

I Am A Citizen of Heaven - Philippians 3:17-21, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same." This is how the oath of citizenship begins for those going through the naturalization process of becoming United States Citizens. Each year thousands of people from all over the world go through the process of becoming US citizens. They may speak in various languages with all sorts of skin colors and cultural backgrounds, but on that day they become full members of this country while rejecting the sovereignty of rule from their country of origin.

Do you know that if you are a follower of Jesus you too went through a naturalization process becoming a citizen of a different Kingdom. Our texts for this week remind us that we are citizens of heaven and ambassadors of Christ and His Kingdom. This is a significant aspect of our new identity in Christ. Fourth Century theologian Augustine in his book *City of God* speaks of two cities competing for our allegiance, the city of God and the city of man. We live in the city of man, yet there are two kingdoms vying for our allegiance. In the end it is only those who truly understand themselves as citizens of the holy city who will have a faithful witness in the city of man.

There is no doubt that the country of our origin and citizenship shapes our identity as people. Most, if not all of us are Americans by birth, and this culture shapes the way we see ourselves and the world. "Love God and country" is a motto many of us have grown up with and sought to raise our kids to follow. And at the core, this can be a beautiful thing. Yet, as followers of Jesus we can be embracing idolatry without even realizing it when our greater allegiance is to our country or when we actually start mingling America and the Kingdom of God treating it as something intertwined. Listen to me in love here. For most of us, I do not fear that we will embrace the new sense of identity wrapped up in the individualistic humanism that cries out that I am whoever I say I am. But I do fear that many of us have fully embraced a God and country identity that treats my heavenly citizenship as nothing more than a subset of being American. Any time we seek to drape the cross with an American flag we are demonstrating a core misunderstanding of this new identity and might be embracing an idolatrous identity that can be as sinful as any other. Furthermore, especially among younger Americans, the perceived merger between Christ's Kingdom, America, and yes, a certain brand of politics has harmed the witness of the church.

Christ's Kingdom has no rivals and all human governments, systems, and cultures will ultimately stand as an enemy of the cross. Christ will not ride into His Kingdom on a donkey or an elephant and He will not wave any human flag. All human kingdoms rise and fall, even ours, and none of them will join the battle with the righteous on the last day nor will they stand in the end. As a follower of Jesus we have been declared citizens of heaven, which means that our True Kingdom will eventually "subject all things to Himself (Christ)." (Philippians 3:21). Our allegiance is to Christ as King first and foremost, and our mission is to stand as His representative wherever the Spirit places us.

Does this mean patriotism and love of country is wrong? Absolutely not. Multiple times we see Paul asserting his citizenship of Rome in his travels and we even find Jesus expressing love for Israel. Yet, we must have clarity on our role as citizens of heaven. We are to live in this country as citizens of that one. This is why Peter calls us aliens and sojourners (1 Peter 2:11). While we are citizens of this great country, our allegiance does not lie here, and our message is a call to people in this place that they need to be

reconciled to the God who sent His Son to bring peace. It means we have freedom to attend a July 4 fireworks where Lee Greenwood sings proudly while at the same time speaking with a prophetic voice toward country about the need for repentance. This also means that our character is being shaped by Christ more than the world around us. This is especially important as more and more our culture is being defined by hate, anger, and cancel culture forcing people more and more into identity groups. The Kingdom of Christ, on the other hand is defined by its diversity and posture of love for God and neighbor. All this is true because we are not placing our hope in country or government knowing that true salvation comes only from Christ, and this world is not our true home. This is our true identity, and only in this true identity will we be free to be the type of Americans who can truly impact our culture with the Gospel.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Colossians 4	Genesis 1	Genesis 2	Genesis 3	Genesis 4	Genesis 5	Genesis 6

Reading from this past week: Philippians 3:17-21, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Philippians 3:7-11

Family Worship

Song - *His Mercy is More*

<https://youtu.be/11GiZL60c80>

Gospel Project

Story: Paul gave Hope

Story Point: Paul told the church to stand firm as we wait for Jesus' return.

Big Picture Question: What is the Bible about?

Answer: The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

Scripture: 1 & 2 Thessalonians

New City Catechism

Question #22: Why must the Redeemer be truly human?

Answer: That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin.

Verse: Hebrews 2:17

Scripture

Philippians 3:17-21, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

- What does it mean to be a citizen? What does it mean to be a citizen of heaven?
- How does being a citizen of heaven shape our identity as people who live in this world and in our country?
- What is an ambassador? How should our role as ambassadors for Christ shape our message and values as we live here?

Prayer

*Give thanks for the men and women who gave their lives for our freedom and pray for those who are currently serving in the military.

*Pray that you would understand your identity as a citizen of heaven and that you would represent Christ in the world as His ambassador.