

OUR THEME FOR THIS WEEK

Sunday, September 4, 2011

"God's Government?"

Romans 13: 1 – 10

Happy Labor Day Weekend! Isn't it nice that Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September each year a legal holiday? Speaking of our government, when is the last time – not counting the above statement – that you remember reading or hearing about anything good that our government has done for the well-being of the people? Are you having a hard time remembering? How, then, as God's people, are we to receive St. Paul's words today in Romans 13?

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 44: 24 – 28

(The Lord, our Redeemer, has all things under His control. He reminds Israel of this as He tells how He will use Cyrus, the future leader of pagan Persia, to fulfill His purpose for the good of His people.)

²⁴Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ²⁵who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, ²⁶who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins'; ²⁷who says to the deep, 'Be dry; I will dry up your rivers'; ²⁸who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Epistle Lesson

Romans 13: 1 – 10

(St. Paul exhorts Christians to respect and heed the authority which God placed over us for our good.)

¹Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

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Gospel Lesson *(please rise)*

Matthew 18: 1 – 20

(Jesus speaks of the need for a humble and repentant heart. Though in our sin we deserve to be “drowned in the depth of the sea” [v. 6], we have been instead drowned [buried] with Christ in Baptism and then raised the new, humble obedience as a child of God.)

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

⁷“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”



Connecting Points: Our Vision in Action

God has placed governing authorities over us for our good. This week, pray by name for our local, state, and national leaders, lifting them up before our Heavenly Father, and asking that He grant them wisdom and guidance in serving well.

This week, use the freedom God has granted you under this government to share with someone the message of forgiveness and life in Christ.

Connecting People to Christ Now and Forever