

HOW WOULD JESUS VOTE?

(Luke 6:20-23)

For *WAY* too many months—at least in my opinion— “we the people” have been part of a really bad dream called the U.S. presidential election process, and no matter which side you may be supporting, I think we can all agree that **THIS** election process has been just a bit different than others that we have been through as a nation.

Thankfully, two days from now, a big part of that process will come to an end as hopefully a vast majority of registered voters will cast their votes, and a winner in the presidential race—as well as winners in many local and state elections—will be chosen (and hopefully accepted).

I truly hope that everyone under the sound of my voice who is *eligible* to vote and *registered* to vote will *cast* a vote in this election, no matter how discouraged or disgusted you may be with the process that has led us to this point; because choosing not to vote if you are eligible to vote is a fruitless temper tantrum that makes you irrelevant to the process

of democracy as we practice it here in the United States. And too many people have already been rendered irrelevant to the process of democracy as their voting rights have been taken away because they ended up incarcerated—fairly or unfairly. Even here in Wisconsin you have to be completely done with parole as well as probation in order to be eligible to re-register to vote. For many, many people, that is a long time to be irrelevant to the process of democracy. Most of us don't know how many people have never had the chance to vote their choice in their lifetime. And many of us have no idea how many lifetimes it took for people of color and women to even HAVE the right to vote their choice. So, I'm not trying to tell you who to vote FOR. I'm just trying to encourage you to VOTE.

II.

In case you need some added incentive concerning the whole matter of voting, let's look at it from a Christian perspective for a moment. My 33 years as a Christian pastor and preacher have taught me that for

many Christians there is an unfortunate disconnect between the living out of our *faith* lives and the living out of our *daily* lives. For many of us who consider ourselves practicing Christians, our *faith* lives are what we do on Sunday, and our *daily* lives are what we do Monday through Saturday, and often there is no intersecting between the two! So, I'm going to make what will seem to some of you to be a provocative statement, and that is this: *Jesus would want you to vote.*

"Preacher, how do you know that?" I'm glad you asked . . .

According to my understanding of scripture—an understanding which is both solidly Lutheran and liberationist—the gospel stories tell us that Jesus was ALL FOR being engaged in the political process; depending, of course, on how you define *politics*. I've said from this very pulpit many times before that I go with the definition of politics that explains it as *concern with the shape and shaping of any human community*. By that definition, Jesus himself was very much *immersed* and *engaged* in the political process. He was even nailed to the cross and killed as a

political prisoner—accused by his own people, and executed by the Roman empire; charged with the crime of *sedition*, which is trying to overthrow the government.

Why did that happen? Because he had the *audacity* to stand up to and speak out against the political powers-that-be, and that very act of standing up and speaking out was a political act. Anyone who would over-turn the money tables in the most lucrative state-sponsored scam that was going on at the time—like Jesus did in the temple in Jerusalem, proclaiming God’s house to be a house of prayer and not a den of thieves—was definitely engaged in the political process.

And so, if politics can be defined as *concern with the shape and shaping of any human community*, then the preaching, teaching and actions of Jesus were political. They were political because they were always centered on *interaction* and *relationship* with the God of love—and *sharing* and *showing* that love to others—thus shaping the human

community in any given place toward being a community of love and compassion.

- ✚ Jesus taught about loving even your enemies;
- ✚ He taught about forgiving others, innumerable times;
- ✚ He taught about lending and not expecting anything back in return;
- ✚ He taught about checking out our own motives, and not judging others;
- ✚ He taught about God's compassion—and what should be our compassion—for those who are poor, hungry, weeping, and marginalized;
- ✚ And he always taught about the values of the kingdom of God:
love, peace, joy, prosperity, kindness, gentleness, generosity, health, fulfillment, freedom, faith, community, abundance—for ALL of God's children, not just for SOME of them!

It seems that the politics of Jesus were the politics of love and compassion; and because it was an active love and a lived-out compassion, those values could not escape the political realm of his daily life. *Just standing there, living out his life, Jesus was a political person.*

Angela Davis, an African American political activist, writer and scholar, once said: *“I can’t help having a political life, because I grew up in the south, where to be black WAS to be political.”*

In many ways it was the same for Jesus. To be Messiah, to be Christ, to be Anointed One of God, WAS to be political—because it was a calling to be concerned with the shape and the shaping of the human community.

If we turn Luke’s gospel to the 4th chapter, and hear Jesus describe his mission among us from the book of Isaiah, Jesus says *“The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.”* To agitate and empower the poor with good news—that’s political!

He says “*The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to release the captives and let the oppressed go free.*” To agitate, empower and work for the freedom of those who are condemned and imprisoned—that’s political!

He says “*The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor*” or the Year of Jubilee, spoken of in Leviticus 25, where all resources are redistributed with equity. To agitate and excite people by telling them that one day everything will be distributed fairly, and things as we know them will be turned on their head—that’s political!

Make no mistake about it: the reality of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached and taught about is ultimately concerned with the shape and shaping of the human community.

III.

All that having been said, I have an initial observation about how I believe Jesus would conduct himself in the voting booth that may be helpful to some. Because I believe that Jesus wouldn’t base his vote on a *candidate*; I believe Jesus would base his vote on the *positions that a*

candidate took. I don't believe he would vote for a candidate because that candidate broke bread with him, or made a large donation to his synagogue, or was from a particular political party—because I believe that Jesus would be the *ultimate independent voter*. What would matter to Jesus, I believe, would be a candidate's positions concerning - the whole people of God.

So, from what I know about Jesus, I'm going to leave you with three things this morning concerning how I believe Jesus would vote.

How would Jesus vote? Jesus would vote for LIFE.

- ✚ Why? Because Jesus IS life. He says *"I am the way, the truth AND the life."*

- ✚ Jesus would vote for life because Jesus is ALL ABOUT life. He said *"I came so that you could HAVE life—and not JUST life, but ABUNDANT life!"*

- ✚ Jesus would vote for life, because as a co-creator with God, Jesus GAVE us life. The gospel of John says concerning Jesus: *"He was in*

the beginning with God. Nothing exists that he didn't make. Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to the world."

✚ Not only did he GIVE us life, but Jesus gave us HIS life. He said "*I came not to BE served, but TO serve, and to give MY LIFE as a ransom for many.*"

✚ And after he gave us his life, Jesus himself was raised to life again! Didn't the angel ask the women at the empty tomb "*Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised!*"

✚ Jesus would vote for LIFE, which means he would vote FOR positions that would mean a better quality of life for EVERYONE—not just for heterosexual white Christian Americans, but for all people no matter their sexual orientation, their ethnicity, their religion or their nationality—so that all people were not just surviving, but thriving in all aspects of life, and sharing the resources that God gave to us all.

How would Jesus vote? Jesus would vote for LIFE.

How would Jesus vote? Jesus would not only vote for LIFE . . .

Jesus would also vote for THE LEAST—as in “the least of these” as they are described by Jesus in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25: *those who are hungry and thirsty, naked and sick, in prison and a stranger.*

Those whom Jesus blesses in our gospel today from Luke 6: *the poor and the hungry, the excluded and the rejected, the sad and the marginalized.*

Those who we talked about earlier from Luke 4: *the poor, the imprisoned, the oppressed, and those whose resources have been taken away.*

Those who need our help and compassion to get the rights and the resources they are entitled to—those are “the least” that Jesus speaks of, and those who Jesus would vote for.

✚ Which means Jesus would vote to change the prison system, which has captives who need to be released, oppressed ones who need to be set free, misguided ones who need to be rehabilitated, and sick ones who need to be healed.

✚ Jesus would vote to change the health-care system, so that all who are sick could have equal access to healing, just as Jesus healed all who were brought to him. Jesus would make healing rather than profit the bottom line for health care.

✚ Jesus would vote to change the public education system, that mismanaged mess that leaves too many of our children behind—the same children that Jesus said not to hinder, *“for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”*

✚ Jesus would vote for better jobs and job-training systems, to help people to work and to stay employed. He would vote for more affordable housing so God's people could have a place to lay their heads. He would vote for more compassionate systems of care for those who have a hard time caring for themselves.

How would Jesus vote? Jesus would vote for the last, the least, the lost, and the left-out. Jesus would vote with and for those who are known as "the least of these."

How would Jesus vote?

✚ **For life**

✚ **For the least**

✚ **For love**

LOVE is the whole reason that Jesus was here in the flesh in the first place. *"For God so loved the world, that God gave God's only Son, that*

WHOSOEVER believes in him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.” THAT, my brothers and sisters, is a MIGHTY LOVE!

LOVE is what Jesus came to teach us. *“THIS is my commandment, that you **love one another, even as I have loved you.** No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.* THAT, my sisters and brothers, is a MIGHTY LOVE!

It was LOVE that gave Jesus his final victory. Because it was the ***hate of humankind*** that nailed Jesus to the cross; but it was the ***love of the Lord God*** that raised him up from death!

There is a song that says: *Love lifted me; love lifted me. When nothing else could help, love lifted me.*

THAT, Beloved, is a MIGHTY LOVE!

How would Jesus vote?

I believe Jesus would vote for LIFE

Jesus would vote for THE LEAST

Jesus would vote for LOVE

I'm not trying to tell you how to vote;

I'm just telling you how I believe Jesus would vote.

Amen.

© Stephen G. Marsh