our founding fathers certainly recognized that all human authority is derived from Divine Authority.

- They were aware of the depravity of the human soul, thus they wove into our structure of government a system of checks and balances so that no branch of government went too far in the use of its power.
- America's Founders believed that humans were created in the *imago dei*—the image of God. Part of what this means is that humans are reasonable beings. This led them to conclude that we the people (as opposed to the elite) can order our public lives together through politics rather than force. It also helped inform early (and later) American opposition to slavery.
- The concept of the separation of Church and State (*a statement found nowhere in our constitution or bill of rights. Rather it was a line from a letter by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association*) has come to mean - the complete removal of God from Government.

Proponents of a completely Secular government, fail to mention that Jefferson himself (though not a Christian) issued calls for prayer and fasting as governor of Virginia, and in his revision of Virginia's statutes, he drafted bills stipulating when the governor could appoint "*days of public fasting and humiliation, or thanksgiving*" and to punish "*Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers.*"

As a member of the Continental Congress, he proposed that the nation adopt a seal containing the image of Moses "extending his hand over the sea, caus[ing] it to overwhelm Pharaoh," and the motto "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."

He closed his second inaugural address by encouraging all Americans to join him in seeking “*the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our forefathers, as Israel of old...*”

*Don't get the idea that the solution to all of our problems would be solved if we could get more God language in our official documents. There is no more secular state on the planet than the United Kingdom, but if you read it's founding documents you would think Paul himself wrote them.*

Every law has a moral component to it - which morality ought to influence our system of government? The Morality of Atheism? Sherea Law? Marxism? Support candidates who lead in such a way that our government operates as a steward of God's authority.

## 2. Submit to Human Authorities that Do Not Contradict Divine Authority

Last week we saw that John was questioned by tax collectors and centurions. He had the opportunity to call them to insurrection - but he did not.

He would agree with the words of Paul in **Romans 13:1–2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

Yet, John also recognized that there was a higher authority than Herod and he called even Herod to submit to Divine law.

## 3. Express our Ultimate Citizenship

John knew the truth of Paul's words to the **Philippians 3:20–21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

He was able to LIVE differently and PREACH differently because he was a citizen of a higher kingdom.

There reason it is so difficult for Church in America to maintain a prophetic voice against a decaying culture, is simply because there is very little difference between the morality of the pagan world and that of the professing church.

**Adrian Rogers said**, “*It's hard to build a dam when you floating down the stream*”.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** December 7, 1941 under the command Admiral Yamamoto - the command was given to attack the US Naval Fleet at pearl harbor. After that event, something happened in our nation. Admiral Yamamoto recognized the change when he said, "I had every intention of dealing a fatal blow to the US Fleet by attacking Pearl Harbor. I fear that all I have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve".

Friends, the old Devil has been dropping bombs on us for long time now. Sometimes it seems that he has already dealt a fatal blow. But, I'm praying that today - you will look around at what is happening in our Nation and WAKE UP sleeping giant! Be filled with a terrible resolve. Let's honor the King of Kings in the State House, the Church House, and in Our House.