

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! The month that we have been fearing and dreading has arrived: November—election month. As a pastor, I have not been called to tell you for whom you should vote, and I have tried to be careful not to lead you toward one candidate or another. At the same time, Paul wrote in Romans 13 of the importance of following the rules of the land, which, in this land, include voting. We vote so that we may elect our leaders and so that we don't lose the privilege of voting by not doing it. It is a good time, then, to review what Luther had to say about government in our study of his Large Catechism.

Good Government

Last newsletter, we heard how we are not autonomous, self-driven creatures but that God provides for all that we need. He watches over the functions of all organizations on the earth, including, as we'll see, the government. Luther continues his explanation of the First Article as follows: “Moreover, he (that is, God) gives all physical and temporal blessings—good government, peace, security (BoC, p.432).”

Did you catch that? Luther wrote that God gives the “blessing” of “good government.” Just as we cannot all be farmers and truck drivers and packagers and store clerks and all the positions needed to make and distribute goods, we are not all called or made to be government officials in addition to any other vocations we have. We must trust God, then, to provide what we need and when we need it. And just as we trust God to provide police officers to prevent the theft of goods en route to the store, we also trust God to provide security through our government. Looking at Luther's next words on pp.432-433, he wrote “Thus we learn from this

article that none of us has life—or anything else that has been mentioned here or can be mentioned—from ourselves, nor can we by ourselves preserve any of them, however small and unimportant.”

Granted, politics—especially this year—are far from “small and unimportant”—but if God can handle the small things, as well as salvation from our sins, do we need to fear whatever happens as a result of this election? Doesn’t God still have control?

So, along with Paul, we do the things our government asks, paying them taxes, sometimes becoming soldiers, and even voting for our officials—not because we trust that our government, whether led by this new president or that, will keep us secure, but because we trust that God is keeping us secure, and will use our government as He does. God can use anyone and any official, whether they believe in Him, like King David, or if they don’t, like King Cyrus (through whom the Israelites were permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem). We do not trust in the “strength of the horses” of our government—to use Old Testament language—we trust God. Yet at the same time, God calls us to honor our authorities, including our government. (The only exception being, of course, being required to do something against God’s Law.)

From these couple sentences we can see that while we may have entered November with fear and dread, and even if our candidate does not get elected, we don’t need to continue that fearing and dreading. God is still in control and will always be in control—God, the same God who sent His beloved Son to pay for your sins and mine, so that we might be His dear children. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh