

O God of Love, O King of Peace

Old Orchard Church

July 3, 2011 — 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

Inscription: "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus"

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

**Do you want to have no fear of authority?
Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good.
But if you do what is evil, be afraid...for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.**

—Romans 13:3-4—

Celebrating Jesus Christ, Lord of Ministering Magistrates

The Lord reigns on high,
The Lord is worthy to be praised;
Righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.
He who makes angelic spirits to serve him,
Raises up human magistrates to do his bidding.
For the sake of the world he raises them up:
To punish those doing evil,
And praise those doing good.

Bless the Lord for his kindness to the nations—
For governors and prime ministers,
For town councils and presidents,
For judges and lawmakers:
All are given for justice and to promote what is good,
That the peoples may flourish and the earth be refreshed.
All are called to be wise and fair;
All will answer one day in the Great Judgment;
All serve the citizens they govern;
All are subject to the crucified, risen, ruling, King Jesus.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Alleluia!



Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Esther 9:20-10:3

New Testament Lesson: Romans 12:17– 13:1-7

Sermon

“Are You An Athlete in Training?”

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Ron Lutjens, pastor, preaching

What Good Is Government?

The institution of civil government is for the purpose of restraining evil and promoting good in the whole body politic.

Civil magistrates are sent by God “**to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right**” (I Pet. 2:14.). Notwithstanding all the miscarriage of justice and all the faults that have characterized civil government in the course of history, the purpose of this divine institution has not completely failed. The Roman state in the days of the apostles was characterized by gross corruptions that defeated the very end for which government was instituted. Yet it was of such government that Paul could say, “**For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.**” (Rom. 13:3-4) While particular governments do themselves often perpetrate the grossest injustices, yet the testimony of Scripture and of experience is that apart from the restraints imposed and the order promoted by civil government the condition of this world would be one of moral and economic barbarism.

Civil government as such is not a redemptive ordinance. But it provides, and is intended to provide, that outward peace and order within which the ordinances of redemption may work to the accomplishment of God’s saving purposes. It is on this basis and to the end of fostering in believers the recognition and appreciation of it that Paul says to Timothy, “**I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.**” (I Tim. 2: 1, 2).

The tranquility and order established and preserved by the ordinances of government are benefits enjoyed by all. This blessing arising from divine institution we must regard therefore as a common blessing and therefore as one of the institutions of common grace.

The evidence drawn from Scripture, then, compels the conclusion that the world as a whole, though subject to the curse [that came on it through] sin, receives the showers of manifold blessing, that men who still lie under the divine condemnation of sin, including even those who will finally suffer the full weight of that condemnation in perdition, are the recipients in this life of multiple favors that proceed from God’s lovingkindness....So that viewing God’s government of this world, even from the aspect of his common or non-saving grace, we may say, the earth is full of the glory of the Lord and all peoples see his glory.

—John Murray, *Systematic Theology* (1977)



For Meditation

Here's one of the things we should be about as a church and as individual disciples of King Jesus: thanking God for any and all benefits we enjoy in the civil sphere, and pleading with him for greater justice and a wider peace in our land and in the world:

I urge...that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in high places, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- 1. Read it**—Read the passage out loud at least three times this week, and try to memorize it if you can.
- 2. Think it**—Mull the text over through your week, and try to carve out some time to sit alone with your Bible open to it. *Remember that the core exercise in meditating on God's Word is simply to get quiet with the text in front of you—or in your head—as you try to discern the Lord speaking to you in it.*
- 3. Pray it**—As you ponder this passage and reflect on it, ask God to show you if you have become more “cynical about politics” than hopeful of Christ's grace and intervention in the rough and tumble of our political order. Then ask for what you need.
- 4. Live it**—Do this week what God in this text commands you to do, and pray for men and women of influence and power as the Lord brings them into your mind. And watch it soften your political passivity or cynicism or extremism.