



November 11, 2022

### **Yes, God is in Control**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God again from here in Mankato, Minnesota. We're still here on a pastoral and family visit for a few more days. We've now also traveled over to South Dakota and back and had a great visit with brethren there. We've still some to visit here in Minnesota before we head back to Alabama midweek. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Midterm elections in the United States are the general elections that are held near the midpoint of a president's four-year term of office. We know from previous years that we were to be ready for a long night and maybe days of waiting before it would be clear whether Republicans or the President's Democrats would control Congress. All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives were up for grabs, as were 35 U.S. Senate seats and 36 governorships.

Similarly, Election Day in the United States of America is the Tuesday following the first Monday in November. It can fall on or between November 2 and November 8. It is the day when popular ballots are held to select public officials. These include national, state and local government representatives at all levels up to the president.

On Election Day, citizens of the United States of America can vote by popular ballot for candidates for public offices at local, state and national levels. In even numbered years, federal elections are always held. In years divisible by four, presidential elections are always held. Elections for local and state officials may be held in odd or even-numbered years, depending on local and state laws.

I remember, reflecting back to 2017, (the year we were transferred to the Gulf Coast) the way in which people voted depended on the state in which they lived. In Oregon, all votes were cast by post and all votes had to be received at a given

time on Election Day. In the state of Washington, nearly all people voted by post and the envelopes containing the voting papers had to be postmarked with the date of Election Day. In other states, people voted at voting stations, where long queues could form. It's still a quite complicated process for some...

Let's reflect back to November 8, 2016 six years ago now. It was "election Day" in America. Candidates would be shortly elected for the Presidency, Vice Presidency, Senate, House, and many other positions of leadership and authority in the United States. It was an unusually important day of decisions for the country I live in. While thinking and praying on the importance of that election for the nation, the economy, the world, and especially the Church and Work of God, I shared some thoughts back then that are still applicable today.

You and I pray at the great throne where God Himself sits to "hold court," and conduct the business of administration of the universe which includes answering our prayers. This exalted throne (Isaiah 6:1) is named the Throne of Grace in Hebrews 4:16, signifying His main relationship with us in the covenant we have with Him: grace and mercy. It is where we come with all of the myriad appeals and petitions that we present to God: requests for our own and others' needs, blessings on the Church and Work of God, help and mercy for the communities and nations where we live, and the world in general— a vast variety.

As I've discussed in sermon messages here on the Gulf Coast, we come to God with our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise—continually. In this way we practically live in God's House (Hebrews 13) on a full-time basis.

Hebrews 4:16 states *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* Hebrews 13:15 *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."* Hebrews 13:16 *"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*

In addition to thanksgiving and praise, we bring our burdens, our worries, and troubles. Most everyone worries or frets about elections—who will gain what power, and what will be done as a result. We hope for good things and fret about

bad things that will come from any given election. It can be a time of worry, excitement, stress and concern. God, being kind and compassionate, has provided many instructive scriptures to strengthen us and tells us to put the burdens on him and leave our concerns and worries to him (1 Peter 5:7).

Here is a major instruction on the subject of the authorities of this world from 1 Timothy: 1 Timothy 2:1 *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior”*.

This is “just what the doctor ordered” —good medicine for a worried mind on a day like Election Day! We should get our minds on the One who holds ALL the power, and our relationship with Him. Another way to put it is “to look above”, not to the around.

Our Christian duty is to pray (along with our sacrificial offerings of thanksgiving and praise) for *all* men, kings, and leaders.

One question would be why?

Answer: for the success of our efforts in doing the Work of God collectively and individually and the opportunity to work and live our lives in peace. God’s Work can be done under duress, but certainly not as well as in peaceful times.

Another question might be how? How can you pray for certain rulers and authorities who are persecuting the beliefs from God’s Word as many have done over the years?

2 Thess. 3:1 *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

And a related question: How can you pray for an election if you don’t know which person would do God’s will? — For that matter, even if you think you DO know who would be best?

It's a big subject, but let's discuss one aspect of this. If you do know that a person (or persons)—a potential ruler—has shown good character in the past, and another (others) have shown bad character, you can make a judgement on who would be the best one for the job. Right?

But, we can't see into the heart, and we don't know all the facts and circumstances, nor do we have the wisdom of God to know all the right outcomes—His sovereign will. In His supreme wisdom God makes peace and creates evil (Isaiah 45:7) within His great overarching plan of salvation. Sometimes He carefully controls circumstances and skillfully manipulates rebellious mankind to bring about a good result despite allowing bad things to happen.

For example, God had decided and prophesied that Israel and Judah would split into two nations. King Rehoboam saw the rebellion and intended to crush it quickly. But God told Rehoboam through His prophet Shemaiah not to go to war against the rebellious tribes. "*For this thing is from me,*" God said (1 Kings 12:22-24). As in many situations, there was plenty of rebellion and other sin to go around. Either side could have seen this was true, and nobody was interested in repenting; but God had His sovereign plan that required *two* nations, not one.

The greatest example that comes to mind of this principle is the death of Christ. Jesus "turned up the heat," as it were, in the weeks approaching His final Passover as a man, setting up the scenario that would lead the Jews and the Romans to cooperate in committing the worst crime of all time—His own murder. But, His blood sacrifice was required to bring the healing Atonement from God to mankind—the greatest and best thing of all time!

Here's a political example from history, though hypothetical: Let's make believe you were there casting your vote in some way when the new king of Babylon was being chosen. That's not how it happened, but just for a moment, let's say that you were aware that he had killed many people just to get them out of the way of his personal agenda of personal power. Also, that he would think nothing of killing a large group of civil servants and their families because he suspected their loyalty was not solid. (I'm referring to the Magi—a large group of soothsayers, magicians, etc., in Daniel chapter 2, verses 8-13.) Also, you remembered the death and

destruction of the invasion of Jerusalem in your recent history, and realized he worshipped many demon gods and considered women and men mere chattel for his use.

Would you have voted for Him? I'm guessing few Americans would have, but, he is the one God chose to take a powerful role in making major changes in the balance of power of the world so that God's plan could move forward, preparing for the great sacrifice of Christ. This would ultimately result in many sons being brought to glory (Hebrews 2:10). God used Nebuchadnezzar as a tool and even calls him "*my servant*" in Jeremiah 27:6. It wasn't that this pagan despotic king was righteous or a good ruler. God simply had a plan in mind for the eventual good of all mankind.

In the same way on a much smaller scale, God works in our lives with incalculable miraculous provision and uncountable blessings. But along with the blessings often come a few hard lessons that need to be molded into the people He is preparing for His family.

So, Election Day was a very important day in our nation's experience. The results were very important because the ones given power to rule for two or four years would make decisions that will affect the policies and the hearts of this one nation's citizenship— in its collective attitudes toward God and truth.

Let's remember that God comforted Daniel—and all of us—through the story of Nebuchadnezzar's humbling before God in the fourth chapter in the king's own words quoting his dream! Verses 17, 25, and 32 pointedly state the *big picture* regarding all human leadership that God allows to have power: The Most High rules in the realm of men (stated three times), and God Most High is in control of all earthly kingdoms and that he is the one who chooses their rulers (CEV).

In the end, it's truly simple: God is in control of absolutely everything, including every aspect of our lives—our personal experiences, His Church, our employment, the nation—absolutely everything. So, let us in all parts of our lives pray sincerely about all that God has put before us, do our responsibilities diligently and joyfully, and ask God for help in every need.

As a minister I once worked under conveyed: "Say your prayers, and do your job. Leave the rest to God".

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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