

Talking Politics with Solomon

Ecclesiastes 8:1–15

#9 in our series from Ecclesiastes

December 11, 2016

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Message

Let's Watch TV

Clip from "Saturday Night Live"

The scene is set with two images:

The first says, "MSNBC The Place For Politics 2016"

The second says, "The Presidential Debate"

[Crowd cheers and applause. Actors portraying Martha Raddatz and Anderson Cooper begin acting out a mock presidential debate.]

Martha Raddatz: *Hello and welcome to the second, and worst ever, presidential debate. I'm Martha Raddatz.*

Anderson Cooper: *And I'm Anderson Cooper, and before we begin we just need to do one last thing.*
[Martha and Anderson pick up shot glasses and drink them in unison.]

Martha: *Much better. Let's get this nightmare started. Please help us welcome the candidates Republican nominee Donald Trump and can we say this yet?*

Anderson: *Probably fine.*

Martha: . . . *President Hillary Clinton.*

[Actors impersonating Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump enter. The crowd erupts into applause and cheers. The "candidates" circle round each other like they're in a wrestling match. They reach out to shake hands, and then at the last minute fix their hair instead.]

[The camera pans back to the news anchors "Martha" and "Anderson".]

Martha: *Thank you both for being here*

[A woman named Patrice stands.]

Patrice: *Hello. My question is, "Do you feel you are modeling appropriate and positive behavior for today's youth."*

Hillary Clinton: *Hi Patrice! Let me start by walking over to you just as I practiced. Right, left. Right, left. Right, left. . . Now, Patrice, you're a teacher?*

Patrice: *No.*

"Saturday Night Live" clip continued:

Hillary Clinton: *You have kids?*

Patrice: *No.*

Hillary Clinton: *You like kids.*

Patrice: *No.*

Hillary Clinton: *You've seen kids.*

Patrice: *Yeah (shrugging).*

Hillary Clinton: *OK great! We're bonding already. Oh my friend Patrice, I strive to be a role model for all children, children like my daughter Chelsey, and my granddaughter Chelsey Jr. (I'm assuming).*

Anderson: *Mr. Trump same question. Do you feel you are modeling appropriate and positive behavior for today's youth?*

Donald Trump: *No. Next.*

Anderson: *So, you don't care about the kids?*

Donald Trump: *Listen. I love the kids. OK? I love them so much I marry them. I've been helping kids my whole life. In 1992 I helped a kid named Kevin McAllister find a hotel lobby. You might remember the documentary: Home Alone 2 Lost in New York?*

Hillary Clinton: *I agree; Obama Care can be improved. But it does have its benefits.*

#1 insurance companies can't deny you medical insurance because of a pre-existing condition.

[*"Donald Trump" stands behind "Hillary Clinton" grimacing. The theme song from Jaws the movie begins to play.*]

#2 No lifetime limits, which is a big deal, ya know, if you have serious health problems.

[*"Donald Trump" almost pounces on "Hillary Clinton", then runs away as she senses his presence.*]

#3 Sorry...I thought ... And um . . . #3 women can't be charged more... ["Donald Trump" walks behind "Hillary Clinton ominously] than men for health insurance.

And #4 . . .

[*"Donald Trump" unexpectedly charges "Hillary Clinton" then shouts, "WRONG!"*]

[*"Hillary Clinton" is frightened and the camera turns to show that "Martha Raddatz" is very unsettled.*]

Male from the audience: *Donald Trump said you should be in jail. He said you have hate in your heart, and he followed you around the stage like a shark. My question is what do you like about him?*

Hillary Clinton: *Well, this one is actually easy. Donald Trump and I disagree about almost everything. But I do like how generous he is. Just last Friday he handed me this election.*

Mr. Trump, one thing you like about Secretary Clinton.

Donald Trump: *I like that she is a fighter and she doesn't give up, which is why I need all my supporters to get out there and vote on election day. Mark your calendars. Write it down. Here's the day: it's November 35th.*

Kate McKinnon and Alec Baldwin: *Live from New York it's SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE!*

So, do you laugh?

Psalms 2: 2-8

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed... He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations..."

Maybe we should pray:

Father, I pray no one would leave before the end of the message. And I pray that the Prince of Peace would reign in our hearts. And I pray that you would help cause us to proclaim the Gospel. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

I have tried to avoid this topic . . .

But I think God has walked us all into this topic,

Today we come to Ecclesiastes Chapter 8, where King Solomon talks politics.

If you're new or attend only some of the time, it's important to understand that this is the ninth sermon in a series, wherein each message builds on the last. So, if you don't understand some things, don't be surprised and don't get discouraged. You can catch up on line, and I always get to the main point at the end. In fact, I will ask you to eat it and drink it.

Ecclesiastes 8:1-5

Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way.

Now that's fairly self-explanatory:

Barak Obama is our king.

- You should keep his command, for he does whatever he pleases, and who can argue with him, and then, you will know no evil thing!

So what is his command?

His command is federal law added to existing federal law.

I did a little research and it turns out that no one knows exactly how many federal laws there are... for no one can count that high¹.

Well, like I was saying Barak Obama is our king.

And next month it appears that Donald Trump will be our king.

Now you may say, "Hey wait a minute. We don't have a king, 240 years ago our nation rebelled against the king and refused to do his command..."

Well! I'm glad that you acknowledged that fact and just confessed that sin.

Now, repent and do whatever one of *these* men tell you to do . . .
[Image of Prince Charles, Prince William, and Prince George]

After this last election cycle, that might not sound so bad.
This last election was a really difficult one for me . . .

Long ago, I learned from Solomon in Ecclesiastes 11:5 that we don't know, "*how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child.*" Yet, we do know that it does, and so an unborn baby is most likely a person—even if that baby is "*the last and least of these my brethren.*"

Several years ago, I spent a good deal of time praying with a woman who lost several babies, some in the worst possible ways you could imagine . . . and two through abortion.

There were demonic entities attached to all of these tragic deaths . . . or to be more precise, attached to her shame over these deaths. You see? Jesus had always forgiven her, but the evil one used her shame to keep her in bondage.

If you've had an abortion, you must hear this next sentence (maybe this is the entire sermon for you, but you must know this): in the name of Jesus, under the authority of His blood, you are forgiven and Jesus has your children.

But you see? I'm not worried about the babies, but I am concerned for the mothers.

The evil one would try to convince my friend that he had her children.
But in each case Jesus appeared and revealed that *He* had her children—*every one* of her children.

¹ The IRS code alone contains more than 3.4 million words and, if printed 60 lines to the page, is more than 7,500 pages long.
[<http://www.kowal.com/?q=How-Many-Federal-Laws-Are-There%3F>]

See? Jesus made no distinction between those that were killed before they were born and those that were killed after.

I'm saying that abortion does tremendous damage to mothers, and to fathers, and to doctors, and to society, and to Jesus who bears it all in His body on the tree.

So... it's very difficult for me to vote for a candidate who wants to liberalize abortion laws and use my tax dollars to kill babies, even some that are partially born.

In the USA we kill far more babies than were ever sacrificed to Molech in the Valley of Gehenna.

And so the fears of some, that we might sink into some sort of atheistic government collective, where abortions are mandatory as they were in communist China—those fears are not entirely unfounded.

So, if you refused to vote for Hillary Clinton, I understand.
In the early 90's I used to preach that I was a one-issue voter . . .
But ten years later, I stopped saying that for a few reasons:

- #1 I began to wonder if legislation was the best way to love mothers and babies..
- #2 I began to realize that, "*the last and the least of these*" is far more than just unborn babies.

In 2003, I published a commentary on the Revelation and began a three-year study of the Gospel of Matthew. It made me see how Christians had used terrible theology to justify war and even racism in places like the Middle East; I saw that the Pharisees are us.

Now, I understand that nations need borders, but I hate the way Donald Trump talks about poor Mexicans who only want to feed their children and survive.

And I understand that some religions actually advocate killing you, but that's not all Muslim, and even if it were, you're commanded to die for your enemies. That's how Christians fight—not by crucifying, but by being crucified.

When the Access Hollywood tape came out, I thought, "*There's no way this guy is getting elected.*" It wasn't that he used locker room talk, but that he consciously bragged about knowingly trying to commit adultery with a woman he barely knew—violating her covenant of marriage and his seven month old covenant of marriage with his third wife, Melania.

If his bride can't trust him—who is obviously far more attractive than me—why should I trust him?

It's not just unborn babies that are worth the blood of Jesus.
It's every woman, Muslim and Mexican you meet...

You cannot get more valuable than that.

Well, the fears of some—that we might sink into some sort of xenophobic Nazi dictatorship—those fears, are not entirely unfounded.

So, if you refused to vote for Donald Trump, I understand².

Well, some voted for a third party or decided not to vote, which is like deciding not to decide.

If that's you some may be furious with you, for they think your decision not to decide is a vote against democracy . . . and yet even that is a vote. I mean, even not voting, is voting. And not deciding is deciding. So, you have to decide and no matter what you decide it seems wrong, as if we can't escape this problem called "choice," but are *"consigned to disobedience."*

And maybe that's why we each long for a king—so we wouldn't have to decide. We don't know how to decide.

Well, in America, democracy is king, so we tend to think that whatever most people say is right, *IS* right—we abdicate choice to the majority, which the Bible refers to as the crowd.

In America we think that whatever most people say is right, *IS* right...
But according to Scripture that's entirely wrong.

There are many systems of government to be found in Scripture, but as far as I can tell, there is only one instance of organized democracy. It's recorded in all four gospels and it happened on a Friday.

On that day, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, called for a vote. He asked the crowd,

"Who would you have me release for you?"

Do you choose Barabbas (or as some ancient manuscripts attest: Jesus Barabbas),

Do you choose Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Bar Joseph, (Jesus son of Joseph)?

What kind of Jesus, what kind of savior, what kind of King do you want?

² And if what I just said—I mean the fact that I didn't pick sides—really frustrates you, I also understand. I mean it would be really nice to have a king. It would be really nice to have someone that made all the right decisions for you. It would be really nice to belong to a party or group that was always right, so you could feel that you were always right—so as long as you were with them, you would be justified.

They elected Barabbas.

Pilate cried out, *"Would you have me crucify your king?"*

And the Chief Priest of the people of God responded, *"We have no king, but Caesar."*

And the crowd chanted, *"Crucify. Crucify. Crucify."*

Barabbas had lead an insurrection in Jerusalem—city of peace.

He was a politician and political dissident.

He desired to overthrow Rome and create an independent nation state of Israel.

He desired to do what Jesus refused to do, but could've done—satan even offered to help him. (That's what the temptation was about. Do you remember?)

The principalities and powers of this world run on two promises:

#1 They promise safety for yourself. AND

#2 They promise vengeance on your enemies.

Jesus didn't make those promises . . . but He required just the opposite:

#1 He required that you pick up a cross...

That's not saving the self, but losing the self... AND

#2 He required forgiveness of everyone . . . even your enemies.

Well on that Friday, we—humanity—cast our vote.

And on that Friday, God cast His vote . . . in flesh on the tree in the garden.

Jesus is the elect of God.

Jesus is the Judgment of God.

And Jesus is King.

You don't vote for King.

So, Jesus is King, regardless of how you voted or your neighbor voted.

He is King and all authority in Heaven and on earth has been granted unto Him.

So, in His name and under the authority of His blood, I beg you to stop freaking out about this election . . . or the last election . . . or any election in the future.

And if you say, "But Preacher we might get crucified!"

The preacher must respond:

"Correct!

Did you not know?

That is how His Kingdom comes?"

And haven't you not heard?

You are NOT the electors. You are the elect.

You are the Church."

Well, King Solomon saw none of this, but I believe he *foresaw* all of this.

I believe that Scripture is inspired. So let's look again:

Ecclesiastes 8: 2 *"I say: Keep the king's command [literally: "mouth or word"], because of God's oath to him."* "To him," is added by the translator.

As far as I can tell, God only makes one oath in all of Scripture.

- It's first spoken to Abraham and refers to a promised Seed.
- And it's reiterated to David in 2 Samuel 7, when God promises David that He will establish the throne of his son forever.
- But it soon becomes clear that this son, the Messiah, is NOT Solomon or any of the other "kings" of Israel that we read about in the Old Testament . . .

And yet, in their loins, these kings carry this promised seed.

Ecclesiastes 8:3-6

Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he [this king] does whatever he pleases.

Who is the king with "all authority" to do whatever he pleases?

For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

The Old Testament is primarily prophets saying to kings, "What the hell are you doing?"

Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's (ha adam) trouble (literally: evil) lies heavy on him. For he (man) does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?

Man is "evil," and "does not know."

Get the picture?

The King that Solomon is speaking of is far more than just a mere man.

In 1 Samuel 8:5, two generations before Solomon, the elders of Israel came to the prophet Samuel saying, "*We want a king to judge us like all the nations.*" Samuel is heart-broken and God speaks to Samuel saying, "*They have not rejected you, they have rejected me from being king over them.*"

You see, ever since God called Israel out of Egypt, he was their king and would judge them from his throne.

[Drawing of the tabernacle]

His throne was in the tabernacle, between the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant . . . where He appeared as a pillar of fire. When the pillar would move the people would move. And when Moses lacked Wisdom, he would enter the tabernacle and God would speak to him from between the cherubim, and he would receive Wisdom.

"Wisdom is a tree of Life," wrote Solomon.

"Jesus is our Wisdom," wrote Paul.

So, I hope you're getting this breathtaking biblical drama.

- Israel rejects God as King.

- So God gives them kings but warns them, through Samuel, about the evils of worldly kings.
- For a thousand years Israel suffers under kings, from King Saul through King David and King Solomon.
- They suffer hope, for God has promised them a king—carried in the loins of the descendants of David.
- They suffer for a thousand years, until the reign of Caesar Augustus, when God Himself wraps His Word, in human flesh, born of a virgin, who then wraps Him in swaddling clothes and places Him in a manger.
- Kings from the east come and bow down to Him.
- But Herod, the king of the Jews, tries to kill him.
- Ultimately, we all elect to kill Him.
- The High Priest confesses our sin: “We have no king but Caesar!”
- He dies on a tree, in a garden, on the temple mount where, according to the Jews, God first breathed His Spirit into Adam.
- On that tree, Christ—the last Adam—surrenders that very Spirit.
- Simultaneously, the curtain in the temple rips from top to bottom.
- Tombs are opened and saints come out.
- The Romans Centurion drops to his knees and confesses, “Surely this was the Son of God.”
- It’s at that point, the edge of time and eternity, that the King of Glory invades the kingdoms of this earth, and establishes His throne in your heart, which is now the King’s Sanctuary and the seat of all power in heaven and on earth.

Because we don’t believe this incredible news, we freak out about Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Barak Obama. And then, instead of being a blessing to our country we become a curse, for we act as if the Kingdom of God is dependent upon Washington D.C.

SO

1. **Who is the King?** *The Lord is King.*
2. **Where is His Throne?** *In the temple that is you.*
3. **What is His Command, His Word, His Judgment?**

Well, this is where things really get fascinating:

We know that the law describes God’s Wisdom, but the law is like dead Wisdom—like Wisdom that’s been crucified. Most of Old Testament law is for a particular group of people at a particular time. Even the Ten Commandments, get applied in different ways at different times. The law, both God’s laws and human laws, can be extremely helpful. The law describes Love, but it’s not Love.

God is Love and His Word is “The Way, The Truth and The Life.”
Jesus is God’s Word in flesh . . . even enthroned in your flesh.

When you surrender to Him, you become—or realize that you already are—His Body.

Your job is not to judge God's Judgment, *as if* God needed your authorization,
As *if* God has some cause and He needs you give him aid . . . [Endnote A]

Your job is not to judge God's Judgment, but to manifest God's Judgment . . .
As the Body of Christ . . . and then it's not a job, but something more like a dance.

You cannot judge God's Judgment . . .
But you can judge laws, which describe God's Judgment.
You can, and should, argue and even fight over politics. And I hope you do.

You can say, "I think the best way to love God and love our neighbors is immigration reform that involves *deportation*, a *wall*, and a *big door*." And you can argue back, "I think that's not the best way to love God and love our neighbors. I think *general* amnesty for illegal aliens, followed by legislative reform is the best policy."

You can, and should, argue and judge the laws.
But ultimately you cannot judge Love.

Why?

Well firstly because God is Love, and Love is constantly judging you.
See? You can't even judge Love in your own heart . . .
You must submit to love in your own heart.
And secondly, you definitely can't judge Love in your neighbor's heart . . .
The sanctuary of his or her covenant with Jesus.

I mean, you can say to your neighbor, "That does not sound like Love, and I believe that Love is telling me to argue with you." But ultimately you don't know what Love has, or has not, spoken in your neighbor's heart. Likewise, you don't know what Truth has, or has not, spoken in your neighbor's heart.

Truth and Love is the King to be enthroned in the heart.

In other words, obedience to the King's command is a subjective encounter in the depths of your own heart, in the depths of your being.

There is such a thing as Objective Truth—that's Jesus.
But the obedience of faith is *subjective encounter* in the depths of your own soul. It is to be judged by *Truth and Love* sitting on the throne in your heart.
Yeah . . . we try to avoid that though, don't we? It's terrifying, and yet the result is profoundly liberating!

But I hope you understand this:

Obedience is not objective knowledge of Good and Evil.

Obedience is subjective submission to the Good, who is your King. [Endnote B]

Obedience is trusting Truth, who sits on the throne, in the temple of your heart.

And so, it's entirely conceivable that the King told some of you to vote for Donald Trump—as an expression of your love for the unborn in solidarity to truths that God has revealed uniquely and privately to you in the sanctuary of your own heart.

And it's entirely conceivable that the King told some of you to vote for Hillary Clinton—as an expression of your love for immigrants and refugees in solidarity to the truths that God has revealed uniquely and privately to you in the sanctuary of your own heart, in your own story.

And it's entirely conceivable that the King told some of you to vote for someone else, or no one at all.

Now this reality may thoroughly infuriate some of you, for your thinking, *“This is no way to run a government—a secular government.”* And that, my friends, is entirely true. The Kingdom of God is not a secular government; it's a body. And in a body the Head may say one thing to the hand, and another to the eye. And the hand cannot say to the eye, “Because you're not a hand, you're not a part of the body.”

In other words, the Command is living, active, and highly personal.

So you may say, *“This is no way to run a government AND it's profoundly dangerous.”*

Well, YES . . . It may very well get you crucified.

YES and NO, For the greatest danger is not losing your life for the sake of your King.

The greatest danger is keeping it.

NEXT VERSE:

8 *No man [adam] has power to keep/retain the spirit (ruwach), that is power over the day of death.*

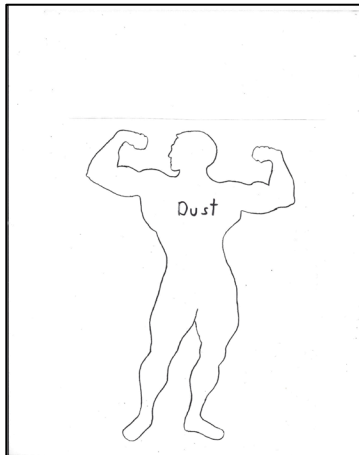
—Ecclesiastes 8:8a

Solomon has been telling us for eight chapters that all man's toil is vanity and striving after the Wind—*ruwach*. We're all striving after the *ruwach*, the Spirit, because we all want to retain the Spirit. In other words, we're all afraid to lose our life, but unless we lose it, we can't find it.

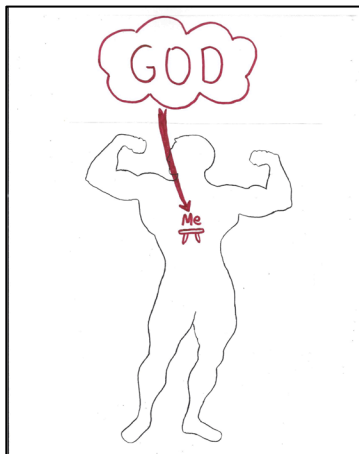
On the sixth day of creation, God breathed His Spirit into dust, and Adam became a living soul. No *adam*, is said to surrender his Spirit, which is God's Spirit, until the last Adam surrenders His Spirit on the tree, in the garden, next to the Temple at the very spot where supposedly God breathed His Breath into *adam* in the first place.

That Adam, the *Eschatos* Adam, is your King and He came to help you lose your life that you might find it—doing so is a decision and that decision is Love.

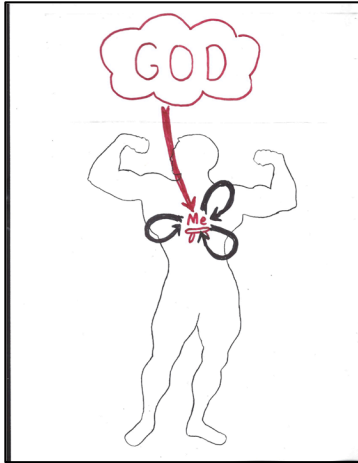
Some of my extremely artistic diagrams might help:



In the beginning God breathed into Adam, the breath of life.



And Adam became a living being.

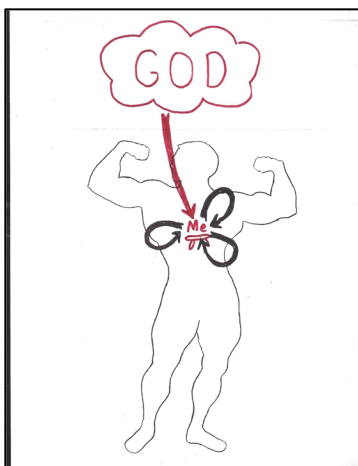


But Adam seized control of Life. He strived after the Spirit. He held God's breath.
Sin is holding your breath.

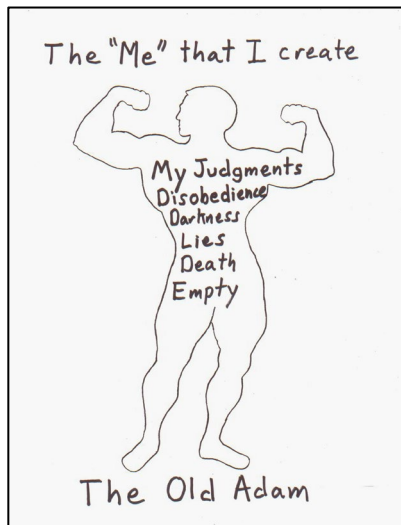
When I sin, all my decisions are about saving "me," and I even use God for that purpose.

The kings of this world gain their power from your fear of losing your self—your fear of death. Satan has kept us in life long bondage through fear of death. The kings of this world speak the language of rights. They will say, "You have a *right* to life." OR "You have a *right* to choose." In other words, you are the king of your own life and all your choices. So, the kings of this world all talk about your "rights." But, a man on a cross has no rights.

The kings of this world say that they are defending your "freedom."
But Scripture claims this isn't freedom but bondage to death.

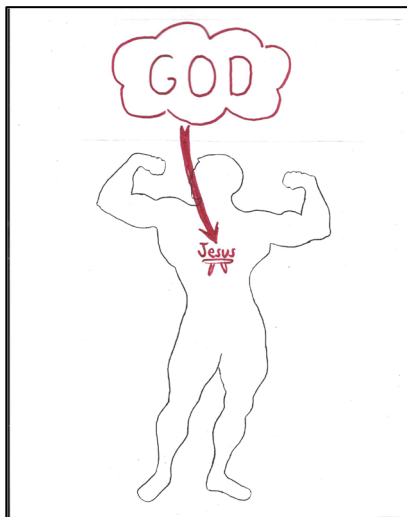


You see “holding your breath,” that is, “saving your own life” is how we create the body of death, that is, the old man.

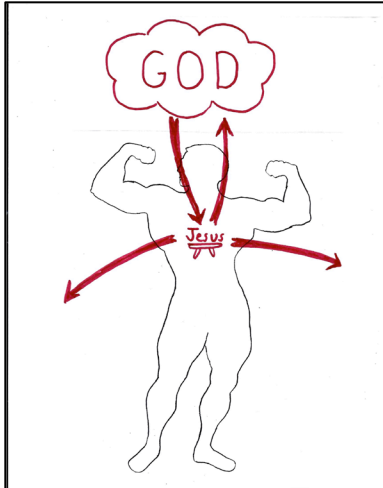


This is the Old Adam that we've been preaching about.

But what happens when Jesus is enthroned in our hearts?



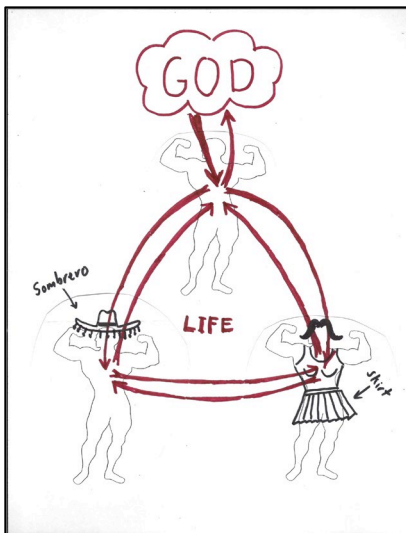
God's Judgment becomes our judgment.



And so we begin to love as He has loved us. We don't hang on to our life, but we begin to give it away. And in this is Love.

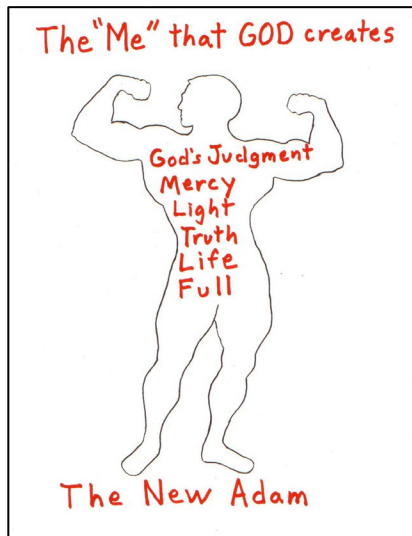
King Jesus doesn't talk the language of rights, but . . .
He is the Logic of Love—the *logos* of God.

This looks like death—a man bleeding out—it looks like a man on a cross.
It looks like death, BUT it is the beginning of endless life.
WHY?



Why? . . .
Because Life is the communion of the Spirit.

- Life is the circulation of Spirit between all the members of a Body.
(See? This one has a sombrero and this one has a skirt)
- The Breath, the Spirit, the Life is in the blood.
- And when we surrender our Spirit—when we *expire*,
God *inspires* us with more Spirit.
- Life is a river that flows from the throne and circulates through all the members of the Body and back to the throne as praise.
- This man, that chooses to lose his life, for the sake of Love and then find it.



- This man is the New Adam that we've been preaching about.
- And this man is part of the Body of the *Eschatos* Adam that is Christ Himself.

A body is unified by obedience to the head, and the circulation of life—which is the breath in the blood.

When you love, you are surrendering your spirit *because* King Jesus is enthroned in your heart. In this way God's Judgment becomes your judgment. His Judgment is Love . . . and Vengeance.

According to Luke, it was the way Jesus surrendered His Spirit that conquered the Roman Centurion and caused him to drop to his knees and confess, "*Surely this was the son of God.*" The Vengeance of God was revealed on the cross when Jesus cried, "Father Forgive...It is finished" and "Into your hands I commit my spirit." It was Vengeance that burned away the old man and gave birth to the New.

Solomon continues in verse 8:

No man [adam] has power to retain the spirit (ruwach), or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war,
In other words we all must suffer the violence of this world...

nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man [ha adam] had power over man [adam] to his (own) hurt [evil]. Then I saw the wicked [evil ones] buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity.

The “evil ones” stand before the throne in the temple and don’t die to themselves but are proud of themselves, and that’s vanity.

Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man [ha adam] is fully set to do evil.

—Ecclesiastes 8:8-11

Did you get that? “*The heart of the children of the adam is fully set to do evil.*”

Why?

Because they want vengeance!

Because they have taken of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, judged each other with the law, and want to make things right.

Because they won’t forgive . . . But forgiveness is the Judgment of God.

In Deuteronomy God says, “*Vengeance is mine I will repay...*”

Study the Scriptures and you’ll see He did pay on the cross.

So Paul writes, “*present your bodies a living sacrifice*” (Romans 12:1)

Then quotes Deuteronomy, “*God will repay*” (Romans 12:19)

Then says, “*Love your enemy and in this way you will heap burning coals upon his head.*” (Romans 12:20)

So Jesus Barabbas and every secular government in this world promises:

1. To help you save your life AND
2. Take vengeance on your enemies—they call it justice.

But King Jesus promises

1. To help you lose your life AND
2. Forgive your enemies—He claims it *is* Life and Justice.

“It is again clear,” writes Karl Barth, “that the divine state is quite incompatible not merely with the wicked totalitarian state but with every conceivable human [government].”

Karl Barth was part of the confessing church in Nazi Germany.

He’s saying,

The *real choice* was not between the Nazi’s and some other government,

The *real choice* was not between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

The *real choice* is always between Jesus and the powers of this world.

Saint Paul wrote, “*Be subject to the governing powers,*” but he also wrote that we battle *against* the powers . . . and he often wrote his letters from jail.

Did you know, that by some estimates, China may be the largest Christian nation in the world³.

[Graph showing steady growth of Christianity in China]

This graph, from the council on foreign relations, shows that the size of the church in China will soon be larger than that of the communist party.

Historically, the Church has grown fastest and strongest when political power has not been and option and getting crucified is a real possibility.
It was the persecuted Church that wrote the New Testament, and conquered the Roman Empire.

Many of the heroes of my faith were born out of the struggle in Germany: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Martin Niemoller, Corrie Ten Boom, Martin Buber and Victor Frankl, whom Karl mentioned last week.

See? I really don't know what would've happened if we'd elected Hillary Clinton.
But if we did become like Communist China that would in no way stop Jesus.

And I really don't know what will happen under Donald Trump—*perhaps*, many years of prosperity and kindness . . . Or perhaps we'll sink into something reminiscent of Nazi Germany—but that would in no way stop Jesus, and should in no way stop you.

It's in places like Communist China and Nazi Germany that the Church does her best work. It is in places like that, that she gives birth to a baby who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Ecclesiastes 8:12-14

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.

They stand before His throne... and surrender to His Judgment and give birth to His Good Judgment.

But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

We'll talk later about the fear of God that becomes the faith of God in us.

There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked

³ The Church in China has grown from about 750,000 in 1949, when missionaries were kicked out of the country, to around 100 million today.

people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

The illusion of control is vanity.

- Secular governments promise control, and they call it freedom.
- Jesus calls you to surrender control, and it is freedom.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pacifist who became an activist and was implicated in a plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler. On April 8, 1945, having just finished a prayer, the prison worship service was interrupted. Two men entered and said, "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, come with us." Bonhoeffer whispered to a friend, "This is the end. But for me, it is the beginning of life."

The next day, April 9, 1945, he was hanged in Flossenbürg (hours before the allies arrived and liberated the concentration camp). It's said that as he approached the gallows, he broke free from the guards and ran to the tree on which he would hang shouting, *"Oh death! You are the supreme festival on the road to Christian freedom! Jesus, I'm coming home."*

Actually, you can live at home right now *because* the King Jesus is enthroned in the sanctuary of your own heart. Actually, He rules all space and time from that throne in your soul. [Endnote C]

In Proverbs Solomon wrote, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding."* Your own understanding will not lead you to lose your life or forgive your enemies. That's entirely non-strategic and counterintuitive . . . *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding, In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths"*

You must believe that the King in your heart has the power to move mountains in order to make your feet land on the path.

- So you don't have to have a map of the path.
- You don't have to know who to vote for.
- And you don't need the Kings of this earth to tell you what to do.

You just have to obey Truth and Love, enthroned in the depths of your own heart, and you will walk in a freedom that terrifies the principalities and powers of this world. And you will know joy.

The kings of the earth will plot and scheme against the Lord and His anointed, but you will laugh. It will rise from deep in your belly from the judgment seat that is the throne... It's the laughter of your King that He's sharing with you . . . It's Joy.

Next Verse, Ecclesiastes 8:15

And I commend joy, (writes King Solomon or the King in Solomon) for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

This is strange, but for the last two months preaching through Ecclesiastes, I keep thinking of this little video. The woman on the left has believed a lie and is in bondage to fear. The woman on the right knows the truth and trusts the one in charge of the ride. The woman on the left is a picture of your old faithless man. The woman on the right is a picture of your new faithful man... and joy.

[Short YouTube clip is shown]

Two ladies embark on a carnival ride. The one on the right is thoroughly enjoying it. At every moment she is engaged and filled with joy. The one on the left is utterly terrified at the thought of the ride even before it begins, and she is almost in tears throughout the course of the ride. The man overseeing the ride jokes about the ladies' seatbelts not being checked and then suddenly starts the ride. In terror, the one on the left screams things like, "No. Stop it! Get me down! No. No!" The woman on the right cheers and smiles in delight at the thrill of each moment of the ride.

We're all on the same ride. And no matter how wild the ride gets, you must remember that the King in your heart is in full control of the ride. And when you do, He will use you as His very own body. He will use you to change the world.

And now, if I totally lost you in the sermon, everything I said is summed up in this:

Communion

On the night that we all voted for Barabbas, Jesus the King took bread and broke it, saying, "This is my body broken for you; take and eat." And in the same manor, after supper, and having given thanks, He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do this in remembrance of me." The light cup is juice. The dark cup is wine. They are both the Judgment of God. Bring your throne room to the table and let the King take His rightful place. Believe the Gospel. Amen.

Benediction

Christmas is in two weeks, but the Lord has come and He is seated on the throne in your heart, right now. What I said a couple weeks ago I really meant. I don't know who you should've voted for because I don't know what the King told you, but keep going to the throne. The truth is I don't know who you should've voted for and I don't know why you voted for the person that you did.

I'm guessing it was a mix of the ladies on the YouTube clip we just watched. There was some bad and there was some good. But do you see? You keep going before the throne and it burns away the bad and gives birth to the good—telling you who you really are—and you will do the right thing. He will tell you. He will reveal His glory. He "makes the nations prove" That's what's happening right now . . . the glories of His

righteousness and He's even proving it in you. So, may you continually live from that place—standing before the throne, and I commend joy. Amen.

ENDNOTES

A: There are those who talk about God's cause, and about wanting to serve that cause. This is all very fine, but how, exactly, is this to be interpreted? The common view thinks that God has a cause in the human sense of the word, that he is some kind of advocate, interested in having his cause win and therefore eager to help the person who would serve his cause, and so forth. If we follow this line of thinking God becomes a minor character who arrives at the embarrassing dilemma of needing human beings.

No, no! God has no cause, is no advocate in this sense. For God everything is infinitely nothing. Any second he wills it, everything, including all opposition to his cause, becomes nothing. Wanting to serve God's cause can never mean the same thing as come to his aid. No, to serve God's cause is to face examination. —Kierkegaard, *Provocations* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), p. 43

B: When the question about truth is asked objectively, what is reflected upon is not the relation but the what of the relation. As long as what one relates oneself to is the truth, the subject is supposedly in the truth. But when the question about truth is asked subjectively, the individual's relation to the truth is what matters. If only the how (not the what) of this relation is in truth, then the individual is in truth, even if he in this way were to relate himself to untruth. . . .

If someone lives in the midst of Christianity and enters, with knowledge of the true idea of God, the house of God, the house of the true God, and prays, but prays in untruth, and if someone lives in an idolatrous land but prays with all the passion of infinity, although his eyes are resting upon the image of an idol — where, then, is there more truth? The one prays in truth to God although he is worshipping an idol; the other prays in untruth to the true God and is therefore in truth worshipping an idol. The distance between objective reflection and subjectivity is indeed an infinite one. —Kierkegaard, *Provocations* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), p. 59-61

C: And I was still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul in the middle of my heart. I saw my soul as large as if it were a kingdom; and from the properties that I saw in it, it seemed to me to be a glorious city. In the centre of that city sits our Lord Jesu, true God and true man, glorious, highest Lord; and I saw him dressed imposingly in glory. He sits in the soul, in the very centre, in peace and rest, and he rules and protects heaven and earth and all that is. The Manhood and the Godhead sit at rest, and the Godhead rules and protects without any subordinate or any trouble; and my soul was blissfully filled with the Godhead, which is supreme power, supreme wisdom, supreme goodness. In all eternity Jesus will never leave the position which he takes in our soul; for in us is his most familiar home and his favourite dwelling. This was a ravishing and restful sight, for it is truly so everlastingly. And it is very pleasing to God and extremely helpful to us that we should see this while we are here. —Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 33

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.