

## How Would Jesus Vote?

In exactly 30 days, our country will hold what many consider to be one of the most important presidential elections of our time. The stakes are high and, as in all major elections, we have an opportunity at the polls to impact conditions in our society. As it says in Proverbs 31:9, "*Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.*" But, we are constantly bombarded with political ads that are more confusing and off-putting than helpful, aren't we? There is so much mudslinging that we would probably tend to agree with a message on a church yard sign I saw recently that said, "the lesser of two evils is still evil." And I'm not sure this is on any yard sign but do you know the difference between a Democrat, a Republican and a Christian? The Democrat says I can save the world with more government. The Republican says I can save the world with less government. The Christian says I can save the world with the Kingdom of God. So, what do we do? How do we decide who to vote for? As Disciples of Christ, we might ask the question, how would Jesus vote? Stay tuned, I'll answer that question in a bit.

As part of our Circles Ministry, we have proclaimed today as Justice Sunday. But, what is justice? The Life Application Study Bible gives this definition: justice is "the administration of law that determines what is right, based on principles of equity and correctness....." Encarta World English Dictionary defines "justice" as "fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made." Our Justice Circle "represents our commitment to promoting social and economic fairness."

I have worked for over 30 years as a professional social worker. As such, I have directly observed the effects of injustice or lack of justice in our society. I have worked with young, single mothers in the inner city struggling to feed their children and make ends meet. I have worked with children and teens whose parents lacked sufficient material, emotional and/or educational resources to give their children needed safety and security. I have worked with young adults with mental illness struggling to find ways to maintain a job or even carry out typical daily functions. I have worked with children and teens whose family circumstances have been so stressful, they are unable to behave within usual rules and norms. And, I have worked with families who struggle to find adequate supports and resources for helping their child with a disability reach his or her full potential. I have witnessed suffering over my career that, in many cases seemed preventable with a societal approach that was more correct, equitable, fair and reasonable - in other words, more just.

The justice concerns in our society are more poignantly portrayed by the pop singing group, "Daughtry." Let's look at Daughtry's video, "What About Now?"

(show video)

Did you note the words in the chorus?

What About Now

What about today

What if you're making me

All that I was meant to be

What if our love never went away

What if it's lost behind

Words we could never find

Baby before its too late

What About Now

This song could be said to be about the troubled relationship between two lovers but the images in the video perhaps give it broader meaning. Could it be pointing to the troubled relationship between us and our human brothers and sisters and, perhaps even, a troubled relationship with God? The title, *What about Now?*, calls us to do something about this broken relationship. So, how would Jesus vote? Don't worry, I'll get to it.

We might ask ourselves, was Jesus really interested in politics? In an op-ed piece titled, *Christ Among the Partisans*, GARRY WILLS asserts, "THERE is no such thing as a "Christian politics." If it is politics, it cannot be Christian. (after all) Jesus told Pilate (John 18:36): "My reign is not of this present order. If my reign were of this present order, my supporters would have fought against my being turned over to the Jews. But my reign is not here". Wills goes on to say, "Jesus held that the church and state had separate callings and spheres of authority."

Jesus' also asserted, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's". But a web site, *True.org*, points out that "while Jesus is neither a Democrat nor a Republican, there are things He taught about morality, the state, and the church which a believer should factor into her or his political, social and cultural thinking and practice."

What were some of His actions that might be clues as to how Jesus would vote?

We know Jesus was interested in compassion and justice: In Matthew 25, we find His words, "Whenever you did these things to the lowliest of my brothers, you were doing it to me." In Matthew 7, He says, "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." There are many accounts of when Jesus healed the sick. Interestingly, though, as we read the New Testament, we find nothing about asking for their health insurance cards or about their immigration status, first, do we? And, in Matthew 21, Jesus says, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor..."

How would Jesus vote? Hang on, I'll tell you in a minute.

Unfortunately, many Christian messages have been divisive and polarizing. The internet and other media are full of advice about how Christians should respond to worldly issues. Many promote more extreme viewpoints but some attempt to be enlightening. A group called Sojourners has provided a Principles and Policies guide for Christians that seems to try to synthesize a broad range of views. What does Sojourners think are the priorities for Christians to consider as they look for ways to do justice?

- #1. Workers must be able to work and provide for family economic success and security.
- #2. Child poverty should be eradicated.
- #3. Extreme global poverty must be eliminated.
- #4. The war in Iraq must be ended.
- #5. Nuclear weapons must be abolished.
- #6. Support must be increased for security and freedom in the Middle East.
- #7. There must be a strengthening of the United Nations and international law to more effectively fight terrorism.
- #8. Policies must be established to dramatically reduce abortion.
- #9. Capital punishment must be ended.
- #10. Genocide must be stopped.
- #11. Racial disparities must be reduced or eliminated.
- #12. Environmental racism (locating dumps or pollution emitting plants near poor communities) must be stamped out.
- #13. Humane and holistic immigration policies must be adopted.
- #14. Torture must be ended worldwide.
- #15. Efforts must be made to stop human trafficking, promote religious freedom, fight HIV/AIDS, and defend the rights of women.

#16. Establish ways to strengthen marriage and families.

#17. Restore integrity to our civic and business practices.

#18. Prevent violence worldwide.

#19. Reverse global climate change.

#20. Prioritize efforts to clean up our air and water.

#21. Develop clean and renewable energy.

This is a long list and there's lots of work to do but perhaps achievement of these priorities would repair the broken relationship alluded to in Daughtry's song.

So, how would Jesus vote? Are you ready for the answer? Well, the answer is that He probably wouldn't vote at all. But we, as Christians can think and pray about how we might act upon His teachings and decide how best to do Justice in the world, including what direction we will take in the national election.

As we're instructed in Matthew 6:5-6,

"When you pray, be not like the pretenders, who prefer to pray in the synagogues and in the public square, in the sight of others. In truth I tell you, that is all the profit they will have.

But you, when you pray, go into your inner chamber and, locking the door, pray there in hiding to your Father, and your Father who sees you in hiding will reward you"

And, in John 8:31-32, Jesus says, "If you continue in my words, then you are my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Amen.

-- Mark Cederburg, Justice Sunday, Hickman Mills Community Christian Church, 8:30 am Worship Service, October 5, 2008