

IN THE MARGINS: Politics and idolatry

By Tony Martin

Editor

We're all thinking about the upcoming election, right? It's plastered everywhere – news channels, billboards, social media. It's the hot topic that's impossible to escape.

As the election approaches, there's this sense of heaviness. Our nation and our churches feel so divided. What's going to happen after the election? Who's going to win – Democrats, Republicans, Independents? And what's our role in all this as Christians? How can we be a calming voice in such a chaotic time?

Here's the thing: when politics becomes our end goal, it turns into idolatry. When we start putting our faith in a political leader or a party, we're missing the point that our true sufficiency is in the Lord.

Jesus is our Prophet, Priest, and King. When we replace Him with political figures in our hearts, we're giving away something sacred. No president, no political leader can ever meet all our needs like Jesus can. Anytime we put our ultimate hope in a politician, we're stepping into idolatry.

Let's break this down with three key thoughts:

Courage

At the end of the day, where do you want to place your faith? In a sinless Christ who always has your best interests at heart, or in flawed human leaders and political parties? When we look to politicians instead of God, they become idols. Let's be bold and keep our focus on Jesus.

It takes real courage to step away from the political frenzy and ground ourselves in faith. It's easy to get swept up in the debates and the drama, but as Christians, we're called to something higher. Courage means trusting in God's plan even when the future looks uncertain. It means speaking the truth in love and not being afraid to stand out from the crowd.

Unity

We've got to talk about the obvious: Satan is using politics to divide us. It's heartbreaking to see how political ideologies are splitting the church. We need to remember that our unity in Christ is far more important than any political difference.

Unity doesn't mean we all have to agree on every issue. It means we prioritize our shared faith over our political preferences. It means we see each other first and foremost as brothers and sisters in Christ. Imagine the power of a church united in love and purpose, standing together to show the world what it means to live out the gospel. That kind of unity can change hearts and minds far more effectively than any political campaign.

Disagreement

Since when did disagreeing with someone mean we can't be friends or in fellowship anymore? It's a sad shift in our culture where being right has become more important than relationships.

People are suffering everywhere – without food, without homes, without hope. And so many are without the gospel. Instead of getting caught up in political fights, let's focus on sharing the love of Christ and the hope of the gospel with our communities. That's where our real battle lies.

Disagreement doesn't have to lead to division. We can have healthy, respectful conversations without letting them drive a

wedge between us. Remember, Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners. He engaged with people from all walks of life, showing love and compassion even when He disagreed with them. We can do the same.

Moving Forward

So, what does this look like in practical terms? How do we live this out day by day?

1. **Pray for Wisdom and Discernment:** Before engaging in political discussions, ask God for wisdom. Seek His guidance on how to navigate these conversations with grace and truth.
2. **Listen More, Speak Less:** Take the time to really listen to others, especially those with different viewpoints. Listening doesn't mean you have to agree, but it shows respect and opens the door for meaningful dialogue.
3. **Focus on the Gospel:** Keep the main thing the main thing. Our mission is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Let's not get sidetracked by political debates that, in the grand scheme of things, are temporary. The gospel is eternal.
4. **Love Unconditionally:** Love your neighbors, love your enemies, love those who see the world differently. Love is the most powerful witness we have.
5. **Be a Peacemaker:** Strive to bring peace into every situation. Be the calming presence in the room, the voice of reason in a heated debate. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

As we move closer to the election, let's anchor ourselves in Christ. Let's be courageous, united, and focused on what truly matters. Politics will come and go, but the love of Christ endures forever. Let's be a light in the darkness, a beacon of hope in these uncertain times.