

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

69 – A Broader Approach

Announcements:

5/22 @6:30 -

Men's Discipleship
- Question 10

5/24 @7:00 -

Prayer

5/25 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/28 @8:30 -

Sunday School

5/28 @After Service -

GRADUATION

POTLUCK!

ICE BREAKER: If you were “Emperor for the day” what would you do/change?

READ: Matthew 22:15-22

This “test” set up by the Pharisees to “entangle” Jesus is the start of a series of interactions that culminate with Jesus turning the tables and taking the Pharisees to task, and “entangling” them in their own words and traps! But what is important to note with this thought is that Jesus is carefully seeking to answer a specific question in a specific context to a specific audience. In other words, these are not a great place to go about finding a comprehensive statement on any of the topics listed. Yet they are all important topics! (Here it is how we interact with civil government, later what heaven is like, then finally how to follow the commands of God) So we will take a step back, and look at what Scripture in general speaks about these topics to try and get a better idea of how to “live lives worthy of the calling we have received!” So today we ask: what is the christian's duty to civil government?

READ: 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Here Paul is writing to the young pastor of the Church in Ephesus. And he lays out what we are to do. Simply put, we are to pray for all people. Paul uses a series of three words that all have the same basic meaning (supplications, prayers and intercessions), but each with a slightly different focus. The basic gist is this: in all your prayers, of every type, with every movement of your heart, lift these people up to God. Which people? “All People” in verse 1, but just to be clear Paul adds in verse 2: “for kings and all who are in high positions”. Yes, even those rulers over you. Yes, even those *Roman pagan* rulers over you. Yes, even those in authority who sometimes make your life miserable. Pray for them. Why? That you can lead a “peaceful and quiet life.” BUT WAIT! You might be thinking. There were four words Paul used to describe our prayers. What about that fourth one: Thanksgivings. Great Question! That one seems to be a little different, and probably the hardest one for us!

DISCUSS: What does Paul mean when he says that we should make “thanksgivings for all people”? How do we live that out?

READ: Titus 3:1-2

Here the focus is not on the positive things that we do for the authorities over us (prayer) but on the attitude that we regard them with: submissiveness. It is unfortunate that this word carries for so many a negative connotation, here the word basically means operating with “a humble obedience”. Note Paul says NOTHING about the ones over us, simply what our attitude must be toward them. Even if they are foolish, even when we don't appreciate or love what they are doing. It is the same sort of attitude that Paul expressed in Romans 13. God has placed these people over us, so (unless it directly goes against a command of God) we should listen to their authority. It is for our good. Especially relevant to our modern context is Paul's idea of “avoiding quarreling”. In a day and age where everything seems to be up for debate and both sides do not do much more than scream at each other, a christian's submissive spirit and good works should speak volumes!

DISCUSS: How can we “show perfect courtesy”? What does this look like?

READ: 2 Peter 2:13-17

Moving from Paul we see what Peter says about this subject. This text surely is the closest we have to a comprehensive treatise on this topic, and there is a whole lot here. But there are two quick points that I would like to make. The first is to look at verse 17. If we didn't know any better we might think that this is a bit of propaganda. How can Peter end this exhortation with the parting thought being “Honor the emperor”? Well, It is because of all the things that we have said up to this point. Because God placed them in authority over them, because good or bad we are to be thankful for where God has placed us. And it is because by fulfilling this command we are able to do all that came before. And this leads to the second point I would like to see: That all of this is done so that we may “live as servants of God.” Ultimately I would say that this was Jesus' Point when told us to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.”

DISCUSS: In what ways are doing these things showing that we are servants of God? What is the connection between submission to earthly authority and submission to God?