

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Reviving the “Loyal Opposition”

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. —Romans 13:1-2

It is obvious that we live in an age of political ugliness, and what shall we do? It is not enough to lament the poison atmosphere in which we now find ourselves and to call for increased niceness. I guess that politeness is always a good start, but the real need is to look deeper at the underlying causes of it all. At the heart of this present tension, I see the problem of challenged elections. The latest turmoil and the Capitol riot centered on the claim that Joe Biden was not legitimately elected. This wild claim did not come out of the clear blue, as there was a precedent for this accusation. Following the 2016 election there came years of charges that the election was stolen through Russian interference. Long after any claim of such foul play was refuted the charge lived on, and many of the opposition party could never bring themselves to admit that Mr. Trump was legitimately elected. Many citizens embraced the motto, “Not My President,” and identified themselves as members of “The Resistance,” as though we had been taken over by a totalitarian regime. Demonstrating a complete lack of any grace or nobility, President Trump played a very similar card against his opposition in 2020. Claiming massive voter fraud, this most recent election was declared illegitimate by angry partisans. This is not ending well. Again, I am hearing of banners proclaiming “Not My President,” but now the shoe is on the other foot.

These attacks upon the legitimacy of our leaders' authority are at the heart of the problem before us, and action is necessary if we are to head off this insidious spiritual disease. We can start by confessing that Donald Trump was our duly elected president and that Joe Biden has legitimately won his present place in the Oval Office. Perhaps we should all say this out loud, even though half of that statement may be painful for us. The Russians will always be making mischief, voting systems will always be problematic and the hastily implemented mail-in system is deserving of careful review, but all the same, these elections were valid.

Next, we must remember the honor and respect that our government leaders are owed. I say this not as a mere civics lesson but as a command from Holy Scripture! Paul is clear in his command that we give respect to government leaders, and it is noteworthy that he penned these words in the days of Roman emperors who were

not of the noblest breed, nor were they friends of the Church. God has appointed governments and human leaders. They are all flawed and frail, but they are our leaders with authority from God. If you really want to speak a challenging confession, say for the world to hear that both Presidents Trump and Biden have received authority from God.

My final plea is that we claim for ourselves the concept of “The Loyal Opposition.” This is a term which originated in the British parliamentary system and refers to those in the minority in that ruling body. To claim one’s place in the Loyal Opposition was to state that one had many disagreements and misgivings about the present government, *but* that they were going to address those differences with all the respect they could muster toward the present leadership, the law of the land, and toward God. It was an affirmation that they were all Brits and were in this endeavor together, despite partisan differences. In present day America we live among opposing parties which have become blinded to the higher principles of our nation and can see only partisan concerns.

I have never been quick to look across The Pond for our political answers, but our British brothers and sisters have something to teach us in our present tension. Though the term Loyal Opposition is not to be found in the Bible, it is a thing of beauty and seems to fit there very well. Let us pray for our nation, and let us demonstrate the kind of gracious citizenship which our country so needs.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Almighty God, who hast ordained that men should serve thee in serving one another by their labors: have regard, we pray thee, to this nation, oppressed at this time by many burdens. Grant to its citizens grace to work together with honest and faithful hearts, each caring for the good of all; that seeking first thy kingdom and its righteousness, they may have added to them all things needful for their daily sustenance and the common good; through Jesus Christ our Lord. —Geoffrey F. Fisher, 1887-1972