

Isaiah 60:1-5

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.  
<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice.

Romans 15:1-6

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.  
<sup>2</sup> Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. <sup>3</sup> For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.' <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:43-47

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.  
<sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### **If Jesus Ran for President**

Here we are in the midst of a campaign season where the candidates of the two major political parties suffer from the lowest approval ratings of any candidates perhaps in history. Both have been accused of lying, hiding information, "rigging," sexually assaulting, and worse in this very nasty campaign. But I have to ask myself, "Self, is America looking for a clean candidate?" And by clean, I mean pure, I mean without any blemish at all. *What if Jesus ran for President?*

And why not? Any good Christian knows that Christ is alive working through that person of the Trinity we call the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. God is in us. As Methodists we believe that we are moving toward perfection precisely because the Spirit of God dwells in us, so couldn't there be a candidate who truly walks with Jesus and promotes policies that Jesus espouses?

And isn't the Bible our reference book, our guide to what the will of God truly is? Today I've picked three passages from the Bible that give us some vision of what Jesus' platform would be if he were running for office. First the vision given in Isaiah, a great prophet of God, a vision of Israel under God's rule. And this sounds better than any campaign speech we'd imagine at a political rally. We can imagine Jesus saying these words on the stump:

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you...  
Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn...

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.

Uh, but wait a minute, Jesus. Are you promoting open borders? There are a lot of horrible people out there; terrorists, rapists, drug dealers. Besides that, they're taking our jobs! We need to protect ourselves! What exactly are you promoting here?

Alright, so maybe we disagree with this point, but what else does Jesus advocate. Well that Holy Spirit was speaking through Paul when he wrote:

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself...

Wait a minute...you think we should put up with the failings of the weak? Hey, they're responsible for their own failures; I worked hard to get to the place that I am today so that I could do things that are pleasing for me, not pleasing for my lazy neighbor. What else do you have on your platform, Jesus?

So Jesus starts describing this little utopia where..."all who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need."

O MY GOD! JESUS IS A SOCIALIST! You want to take money from the haves and give it to the have-nots. That's insane! Those folks will just waste it; that's why they don't have anything now! Jesus, I'm afraid you don't represent MY interests; I'm gonna look for another candidate to vote for!

So one point I'd like to make is that we scorn candidates for their faults, **but would not even consider voting for a candidate with no faults.** What we want is a candidate whose faults work to our own benefit, a candidate who represents our interests. And the truth of that matter is that our interests are not God's interests. We don't want to welcome everyone from all corners of the earth. We don't want to consider our neighbor's interests above our own interests. We don't want to give up what we consider our own for the sake of those who don't have enough. So no, I don't think Jesus would win the election.

The problem is that we still need government; we need someone to govern us, to set limits on our selfishness. Government establishes and enforces laws that keep others from stealing from us and killing us, and these are good things for those who don't steal and don't kill. But government also protects our selfish nature so that, beyond some level of tax to pay for government and things like armies, we are free to make a lot of money and use it in any way we feel like using it. We don't have to sell everything we have, put it in a common pot, and let anyone who had need take from it. If we did that, our suspicion would kick in as soon as someone went to take money out of the pot – does that person *really* need the money? Isn't that a Rolex on his wrist? And so it becomes the province of government to determine who is really poor, and how much that person *really* needs to get by, and they'll need to fill out a lot of documents and wait a few months before they may be approved for the program they're applying to. Government is all about us setting the minimum standard of charity, of what standard of living we should set for those who no one else is willing to help.

So we don't want perfect candidates because we don't want a perfect system according to what God would call perfect. That means that almost everyone who ever says, "Jesus is Lord" is really a hypocrite. Face it; Jesus is not your Lord. At best he's your advisor who sometimes causes you to do things that go against your nature. For the kingdom of God to actually happen we would need to have radical change in our own nature to better reflect God's nature.

So where do we start? It starts with us, the hypocrites. And it's important that we acknowledge that we are hypocrites. We need to recognize just how far we are from actually serving Jesus as our Lord. We need to recognize that the good things we do, those things that God prompts us to do, are actually the result of God's prompting. We pride ourselves so much for giving so little of what requires of us. I think that we have to be conscious of that huge distance between our charity and the charity God expects from us.

But that being said, we need to resist that temptation to be selfish. It doesn't matter who you are; right now you live in abundance! Be thankful for it, then of those who don't have a fraction of what you have, and then go do something to change that. You have food and water; go help out a food pantry. You have a roof over your head; go support someone whose trying to find homes for refugees. You have access to decent healthcare; go and support an organization that cares for the uninsured.

And do so in Jesus' name, because even if he's not really your Lord (yet), he is still your Savior. He's saved you from sin and death by demonstrating God's infinite, eternal love for you, and so

in him you no longer are enslaved to that selfish impulse that leads you to sin. You may not be ready to cast your full support behind Jesus, but you can take a step toward endorsing him. You can allow that Spirit to work changes in you that in turn change the world around you.