



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

November 3, 2008

Scripture Lesson: Romans 13:1-7

A Service of Prayer for Our Nation

Psalm 118:8-9

Pastor Randy Ott

Praise Be to the Lord!

Before the fact

After the fact

This evening we want to focus on the blessings God gives us through government and talk about what the government truly is and where we find our hope and our comfort.

Let's say you're living without a home. You have no place to lay your head at night. There's a storm coming and it's going to get cold. Snow is going to come. What would you like to have?

I'm hoping you are saying "four walls and a roof" right now—something to shelter you to keep you out of the storm. Keep that in mind, and then I'm going to need someone to help me. And that volunteer is going to be Erv.

I have two hammers, right Erv? You build things and do things with your hands at times, right? I've seen what you've done, like remodeling in your house and things like that, right? If you need to build a house, which of those hammers would you use? The design of this one is better than the design of the other one, right? That's what you told me.

Can either one of these hammers build the house for you? Let's watch the hammers do it.

Can these hammers build a house for you? No. Can either of the hammers help you get the job done? Sure. Can either one of those hammers build you the house? No. Those hammers cannot build the house, unless you have someone that knows what they are doing, swinging the hammer, putting the house together, putting the walls up, putting the roof up, things like that, right?

So what's the point? As we go as a nation and elect the president, representatives and all these different things, I think we need to remember that they are like those hammers, aren't they? They are a tool. They are a tool in the hand of the Almighty God. God is the one who is going to use that tool either to be a blessing to us or maybe to test us. He will accomplish his purposes through whomever is elected, right?

I think sometimes we buy into too much of the election hype that we need Candidate A or Candidate B to be elected or else the world is going to stop spinning and we are all going to float into outer space and the world as we know it will come to an end. Maybe it will. But if it does, it's going to be because that's what God wanted to happen, right?

If we are blessed, it's not because we elected the right person. It's because God blessed us through whoever is elected.

If we are tested, it's not because we elected the wrong person. It's because God has chosen at this point in time to test us through whoever is elected, right?

I think too often we buy into the government's lie that they are our ultimate source of help. God has given to each of us means and abilities and gifts and talents to use, and he wants us to use them. He tells us that he gives us governments and that he establishes them so that they can do us good.

We might say, "Well, if we elect so and so," and I've heard this said about both candidates, "they won't do us good." Think about the Bible. Didn't we just hear a few weeks back about God calling Cyrus by name many moons before Cyrus was born? God was going to achieve his purpose through Cyrus. Was Cyrus a great guy? Did he have good Christian values and good Christian upstanding morals? He was a pagan through and through, right? God blessed his people through Cyrus.

Caesar Augustus—God kind of used him to get things where he wanted them to be when the time had fully come, right? Caesar Augustus called himself a god, put his face on coins and said, "Worship me." Now if one of our two candidates for president said that to you, would you vote for him? "I am god. Vote for me." I don't think that would play in Peoria, would it?

Yet God still blessed you and me through Caesar Augustus, right? He saw to it that Mary and Joseph would get where they needed to be so that Jesus could be born, so the prophecies could be fulfilled, so that he could carry out his plan, so that you and I, sinful creatures that we are, who put our trust at times in the government instead of God, would have our sins forgiven.

God has worked through all kinds of people that didn't know who he was, that couldn't say his name unless it was in anger. God will continue to work through all kinds of people like that, just like he works through you and me, right?

I'm not saying this so you can say, "There's no reason to vote. Whoever God wants to elect will be elected." God also tells us as Christians to be active in our society, to make our decision as we see fit and vote for the candidates that we choose; to go and do that. That's one of the things that God wants us to do as responsible citizens. Do that, but don't do it thinking that if the right one gets elected, everything will be wonderful, and if the wrong one gets elected, everything will be bad. God is still God. And God can work through a lot of rotten people.

Think of the people he used to build and sustain this congregation—sinners, every last one of them right? Look at how he works through us. Let's not put our trust in those we elected. Let's put our trust in the one who promises to either bless us or help us through the tests that come through those he appointed to be elected.

It's kind of interesting. We had an interesting discussion last night at the 2 Corinthians Bible Study and this morning, looking at Paul, and all the things that Paul went through. He had this solid trust that God would take care of him. Even when he felt unknown, he knew that he was known by God. Even when he was sorrowful, he was always rejoicing. We saw him say these incredible things. This is a guy who wrote the Romans and said "submit," right? This is a guy that tradition tells us was killed by that government he said to submit to, and yet, even when that happened, he had a trust that God would take care of him. He had this trust that God was in control. He had this trust that he could always have joy no matter what happened. And he had an urgency to do the work of the church, which was to share the Gospel.

As we worry about who was elected or not elected, let's remember that one of the main purposes God gives us a peaceful land to live in is so that we can spread the Gospel, like that passage that we read at the very beginning from 1 Timothy 2 said. Let's get busy doing that instead of waiting for the time when the Lord sends people to be a test to us as our government officials, to challenge our faith, to take away the exercise of our faith, till the time that we see there is a real need to be zealous for the faith. And God, open our eyes to see that his love for us in Christ moves us to do it now. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the time of God's grace. Let's not wait until it's taken away from us and then wake up and say, "You know what? We better do something."

So trust in God, live for God and keep in mind always the words of Psalm 118—It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.