

## Redeemer Sunday School // Fall 2020

### ***Faithful Politics: Following Jesus in a (Hyper)Partisan Age***

#### **Challenges:**

- Our hostile, partisan climate makes talking about politics difficult and scary
- Our political formation has often been anemic; focused on “correct” conclusions, rather than equipping us to engage holistically as citizens of God’s Kingdom
- We simultaneously feel cynical towards politics, yet convicted about our responsibility to seek the wellbeing of the city/state/nation/communities God has placed us in
- We also feel hopeless about our ability to bring any kind of positive change

#### **Goals:**

- provide basic theological framework for a Christian approach to politics
- engage major biblical/theological texts that shape these questions/conversations
- model charitable dialogue (and disagreement!) in a fractured, partisan age
- equip participants to more fully/faithfully engage the American political system at federal, state, and local levels

#### **Week 1 (Sep 13) // Politics as Stewardship**

Key Text: Genesis 1:27

Key Questions: What does it mean to be made in God’s image? How does God’s command to “exercise dominion” shape the way we think about politics today? In other words: what are people for, and what is God’s vision for our life together?

#### **Week 2 (Sep 20) // Principle Questions and Challenges**

Key Texts: Psalm 10, Romans 5, Revelation 21

Key Question: What are the main ideas, tensions, and questions that have shaped and occupied Christian political thought throughout history?

#### **Week 3 (Sep 27) // What are Governments For? A Biblical Theology of Civil Authority**

Key Texts: Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, Revelation 13

Key Questions: Why, according to Scripture, do governments exist? What role do they play in God’s purposes for the world? How should Christians relate to civil authority?

#### **Week 4 (Oct 4) // Historical Perspectives: Augustine and Aquinas**

Key Texts: Augustine’s *City of God* (Books IV & XIX), Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* (Part II-II, qq. 90-108)

Key Questions: What did Christendom’s two most influential theologians think about justice, the state, and the law?

#### **Week 5 (Oct 11) // Mercy Month Panel Discussion: Mercy, Justice, and Neighbor Love**

Key Question: what does mercy and justice look like “where we are” in our own local context?

## **Week 6 (Oct 18) // Historical Perspectives: Reformation Era**

Key Texts: Luther’s *Secular Authority*, Calvin’s *Institutes* (Book IV, Chapter 20), *Schleitheim Confession* (Art. VI)

Key Questions: In what ways did the Reformers continue or depart from prior Christian political thought?

## **Week 7 (Oct 25) // American Political Thought**

Key Questions: How did the United States come to be, and what major questions/goals have shaped our political system?

## **Week 8 (Nov 1) // Politics for Exiles: City of God, City of Man, Seeking the Welfare of the “Cities” We’re In**

Key Text: Jeremiah 29:7

Key Questions: What does it mean to “seek the welfare” of the communities God has placed us in (local, state, national, etc)? How does Kingdom citizenship shape our national citizenship? What does voting mean, and how should we navigate competing priorities? Can (or should) Christians participate in political parties that don’t share our goals, values, beliefs, and priorities?

## **Week 9 (Nov 8) // Proximate Justice: Politics, Disappointment, and the Hope of the Gospel**

Key questions: What does it look like to process disappointment in politics? How do we stay motivated when perfect justice/righteousness/shalom isn’t available this side of glory? How might the promise of Christ’s coming restoration impact the way we engage here and now?

## **Week 10 (Nov 15) // You Shall Not Bear False Witness**

Key questions: How should the ninth commandment shape our speech, media habits, and the way we interact with political sparring partners?

## **Weeks 11-12 (Nov 22 & Dec 6) // Contemporary Issues**

## **Week 13 (Dec 13) // Beyond the Voting Booth: Practical Ways to Engage**

Key Questions: Besides voting, what practical ways can we promote good in the political sphere?

## **Week 14 (Dec 20) // The Role of the Local Church**

Key Questions: When it comes to politics, what role does the local church play? How should this play out in the church “gathered” vs. “scattered”? In what ways might the church bring the Lordship of Jesus to bear on pressing issues and political questions?