When In Doubt…Love it Out

Romans 14

On the internet you can find countless articles with titles like…

10 Reasons all Christians should vote for Joe Biden

Or…

5 Reasons that evangelicals should never vote for Trump

Or…

Why Christians should never vote democrat

I know that for some of you this may be blasphemy…But I think in the big scheme of things, “You say potato and I say potahto.”

I’m not saying this because your vote doesn’t matter. It does matter. Based on who is running the show our country could go in very different directions.

One party presents as the party that it knows best about how to care for people and the earth. And quite honestly, the other party says it will do a better job caring for people and the earth.

Today I am going to encourage you to vote according to your conscience. And trust God and love others, even the ones who you’re pretty sure are voting the other way.

The reason I say this is because politicians and laws do not mandate the way of a country. At least not in what matters the most. Love really does win the day. That is if we truly love each other.

I found it very interesting that because I already preached on Romans 13, today we find ourselves at Romans 14. Which, in my opinion is very timely as we consider the tensions in this country. In many of the conversations I have had, it seems that even within households, people have very different (and strong) opinions about who can best lead our state and our country. To me that means that after this election season, there are going to be some very disappointed people. Though it is okay to be disappointed, I want to encourage you all to keep on loving each other. In my study this week, I read Romans 14 from the Message Bible by Eugene Peterson. It goes like this:

**14**Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don’t see things the way you do. And don’t jump all over them every time they do or say something you don’t agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

**2-4**For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume he should only be a vegetarian and eat accordingly. But since both are guests at Christ’s table, wouldn’t it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn’t eat? God, after all, invited them both to the table. Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God’s welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.

**5**Or, say, one person thinks that some days should be set aside as holy and another thinks that each day is pretty much like any other. There are good reasons either way. So, each person is free to follow the convictions of conscience.

**6-9**What’s important in all this is that if you keep a holy day, keep it for *God’s* sake; if you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and thank God for prime rib; if you’re a vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of God and thank God for broccoli. None of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these matters. It’s *God* we are answerable to—all the way from life to death and everything in between—not each other. That’s why Jesus lived and died and then lived again: so that he could be our Master across the entire range of life and death, and free us from the petty tyrannies of each other.

**10-12**So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when you condescend to a sister? I’d say it leaves you looking pretty silly—or worse. Eventually, we’re all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren’t going to improve your position there one bit. Read it for yourself in Scripture:

“As I live and breathe,” God says,
    “every knee will bow before me;
Every tongue will tell the honest truth
    that I and only I am God.”

So tend to your knitting. You’ve got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

**13-14**Forget about deciding what’s right for each other. Here’s what you need to be concerned about: that you don’t get in the way of someone else, making life more difficult than it already is. I’m convinced—Jesus convinced me!—that everything as it is in itself is holy. We, of course, by the way we treat it or talk about it, can contaminate it.

**15-16**If you confuse others by making a big issue over what they eat or don’t eat, you’re no longer a companion with them in love, are you? These, remember, are persons for whom Christ died. Would you risk sending them to hell over an item in their diet? Don’t you dare let a piece of God-blessed food become an occasion of soul-poisoning!

**17-18**God’s kingdom isn’t a matter of what you put in your stomach, for goodness’ sake. It’s what God does with your life as he sets it right, puts it together, and completes it with joy. Your task is to single-mindedly serve Christ. Do that and you’ll kill two birds with one stone: pleasing the God above you and proving your worth to the people around you.

**19-21**So let’s agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other. Help others with encouraging words; don’t drag them down by finding fault. You’re certainly not going to permit an argument over what is served or not served at supper to wreck God’s work among you, are you? I said it before and I’ll say it again: All food is good, but it can turn bad if you use it badly, if you use it to trip others up and send them sprawling. When you sit down to a meal, your primary concern should not be to feed your own face but to share the life of Jesus. So be sensitive and courteous to the others who are eating. Don’t eat or say or do things that might interfere with the free exchange of love.

**22-23**Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don’t impose it on others. You’re fortunate if your behavior and your belief are coherent. But if you’re not sure, if you notice that you are acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe—some days trying to impose your opinions on others, other days just trying to please them—then you know that you’re out of line. If the way you live isn’t consistent with what you believe, then it’s wrong.

If your sure that voting Blue is the answer to all our country’s problems than vote Blue. If Red is your answer vote red. In fact, some may even vote green, or Red-White-and Blue for that matter.

Don’t forget that it wasn’t necessarily God’s idea to have kings. In 1 Samuel 8 Israel demanded that the prophet Samuel give them a king, And Samuel was crushed, but…

 **7**“Do everything they say to you,” the Lord replied, “for they are rejecting me, not you. They don’t want me to be their king any longer. **8**Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment. **9**Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them.”

**Samuel Warns against a Kingdom**

**10**So Samuel passed on the Lord’s warning to the people who were asking him for a king. **11**“This is how a king will reign over you,” Samuel said. “The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers, making them run before his chariots. **12**Some will be generals and captains in his army, some will be forced to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, and some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. **13**The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him. **14**He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials. **15**He will take a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. **16**He will take your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. **17**He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his slaves. **18**When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord will not help you.”

**19**But the people refused to listen to Samuel’s warning. “Even so, we still want a king,” they said. **20**“We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will judge us and lead us into battle.”

**21**So Samuel repeated to the Lord what the people had said, **22**and the Lord replied, “Do as they say, and give them a king.” Then Samuel agreed and sent the people home.

Obviously we don’t have kings in America (at least not yet), instead we have presidents. They do not ultimately have control of how we live.

No matter who wins this election, we are called to live as subjects of our one and only King…Jesus.

Vote, be heard, but most of all be ready to love each other and live according to God’s principles no matter who wins more of the electoral college votes.

As Eugene Peterson’s interpretation says:

Your critical and condescending ways aren’t going to improve your position there one bit. Read it for yourself in Scripture:

“As I live and breathe,” God says,
    “every knee will bow before me;
Every tongue will tell the honest truth
    that I and only I am God.”

So tend to your knitting. You’ve got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

And as he goes on to write:

**22-23**Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don’t impose it on others. You’re fortunate if your behavior and your belief are coherent. But if you’re not sure, if you notice that you are acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe—some days trying to impose your opinions on others, other days just trying to please them—then you know that you’re out of line. If the way you live isn’t consistent with what you believe, then it’s wrong.

As the famous saying goes, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in everything charity.”

Now, I know that some of you, as Christians, don’t think who your voting for is a debatable issue. You might be thinking…Anthony you aren’t even using a real version of the Bible. I guess you are going to have to decide whether you are going to still love and accept me or not. And you are going to have to decide whether or not this message of love for each other in spite of differences is a message for you.

Do you believe that one candidate is going to lead our country to moral decay and the other candidate is going to put us on a path of righteousness?

Only we the people can do that as we learn to cling to Jesus and follow after His ways more and more. There is no President, or King or Kingdom on earth that can fix our condition. In fact, there is only one King and Kingdom on earth, and in heaven, that will stand.

The prophet Daniel tells us that it is so as he interpreted King Nebuchadnezzer’s dream of a statue. He said to the king.

**36**“That was the dream. Now we will tell the king what it means. **37**Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor. **38**He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put even the wild animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

**39**“But after your kingdom comes to an end, another kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third kingdom, represented by bronze, will rise to rule the world. **40**Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth one, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes. **41**The feet and toes you saw were a combination of iron and baked clay, showing that this kingdom will be divided. Like iron mixed with clay, it will have some of the strength of iron. **42**But while some parts of it will be as strong as iron, other parts will be as weak as clay. **43**This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage. But they will not hold together, just as iron and clay do not mix.

**44**“During the reigns of those kings, **the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered**. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. **45**That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain.”

What am I really trying to say today?

Vote your conscience.

Love your neighbor, even the one with a very different idea of the kingdom.

Don’t think that America is above all the other kingdoms of the world.

Follow our King…Jesus

Don’t lose faith in God’s rule and God’s kingdom

As people lose faith in the governments and kingdoms of this world. Tell them and show them the loving king who’s rule will never be destroyed or conquered.

So let’s take up Eugene Peterson’s challenge, when he tells us:

…tend to your knitting. You’ve got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God.

Part of our knitting is to vote, share our concerns, our opinions, and our hopes for our country’s future. And part of our knitting is to simply love each other, work with each other, and support each other as we do our best to follow Our King Jesus.