

Who's the Boss?

My younger brother and I used to fight with each other all the time. I know, it's shocking to hear that siblings would be at odds with one another, igniting one of the oldest rivalries known to man, that which is even found in the book of Genesis, the sibling rivalry. The vast majority of the time our fights were more like verbal arguments over things like who would do what chores or whose turn it was to play the PlayStation. And when we were older, and home by ourselves, naturally, as the older brother, I assumed the mantle of responsibility. There were times, I must confess, when the power would go to my head and I would give my brother an order, to which he would inevitably respond, "You're not the boss of me!" And the truth is, he was right, I wasn't his boss, I didn't have the authority to tell him what to do.

There are many forces in the world that are seeking to have authority over us, and as Americans, we aren't really in favor of this. Perhaps we are a little more amenable to it than previous generations, given the ease at which we gave up our independence through the COVID pandemic, but that's a discussion for another time. At large, we are not in favor of others telling us what to do. Americans, for the most part, have a high regard for their own independence, when compared to other places. Much of this has to do with the system of government that we have. When compared to other countries in Europe, even our neighbors to the north in Canada, our government has a much more limited scope in which to operate.

Yet, the one thing that history shows us again and again is that those in power will seek to expand it, and we have certainly seen this at work, not so subtly, in the United States over the course of the past twenty-five years or so. This was, of course, something that our founding fathers feared, something that they sought to prevent. One of the steps they took to prevent an overreaching authority was to refrain from entangling the government with the church, to allow

the churches to freely practice. This gave rise to the phrase found in Thomas Jefferson's letters to the Danbury Baptists, "the separation of church and state". The phrase, which Thomas Jefferson coined, is not found in any of the founding documents of the United States. It isn't in the Declaration of Independence; it isn't in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. And yet, despite this, many Americans view this as a foundational principal, that our faith and political views remain separated from one another.

Now, while I don't think the pulpit should be a mouthpiece for politicians or a political party, it is important that we, as Christians, as those who claim that we follow Christ, take what God says into account when it comes to our lives, yes, even our political affiliations and decisions (Acts 5:29, 1 Peter 2:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:1-4). After all, what is the supreme authority that Christians follow? Is it the state? Is it a political party or philosophy? Is it the culture? God says, through the prophet Isaiah, "**To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?**" (Is. 40:25-26). Aren't we, as Christians, supposed to derive our morals and values from the highest authority in our lives?

The truth is, we aren't supposed to form our worldview around a philosophy, political party, or even the culture that we live in. We, as Christians, are to conform to the Word of God, follow His commands, in all that we say and do. There is no place in our lives where God and the exercise of our faith are to be put on the back burner. To do such a thing, to put God and His Word outside of our moral center, would be a clear breaking of the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods". Our faith is not simply limited to the worship that we conduct on a Sunday morning. "**The righteous shall live by faith.**" (Rom. 1:17), "**In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your**

Father who is in Heaven.” (Matt. 5:16), “But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works...For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” (James 2:18, 26).

It is clear, by what God says, that we are not to separate the morality of our faith from anything that we do in our lives, not even politics. The truth is, our founding fathers knew this as well. John Adams wrote, in a 1798 letter to the Massachusetts Militia, “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” The idea that the church is meant to have boundaries in our lives is a lie, brought about by those who seek to usurp the values and morals of the church with their own twisted sense of morality, in which the individual is the highest and greatest authority. In truth, when such things are brought to our attention, when we are told that we should sideline our faith for the sake of American principles, perhaps we need to take a page out of my little brother’s book and remind the political and cultural sphere that, “You’re not the boss of me!” “**...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.**” (1 Cor. 8:6).