

Jesus has the First and Last Word - Revelation 2:8-11

Why do we often avoid talking about topics like faith & politics in public? Is it because we don't want to fight, or be challenged, or be ridiculed?

As the "Church" we are called to be "salt & light" in this world! But we live in a post-Christian society & our country is polarized spiritually & politically.

Our day has many similarities to the day in which these letters were written. Christianity was not popular then either & the political scene was chaos!

It's often said that pastors should never use the pulpit to advance a political agenda! I won't! But when the Word of God, & the gospel, speak truth into our politically crazed & spiritually confused society I cannot remain silent.

There may be a price to pay, but the cost of being silent is far greater!

The church in Smyrna paid such a price for taking a stand in their day.

- They faced religious opposition from those loyal to Rome & from the Jews.

- They faced political opposition in the form of poverty, slander, prison, death

But with great persecution, came great faith. Their pursuit of heaven proved greater than the threats of man to conform to the patterns of the world!

Jesus' commended this church for enduring in the midst of great opposition.

They were one of two churches that Jesus did not confront. He simply commanded them to continue to be faithful, even to the point of death.

To be a follower of Jesus, and to speak the truth of God in our world, comes w/ great risk! It was true in the 1st century AD & it's true in the 21st century as well.

But we are ambassadors for the Kingdom of God, called to speak and represent that Kingdom in this world, no matter the cost!

So what does that look like in practice? How can we be a Smyrna church today?

In the words of the Apostle Paul in **Romans 12:2** – **"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."**

We need to do as the Smyrna church did & give Jesus the first & last word!

Revelation 2:8 - "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.'"

The Christians in Smyrna, though mostly Jews & under Roman rule, owed their

allegiance to a different Kingdom, b/c of what Jesus did for them! So do we!

We are in this world, but we don't belong to this world. Our allegiance is to Christ! What does it look like for us to give Jesus the first & the last word?

- If you align yourself with Democrats/Republicans, what would Jesus say?

Jesus said, **"My kingdom is not of this world" – John 18:36**

The Apostle Paul says in response to this, **"Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." – Philippians 3:20**

- If you align yourself with/against President Trump, what would Jesus say?

Jesus said, **"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, & pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons/daughters of your Father who is in heaven..." – Matt. 5:44-45**

Paul said, **"I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions & thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings & all who are in high positions"- 1 Tim 2:1-2**

Rom 13:1 - "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there's no authority except from God, & those that exist have been instituted by God."

- If you declare yourself to be Pro-Choice/Pro-Life, what would Jesus say?

Every life is sacred b/c God created man (male & female) in His image! **Gen. 1:27**

The Apostle Paul said, **"Your body is not your own, you have been bought at a price. So glorify God in your body!" – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

1 Cor. 6:12 – "'All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are good. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything."

- If you align yourself with/against the LBGTQ+, what would Jesus say?

"Let him who is w/out sin among you be the first to throw a stone..." John 8:7

"First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." - Matthew 5:7

"Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst"- 1 Tim. 1:15

The world doesn't like this approach because we aren't choosing a side and conforming to their patterns! To do this invites persecution from the world!

Remember what Jesus said to the church in Smyrna in **Revelation 2:9-11!** Let Jesus have our first & last word as we stand as His ambassadors in this world.

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