

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

“A Place to Lay Your Head”

I. Introduction: Wandering

Even after the best of vacations, the first night back home often feels like a relief. You are back to your familiar surroundings. You are back to the comforts of home, even if they are not as nice as the hotel you visited.

The same thing can be true when someone moves far from home. Maybe it is a son who joined the military and traveled the world. Maybe it is a rebellious daughter who runs off to California. Most of the time, these sons and daughters of the Midwest find their way back home.

I know because I am one of them. When I was younger, I thought any place would be more exciting than Minnesota. After lots of excitement in Miami, I decided maybe the peace and quiet of the Midwest isn't so bad after all. It was nice for me to move near old friends and relatives.

II. Tough Demands from an Itinerant Preacher

I imagine that Jesus must have been feeling tired of traveling when he said, *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay his head.”* Sometimes we forget that Jesus was an itinerant preacher. He traveled from place to place, never building a church building, never even asking for his own house. That's a tough way to live.

It is easy to say that that type of living should only apply to pastors but if we look at the next few verses we see that Jesus demands the same thing from a layman as well. When Jesus said, “Follow me,” he meant it

literally. This disciple was supposed to drop everything and follow Jesus. That's a tough demand to make but Jesus had lived up to the same demand in his life.

Whether or not Jesus demands that we leave our homes, Jesus puts heavy demands on us too. He may not demand that we abandon our house, our family or our nation but he does not want those attachments getting in the way of our attachment to him.

In light of these demands, we see how weak our faith is. Would we give up our house if Jesus demanded it? Would we give up this church building if Jesus demanded it? Would we give up U.S. citizenship if Jesus demanded it?

Not many people would will to do these things. We all want to have our cake and eat it too. We want the benefits of being Jesus' followers without the costs. I include myself in this too. I don't know if I could give up my comfortable lifestyle to live like Jesus demanded from his first followers.

III. No Home but Heaven

Most people don't chose to leave their family or leave their nation but there are times when these situations are thrust upon us. How many people have lost a loved one they didn't want to lose? How many people have lost a job and been forced to sell their house? As incredible as it seems, people can even lose their nation.

Saint Augustine felt that he was losing his nation. Augustine was a citizen of the Roman Empire during its years of decline. Rome itself was sacked by the Visigoths in his lifetime (410 A.D.) and he knew that the once great empire would not last.

Today people wonder the same thing about the United States and Europe. With bombs going off in London and homeland security tensing

up for something similar here, we can't help but wonder, "How long will Anglo-American dominance in the world last? Will Islam triumph in Europe? What would it be like to be a Christian living under Islamic domination?"

Saint Augustine asked himself the same kinds of questions about the Visigoths. What will it be like if they take over? Will Christianity survive if the Roman Empire falls?

After wrangling with these questions, he wrote The City of God. In that book, he wrote that the world is divided into two cities: the City of God and the City of Man. The city of God is concerned with spiritual things. It looks toward heaven and tries to curb our carnal appetites. The City of Man searches after power and pleasure in this world and actively opposes the City of God. On the last day, the City of God will triumph over the City of Man.

By dividing these two cities, Augustine laid the groundwork for separation of Church and State. Christianity was the state religion of the Roman Empire in Augustine's time but Augustine did not put the church at the service of the state. The church had its function and the state had its function. To quote Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world..." (John 18:36)

The point that I am trying to make here is that our nation is not our home. Our house is not our home. They are only things that we can use temporarily to promote the City of God. We as Christians should never get too attached to them.

IV. Citizenship in Heaven and on Earth

So if our citizenship is in the City of God and not in the City of Man, does that mean that we shouldn't celebrate the Fourth of July? Some denominations might say so but the Lutheran understanding of citizenship says that it is good to pay respect to those who lead the civil

government and to respect those who lead the church but we need to keep the two distinct. As Jesus put it, "...give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Luke 20:25)

As citizens of the United States, we should celebrate the Fourth of July. As Christians, we should celebrate Easter. But Easter doesn't necessarily belong in the White House (even though they do have an Easter egg hunt there) and the Fourth of July doesn't necessarily belong in the church (even though we are celebrating it early today). Church and state should two should remain distinct.

Historically, some Christian churches have had trouble with this idea. The Roman Catholic Church claims that the pope has the right to name kings and other secular authorities. In the Middle Ages, the popes had the power to choose between rival candidates for king. Now popes don't have that kind of power but their official doctrine has not changed.

The Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity went in the other direction. They believe in what is called caesaropapism. That means that Caesar, or whoever is in charge of the government, appoints bishops to office. In other words, the church is subordinate to the state.

Martin Luther had a different approach, a middle way. He had what is called his doctrine of two kingdoms. He believed that God ruled the whole world but that he rules through two kingdoms. The kingdom of the right is the Church. The kingdom of the left is the state.

The left-hand kingdom exists to force order on society. Its job is to force thieves to stop stealing by punishing them so severely that they will stop stealing out of fear of the consequences. Its job is to stop murderers from murdering either by putting them to death or by locking them away where they can't do any damage.

The right-hand kingdom is the Church and its job is to preach the gospel. It does not exist to make laws or enforce laws. Instead, it preaches God's

law until an individual sees his sin. Then it offers forgiveness in Christ's name. This is the only power that the church is given. That is why we often think of the left-hand kingdom, the state, as outward and external, and the right-hand kingdom, or the church, as inward and spiritual.

Luther believed the each kingdom should remain distinct and focus on doing its job but there are times when they need to interact. There is nothing wrong with being a military chaplain as long as the chaplain is free to preach the Gospel. There is nothing wrong with a Christian citizen voting according to his conscience. The United States senate has had a paid chaplain since the very beginning of our nation so clearly our founding fathers understood that there is some interaction between church and state even if we keep them distinct.

V. Conclusion: Our Home in Heaven

The relationship between church and state is a tricky one and every generation of Americans struggles with it. But the important thing to remember is that no matter what happens in our City of Man, the City of God is secure. Jesus had no place to lay his head on earth but he rules from heaven. We may lose our house, our family members, even our nation but we will never lose our citizenship in God's kingdom. We won't be Americans forever but we will always be citizens of God's kingdom.

As Luther ended "A Mighty Fortress," so I will end this sermon:

And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife,
Let these all be gone, they yet have nothing won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

*May that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Amen.*