



Life Shines in Civic Action

Luke 20:19-25

Should the Church stay out of politics? Shouldn't Christians stick to spiritual concerns? God's Word records no 501(c)(3) regulations. Political issues may double as spiritual matters. But legislating the Gospel violates Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions (AC XXVIII). We dare not coerce hearts into church or faith, lest force negate grace. Temptations to abuse government for gain remain great. Aware of flesh's weakness, we wisely watch ourselves and avoid such enticements.

Sinfulness—not citizenship—incurs guilt under God's Law. In fact, neglecting citizenship constitutes sin, however righteously disguised. The Fourth Commandment demands actively honoring even secular authorities, and the Tenth Commandment requires encouraging all subordinates in their duties—civics included. We cannot abandon community simply because political affairs invite controversy, for that disregards opportunities to love our neighbor.

Jesus has freed us from being fugitives from love. By His submission to Father (John 6:38) and Caesar (Matthew 17:24-27), He has made us masters of it. His law-fulfilling, love-perfecting life redeems us to reign resurrected with Him over creation in Adam and Eve's original office (Genesis 1:28). Forgiveness makes Christians the best citizens. We attend to civic rights and responsibilities with grateful faith in God who gave them (Romans 13:1-7). He qualifies us by baptismal identity to serve as agents of a fair and safe society.

We practice citizenship (even politically!) for the common good, that Gospel may have free course, and especially in circumstances endangering our neighbor's existence or access to Word and Sacraments. This involves interceding (1 Timothy 2:1-3), exercising (particularly threatened) privileges (Acts 25:11-12), conscientious (educated!) objection to unjust laws (Acts 5:27-29), holding office (Romans 16:23; Acts 8:27), and instruction

about such things in the congregation. Church and state may be separate, but in Christ, God and world aren't, nor are Christian and citizen.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, graciously grant me to render unto Caesar and God. Amen.