

SERMON 27 OCTOBER 2019

Living as Christians in a polarised society

Questions for home groups

Key passages to read:

- Romans 12: 1-21
- Matthew 5: 3-16; 21-26; 38-48
- Matthew 7: 1-6
- 1 Timothy 2: 1-4
- 1 Samuel 8: 1-22

Our national context

The long-running dispute over Brexit has had a huge impact on British society. What do you think of these options for how Christians might handle the topic (note: there are not necessarily rights or wrongs in this list, as the best option will usually depend on the details of the particular situation):

- Keep off the topic because it's so sensitive?
- Keep off the topic because it has become so boring?
- Develop a Christian view on Brexit, and argue for this in conversations with others?
- Keep an open mind and listen to others?
- Try to get alongside and support others who are struggling or mourning over Brexit?
- Be accepting of all viewpoints on Brexit, but not expressing our own views?
- Expressing own personal views on Brexit, but in a respectful way?
- Others?

Checking ourselves

The sermon suggested that we need to “check ourselves” – our standing before God and our motivations – before we engage in conversations with others on Brexit (Romans 12: 1-3; Matthew 7: 3-5).

- Can you share practical advice on how we might “check ourselves”?
- Should this “self-checking” be an occasional activity or an ongoing one?
- What obstacles or challenges can we encounter in “checking ourselves”?

Leadership is very difficult

The sermon asked us to realise how difficult political leadership is. Leaders are especially in need of our support and prayers. See: 1 Timothy 2: 1-3; Matthew 7: 1-2; 1 Samuel 8: 1-22.

- Can you share any experiences you have of the challenges of leading well, and why this is so difficult?

- Do you believe that – if we listen carefully to God – there will always be a clear right way forward for any political (or other) decision? Or do you believe that many issues are more complex, nuanced and “greyer” than this?
- How easy do you find it to pray for our political leaders – especially for those with whom you disagree or don’t trust? Do you have any advice on how to overcome difficulties in this?
- Do you sometimes find yourself participating in widespread public cynicism and criticism of politicians? How might we avoid this?

Maintaining unity in the Church when we strongly disagree with each other

The sermon suggested that we need to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4: 3) in the church. But this is easier said than done when an issue becomes as polarised as Brexit. See: Matthew 5: 21-24; Romans 12: 10.

- Because unity in the Body of Christ is so important, would it be best for us to keep off the topic of Brexit in order to avoid division and animosity?
- Or would making Brexit a “taboo” only give us a false sense of unity, so would it be better to find ways to talk respectfully to each other about it, and about our differences?
- Are there any “down-sides” to not talking about Brexit within the Church?
- Or does none of this matter – should we simply focus on spreading the Gospel?

Behaving as a Christian in the polarised world

The sermon outlined three ways in which Christians should be distinctively different from the world in the current national political context: 1) by not retaliating to provocation (Matthew 5: 38-40; Romans 12: 17,19); 2) by loving those with whom we disagree (Matthew 5: 43-47; Romans 12: 14,20); and 3) by living at peace with everyone (Matthew 5: 9; Romans 12: 16,18).

- Can you share any examples of what happened when you “turned the other” cheek to someone? Or “blessed” your opponents?
- “Loving our enemies” is such a well-known Christian teaching, but it can also be extremely difficult to do. Can you share practical experiences on how this can become more fully part of our daily Christian walk?
- What do you think it means “to live at peace with everyone”?
- The sermon suggested that the new, polarised national context might create new opportunities for us to be authentically Christian in wider society. Do you agree? Or not?

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