

Column

If you thought the 2016 presidential election was raucous . . . 2020 may well take the cake. Several times a day I receive text messages suggesting that the fate of the republic hangs in the balance and its preservation is dependent on my contribution, which is needed immediately. Perhaps you have been receiving messages like this as well.

As Tuesday, Nov. 3, approaches surely Christians should be praying, giving if they are able and so led, yet not overcome with fear. Somethings will stay the same no matter which presidential candidate comes out on top. Three come to mind.

The first is found in the opening line of Psalm 97: "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice." No matter which candidate gets the most votes or wins the electoral college God remains on the throne.

Those in positions of power and in spheres of influence may shake their fist in His face, ignore His revealed precepts, contrive plans in which justice is perverted, the poor forgotten, truth trampled and good order overthrown; nevertheless, God remains in control and in the ends wins. Revelation, the last book in the New Testament, tells us as much. This knowledge should give followers of Jesus a quiet confidence even as the battle rages.

Also remaining, regardless of which presidential candidate wins, is the Biblical mandate to pray for those in charge. In 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 we are told: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority."

When these words were written, the rulers spoken of were pagan and often hostile to the Gospel. Nevertheless, Christians were commanded to pray for them. Why and how?

First, because even bad rulers are better than no rulers at all. When human government breaks down, chaos reigns and the weak go to the wall. But also because of the principle I have just highlighted -- "The Lord reigns."

Because He reigns, even the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and later Cyrus the Persian were God's servants and operated under God's greater sovereignty . . . whether they acknowledged it or not.

The former, Nebuchadnezzar, was God's instrument of punishing the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their apostasy. His armies overthrew Jerusalem and carried God's people off to Babylon. The latter, Cyrus, was God's instrument of salvation. After about 70 years, he issued an edict making it possible for those in exile to go home.

Whether these rulers acknowledged God as God, both were God's servants. The same is true of rulers today. Hence, we have a biblical mandate to pray for them.

In some cases, this prayer may be that schemes contrary to God's will and commandments will be overturned and brought to naught. In others, it may be that, in spite of their faults, these rulers may create the conditions whereby humans may flourish and the Gospel be advanced.

But there is third and final thing that will remain after election day, and that is the need for Christians to remain on the job. They are to be ready to pick up those who have fallen prey to the empty show and false values of popular culture and are suffering. They are to announce Jesus as the true Lord of the World, in season and out of season. They are to be prepared to suffer for Christ.

All three of the things I have mentioned are true now and won't change once the election has come and gone. In the meantime, let us pray for our country, earnestly and faithfully.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favour and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Blue Ridge.