

Old Testament: Zechariah 9:9

New Testament: Luke 24: 36 - 49

Please pray with me. And now Lord God may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts, be pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Jesus had no political party. It is not as if people did not expect him, or even want him, to adopt a political party or party platform, he just didn't. He abided with his Father. The Zealots would have been more than happy to have Jesus identify with their movement to overturn the Roman occupiers through force and violence. But Jesus healed the servant's ear and restored it when Peter cut it off during Jesus' arrest. The Pharisees likely would have, more secretly of course, loved to have Jesus identify with them. I can't help but think that part of the reason Saul so vehemently pursued the followers of the Way was because their leader, Jesus, rejected the group he was so dedicated to. What with Luke's portrayal of a young Jesus sitting in the temple listening to, and debating the scholars, one might think that the Sadducees had it in their mind that Jesus would be aligning himself with them and their movement. There was certainly no love loss between Jesus and the Roman occupiers. Jesus clearly said "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" and yet also invited himself to a Roman sympathizers home for supper. So despite what we might like to tell ourselves, that in order to be a "good" Christian we have to align ourselves with this political party or that political party, Jesus himself, whom at least we proclaim to follow, had no political party or political affiliation. I mean, pull up any United States political party's platform, you can easily Google search the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Green Party, and the Libertarian Party and compare any of them to an overview of the teachings of Jesus. Some do a better job than others but not one of them is, for example, the Sermon on the Mount from start to finish.

Even the Jews, both to whom and from whom Jesus came, were confused by this lack of political identity and affiliation. We saw in both our Zechariah reading and our Luke reading where such confusion might come from. Zechariah proclaimed that a specifically Jewish king was coming. The resurrected Jesus tells his bewildered disciples that what the scriptures have said is true, "that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem". So we and the disciples are thinking, Jesus is a Jewish king, just like Zechariah talked about. Clearly that then is the nation with whom he identifies himself and all political affiliations will be in and through that nation. But then we have Jesus himself telling his Jewish disciples to tell *all* nations about the resurrection and repentance which contributes to forgiveness of sin. So we are then left to wonder and consider what is

it that Jesus is about? What is his kingship all about? Upon his entry into Jerusalem people simultaneously lauded him as king and rejoiced at his kingship, while others were plotting to have him executed as an insurrectionist because the others were calling him a king. What was, what is, Jesus' kingship all about? Is Jesus all about Israel? The nation into which he was born while it was being occupied by the Roman Empire? Or is Jesus about something more? Something that expands beyond human imagined and perceived boundaries and lines.

Many scholars call Jesus' kingdom the upside down kingdom. There are many instances throughout the gospel accounts where we see turns in stories where we do not expect them to be; where the winners and heroes are those whom we expect to lose and be the villain. Not so, Jesus tells us. Change your expectations by changing your heart. Do not judge. Love God. Love yourself. Love one another. Most concisely though, this upside down kingdom can be summarized with the words "many who are first will be last, and the last first". I challenge you to find these words on any political party's platform. No Jesus has no political affiliation precisely because he is king of the upside down kingdom.

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