

Faith in Action: Public Life and Politics
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seymour Indiana
Pastor Blumenberg
September 27, 2020

Overview: This class will study issues that are being debated in our nation. We will seek to apply God's Word to current issues and make good decisions that can influence what takes place in public life, rather than merely reacting to events and trends.

1. Last Week: Two Kingdoms, One King

We discussed **God's "left hand" kingdom**--civil government and authority-- where God seeks to bless all people by providing protection, justice, and peace. He uses power, authority and even force to accomplish this in an evil world.

We also discussed **God's "right hand" kingdom**, the church, where God seeks to bless all people by giving them forgiveness, life, and salvation. He uses the power of the Gospel to bring people to repentance and faith.

2. Religious Influence in the Founding of the United States

While the Kingdom of the Left and Kingdom of the Right are not the same, they are also not mutually exclusive. Both are God's. The Christian faith does not get left at home or at church, but influences how one sees life, community, neighbor, and nation.

Read 1 Peter 2:11-12 (1294)

What is to be the influence of faith in our personal choices? Why?

Read 1 Peter 2:13-16 (1294-5)

What is to be the influence of faith in our public conduct? Why?

Did the founding fathers of our nation see a place for God in public life?

Declaration of Independence:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed....

Bill of Rights:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof....

The first amendment has been interpreted in different ways.

Some claim that it requires a “wall of separation” that prohibits public influence of religion, which is to be a *private* matter. Secular humanism claims that humans can make moral and ethical decisions without reference to “god,” and that people are neither inherently good nor evil. It is a worldview based on atheism, evolution, and ethical relativism. This is a religious conviction with enormous reach in textbooks in schools and university settings as well as in government.

Others claim that the clause was designed not to prevent religious influence in the nation, but to prevent the establishment of a national church and to keep the government from interfering in the free exercise of religion and faith.

What are the implications of either interpretation?

What did the founders mean, and what is the history for this clause?

What did the founders **not** mean, and how do we know?

What about posting 10 commandments in courthouses or displaying nativity scenes?

What was Martin Luther’s contribution to our freedom of religion in America?

**3. Voting: How does Faith go to the Polls?
Read 1 Timothy 2:1-5 (1263)**

What kind of civil leaders should we pray for?

In our nation, where we get to choose our leaders, how should we see our vote?

How do we weigh the following factors in voting?

- Party of the candidates
- Positions of the candidates
- Principles or convictions of the candidates
- Personal knowledge of the candidates

What if we do not agree with either candidate on everything?

Next Week: The changing definitions of sex and gender; how do we respond?