

## Vocation – Part 3 of 4

# “How Are You Being Called By God to Be a Citizen?”

Based on Various Passages

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost / 20<sup>th</sup> after Trinity

October 4 & 5, 2008 ► [Saturday at 5](#) • [Sunday at 8:15 & 10:45](#)

**Sermon Theme:** As we resume this four-part series on the topic of *vocation* or *calling*, let us see and follow God’s plan for our Christian lives in the area of *citizenship*!

**Introduction:** Today we return to the topic of vocation, which refers to our God-given callings – *those various ways in which God ✨puts us on as a mask and ✨works through us to provide for the needs of others!* So far we have considered our callings as *workers* and *family members*; today we focus on our calling as citizens.<sup>1</sup>

1. **Remember Your Dual Citizenship:** We have a reminder of that reality in our display of the *U.S. flag* and *Christian flag* right here in our chancel. *But in our daily lives we tend to focus on what we see!* As a way to remember your dual citizenship, I urge you to memorize these words written by St. Paul: “**We do not look at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen, for what we see lasts only a while, but what we do not see lasts forever.**” (NET 2 Corinthians 4:18)
  - a. **United States:** Most of us are citizens of the U.S. by birth, but some by application. *Either way, we are very blessed by our heavenly Father!* One person stated those blessings in this manner:
    - i. **If you can attend church without fear of**

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Martin Luther’s Table of Duties in the Small Catechism.

harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than 3 billion people in the world.

- ii. If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, money in the bank, and money in your wallet, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.<sup>2</sup>

- b. Heaven: In Christ – *through His perfect life, His substitutionary death, and the gift of faith by which we trust in Him alone* – we are citizens of heaven!
  - i. Peter reminded us of that reality when he addressed fellow believers as “**aliens and strangers**” – *people who are present in one place, but rightly belong in another!* (NAS 1 Peter 2:11)
  - ii. Paul accurately stated our present situation with these words: “**...our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...**” (NIV Philippians 3:20)

## 2. **Live Under the God-Established Governing Authorities:**

This section focuses on our responsibilities as U.S. citizens (next week we will focus on our responsibilities as members of God's kingdom and Bethlehem Lutheran Church).

- a. Government to Citizen: Earlier this year, near the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we focused on Romans 13:1-7, which clearly points to the almighty God as the one who ✦ has established the governing authorities and ✦ works through them to *commend those who do right* and *punish those who do wrong*. Furthermore, our government officials are supposed to be servants both of *God* and of *the people!*

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<sup>2</sup>Adapted from: Our World in Perspective, <http://www.cybercollege.com/letter56.htm>

- b. Citizen to Government: Since God has established the governing authorities and serves through them, we have an obligation – *in almost every circumstance* – to obey the governing authorities!
- i. Peter wrote: **“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men...”** (NIV 1 Peter 2:13) Furthermore, as God’s people, we are called to pray for ✦our nation, ✦our president, and ✦all in authority! (2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
  - ii. Nevertheless, when commanded by the authorities **“not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ... Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’”** (NIV Acts 4:18; 5:29) Veith made this comment: **“Sometimes a government might pass a law that violates the Law of God. Such a law can hardly claim divine authority.”** (111) *Thus Christians are not obligated to obey it!*
- c. Citizen to Citizen: God has placed us into ✦a nation, ✦a state, and ✦a community. As we live among our fellow citizens, God wants to *put us on like a mask* in order to bless them according to their needs. This passage is filled with instruction for *citizen to citizen*: **“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, *as far as it depends on you*, live at peace with everyone. **Do not take revenge**, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: **‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.** In doing this,**

you will heap burning coals on his head.’ **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**” (NIV Romans 12:17-21) By *the Spirit* let us daily live-out *the Word* as citizens!

3. **Be a Citizen and a Ruler:**

- a. Abraham Lincoln, in his *Gettysburg address*, expressed this noble desire “that government of the people, by the people, [and] for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” That will continue *only* as each individual citizen exercises his right to vote, *thus to rule over our governing authorities!*
- b. In 2004, Christian voter turnout increased by 93% over 2002. As a result, four major abortion-restricting bills were enacted. However, in 2006, the Christian voter turnout decreased by 30%. In response, “*The Baltimore Sun* labeled the current Congress as ‘the most pro-choice Congress in the history of the Republic.’”<sup>3</sup> *Please register and vote!*

**Conclusion:** Veith wrote: “Christians who, like the prophets, challenge the evils in their societies...are acting in their divine vocation as citizens.” (113) So, *forgiven in Christ*, let us live as citizens unto God’s glory! And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

Please join us next week as we focus on our calling as church members – what does that mean, how is that lived out in our daily Christian lives?

*Some ideas in this sermon are from God at Work, by Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2002.*

This and other sermons are available on Bethlehem’s website: [www.blc7500.com](http://www.blc7500.com)  
*Please share them with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers!*  
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<sup>3</sup> David Barton, American Voters and the Abortion Issue, WallBuilders, January 2008.