

# Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord

**Three more days and it's finally over!** I'm referring of course the presidential election. What a crazy ride it has been, and generally depressing and unsettling for most of the nation. I've said that our primary choice has come down to a creep and a crook. This is sad because I'm certain there are thousands of men and women all over the country who would be better qualified. People with more character and capability to lead our nation than the two we're left with. Regardless, here we are. My text this morning is repeated in Ps 33 and Ps 144:

“Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.”

I want to encourage us this morning that we can be a blessed people if we seek the Lord, and seek to “turn the world upside down” with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But first, a little history lesson to lighten our perspective of the current times. We like to think this is the worst, most contentious election in American history, but there have been others.

**Back in 1804** - In a duel held in Weehawken, New Jersey, Vice President Aaron Burr fatally shoots his long-time political antagonist Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton, a leading Federalist and the chief architect of America's political economy, died the following day.<sup>1</sup>

So imagine the sitting vice president killing his political rival in a duel.

**1876** - Democratic Governor Samuel Tilden of New York won 250,000 more ballots in the popular vote than his Republican opponent, Rutherford B. Hayes, and snagged 19 more electoral votes. But Tilden was still one electoral vote short of the required majority (185), and 20 votes remained uncounted: Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina remained too close to call, as each party accused the other of fraud, while in Oregon an elector was declared illegal and replaced, with controversial results. As the crisis mounted, threats of another civil war loomed.

An agreement was eventually reached in which the Republican Hayes was given the election on the condition of federal troops being removed from democratic southern states. The result was a long-term pause in post civil war reforms and an entrenching of Jim Crow laws in the south.

1912 - Recently returned from the 10-month African safari he took after leaving the White House, Theodore Roosevelt found himself drawn back into politics as the 1912 election approached. After his close friend and handpicked successor, William Howard Taft, angered Roosevelt and fellow progressives by siding increasingly with the conservative wing of the Republican Party, Roosevelt challenged Taft in the primaries. Denied the nomination, he bolted with his supporters and formed the Progressive Party. In one particularly shocking moment of this wild campaign season, a fanatic shot Roosevelt in the chest during an event in Wisconsin; the self-proclaimed “Bull Moose” actually finished delivering his speech after taking the bullet. In the end, Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote, helping the Democrat Woodrow Wilson win the White House.<sup>2</sup>

So by historical standards, our election season has been relatively tame – no duels, shootings, or threats of civil war. And the good news is our nation, founded by great men who feared God and understood the inherent evil within men and yet the great potential of free men who fear God, has survived periods of great tumult and unrest. I firmly believe if we turn our eyes to our Lord, we can again rise up from these times and be blessed.

Ps 33:12-22

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD , the people he chose for his inheritance.

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<sup>1</sup> “Jul 11, This Day in History - Burr slays Hamilton in duel”, History.com

<sup>2</sup> “7 Most Contentious U.S. Presidential Elections”, Sarah Pruitt, April 26, 2016. History.com

13 From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind;  
14 from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth –  
15 he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.  
16 No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.  
17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.  
18 But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,  
19 to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.  
20 We wait in hope for the LORD ; he is our help and our shield.  
21 In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.  
22 May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD , even as we put our hope in you.

## **1. What does it mean to be blessed?**

This word blessed is also translated ‘happy’. Right now I see a lot of people who aren’t necessarily happy. In fact, we are discontent for the most part. But if we seek the Lord, we can be a blessed and happy people. What does this include?

### **Free from fear**

- **God looks down and sees.**
- **God considers everything men do.** God is not surprised or uninvolved. He is paying close attention.
- **God’s eyes are on those who fear him – to deliver them!** We are not abandoned by God

### **Living in reverent fear is the key to true happiness!**

Prov 28:14 Happy *is* the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

What does this look like? I believe this means that we live like we don’t belong to ourselves. We consider our ways in light of the fact that God is our creator, he is in charge. Everything we have is from His hand, everything we are is by His grace.

- When you start your day, acknowledge God as Lord.
- Ask for God’s blessing and commit your ways to him daily.
- Consider how your time is spent – are you really living for Christ? Or yourself?
- When tempted to sin – know that God is watching and fear the consequences.

### **Free from bondage**

The psalm talks of a people:

- whose hope is on the Lord
- who wait upon the Lord
- and trust in His Holy name.

One of the saddest things I see is how many people, Christians included, who are waiting upon the government to do something.

To create jobs – government spends money, it doesn’t generate money.

To help race relations – government can't change hearts.  
To be everyone's parent and look after us.

Now there is a role the government plays in this, but it is time for Christians especially to stop looking to government as our daddy and start to HOPE, WAIT and TRUST in the Lord.

The apostle Paul wrote this in  
2 Cor 1:8-10

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. <sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

It is a trap to be dependent on the government. It takes away a sense of contribution, of fulfillment to work and use your God given abilities to do things! Work is a great blessing.

I just want to be happy, in the biblical meaning of the word. Blessed by God. Free from fear and free from bondage.

## **2. What does it mean to have God as our Lord?**

Blessed are the people WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD

We are a nation with many Gods. People are naturally inclined toward worship. But let's define this a bit.

- We worship money
- We worship entertainment
- We worship athletes
- We worship our own comfort and pleasure

To worship means to give your attention to something. To adore it, to love it.

I think a key problem is that we don't take time to acknowledge God, but we get caught up in the things of the world. We don't stop and consider God and his creation so as to be thankful. Consider this warning from the book of Romans:

Rom 1:18-23

<sup>18</sup> The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup> since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Two things I see here:

1. Glorifying God for his greatness and our total dependence upon him.
2. Giving thanks to God.

I really want to challenge us to consider whether we are putting God first? Do we lose sight of the glory of God? Are we a thankful people? When we get caught up in our own stuff, the cares of this life, we become worried, worn down, unhappy.

Take time today to consider the greatness of God. How he made the world and all its beauty. Take time to thank him for his creation. For giving you life and breath. For every good thing in your life. For giving us Jesus so we can be saved. For making us a part of His family.

What a blessing it is to have the Lord as our God.

I also want to challenge us to renounce the other God's in our lives. The sins we fall back upon. The ways we use our time and money without asking God first. Lord forgive us for our self-centered ways. May we truly acknowledge you as the Lord.

### **3. How do we become a nation whose God is the Lord?**

We can never hope to have a national religion, but there was a time when Christian influence was deep and wide. This nation was founded upon the ideal that only by having people of inward morality can we have a nation based upon limited government which gives people true freedom. Samuel Adams said this back in 1778:

*Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness.*

Kirk shared last week about turning the world upside down.

#### **Acts 17:2-6**

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup> But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious,\* took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. <sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."

#### **Rom 1:16**

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

We must not fear the future but aggressively attack the future with a mindset of war. Not with earthly weapons or means, but with worship, prayer, and the proclamation of the gospel of love and truth. We cannot be afraid to stand firm in the Word and not afraid to confront the ideas of our generation.

Martin Luther King Jr. said this in 1963:

*The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool.*

Sadly much of the church has turned to accommodating the evil in the world rather than confronting it and offering the hope for change.

Recently a prominent evangelical Christian author and speaker – Jen Hatmaker – has recently stated that she believes a homosexual union can be Holy in God’s sight. Unfortunately many Christians have gone this route, undoubtedly bowing to the pressure to not be judgmental or unloving toward the world who has declared that which is evil in God’s eyes to now be OK.

But there is nothing loving in leaving people to indulge their sinful nature. We all have things in our flesh which we desire. I am certain with little doubt that had it not been the Holy Spirit’s restraint upon my life that I would have wrecked my marriage. I could say that I was just created with a desire to be sexually promiscuous and that it should be OK. But just because I have that struggle doesn’t mean it should be accommodated. Thank God that Jesus saved me from that, and he continues to save me from that such that I can live in purity and deny my fleshly desires.

The world needs to be told that God is still God. He is still Holy. Sin is still sin and this Holy God will judge the world in righteousness. But yet God is also love. He made a way for sin to be dealt with by punishing Jesus on the cross for all of it. So if we turn from and renounce our sinful ways and follow Jesus we can be forgiven, cleansed of all unrighteousness and healed.

**Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. Let us have no other gods, but let us wait, hope and trust in the Lord. Glorifying God for who he is and being a thankful people. Let us stand in the gap for our nation through prayer, but also through making every opportunity to share Christ with those around us and to stand up and speak the truth when given the chance.**

### ***Brief appeal to vote regardless of the lack of good options***

We live in a unique time in history when our form of government allows and requires the people to be involved in the decisions and direction of our nation. And while we may be discouraged by the low quality of the choices before us we must recognize that not voting is a choice. And while it is probably not appropriate to share my political views from the pulpit this morning, I have prepared a brief summary of my opinions and how I intend to vote this Tuesday for your consideration. I invite you to grab one of these afterwards if you are curious.

There are big issues at stake. Religious liberty is one that has significant weight on my mind as one of the two candidates has expressed open hostility toward religious freedom. This would be a dangerous and dark turn for our future if religious liberties are further eroded from the public square.

In a speech not long before she launched her 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton made a stunning declaration of war on religious Americans. Speaking to the 2015 Women in the World Summit, Clinton declared that “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed.”

“Rights have to exist in practice, not just on paper. Laws have to be backed up with resources, and political will,” she said. “Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases have to be changed.” – Hillary, NEW YORK CITY, April 24, 2015

Answers in Genesis founder Ken Ham recently threw his hat in the ring. "Hillary Clinton's comments garnered a lot of attention from Christians across the nation who were understandably and rightly upset that Clinton would even suggest such a thing," he said in his blog. But according to one writer he cites, her words might not be too far off from what's already happening in the Christian community. "Religious freedom has never been under more scrutiny, nor has it ever been more acceptable to personally attack Christians and their livelihoods for their beliefs," he quotes the writer, A.D.P. Efferson, as saying. "There is no longer any institutional refuge for the religious. It is not at all surprising, then, that significant numbers of Christians have learned to adapt as a result."

*I have no doubt that, if elected, one of Hillary Clinton's prime targets will be the religious freedoms of all people of faith across our nation. The federal government is already using Title IX to attack the religious freedoms of faith based colleges and universities.* – Jerry Fallwell Jr.

## Why Does Religious Freedom Matter?

By [Jennifer A. Marshall](#)

The key to America's religious liberty success story is its constitutional order. The Founders argued that virtue derived from religion is indispensable to limited government. The Constitution therefore guaranteed religious free exercise while prohibiting the establishment of a national religion. This Constitutional order produced a constructive relationship between religion and state that balances citizens' dual allegiances to God and earthly authorities without forcing believers to abandon (or moderate) their primary loyalty to God.

This reconciling of civil and religious authorities, and the creation of a Constitutional order that gave freedom to competing religious groups, helped develop a popular spirit of self-government. All the while, religious congregations, family, and other private associations exercise moral authority that is essential to maintaining limited government. The American Founders frequently stated that virtue and religion are essential to maintaining a free society because they preserve “the moral conditions of freedom.”<sup>3</sup>

Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness. – Samuel Adams  
October 16, 1778

The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. – Martin Luther King, Jr.  
1963

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas G. West, “Religious Liberty,” Claremont Institute, January 1997, at <http://www.claremont.org/writings/970101west.html> (November 16, 2010).