

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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Religion & Politics, Oh No!

Growing up I heard from my parents (and others) that in polite company you never discuss religion or politics. Even as a kid I used to think, "Why not?" As I wended my way through the hallowed halls of academia, I learned that most wars (possibly all) were started over issues of religion, faith, and dogma, and/or politics, philosophy, and beliefs.

A few weeks ago Pat Harris from our congregation approached me and asked if I would sit down with a group of folks to discuss the current political climate. The California Sample Ballots have been arriving in mailboxes, so various people were wondering how to approach the responsibility of voting.

So Isaura and I weren't sure who would show up since there was no head count given. She and granddaughter Alyssa made chocolate chip cookies and I put on a pot of coffee. Counting Isaura and me we had 20 people huddled in our family room for a couple of hours sorting through the privilege and responsibility of voting.

After opening our time in prayer, I delved into some of the history of our country, focusing on the process for electing our representatives which the Founding Fathers envisioned for this fledgling nation. Then they made sure to preserve this process by incorporating it in the Constitution. President Lincoln probably said it best in the opening of the Gettysburg Address in 1863. "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." I never cease to marvel at that statement.

It was clearly unanimous among us that we didn't care for the two choices the American people are now left with. The presumptive candidates are Hillary Clinton for the Democrat Party, and Donald Trump for the Republican Party. Admittedly, I am conservative in my views politically, so casting a vote for Hillary is not going to happen. Her mishandling of the Benghazi debacle while serving as Secretary of State was a deal breaker in any event. And as for Trump, he lost me early on when he was openly critical of Senator John McCain, saying McCain was not a hero. He followed that ridiculous comment by saying his heroes don't get captured. Now, I may not agree with Senator McCain on many political issues, but I can assure you that this man endured unimaginable torture at the hands of the North Vietnamese. He was subjected to beatings every day. And don't think for a moment that McCain's father being a retired Navy admiral was lost on the enemy. Then when the war was winding down, the north Vietnamese offered to send him home early so he could be home for Christmas. But when he discovered that he was being released while his fellow POWs were still being retained, he refused, thus

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subjecting himself to further mistreatment. Trump has no idea what a genuine hero is.

Yet the election for the 45th president presents us with these two choices. I wish it were otherwise, but since it is not, I must decide who to vote for. Understand me clearly on this: Not voting is NOT an option. I asked the folks gathered in my home if they could name one other country from history that has been able to exercise the freedoms we enjoy in selecting our representatives. With the exception of countries freed during World War Two who now practice a more democratic process, no one could name a single country that wasn't ruled by a monarchy, potentate, dictator or theocrat.

Every election is important because the decisions that are made have ramifications. For instance, the next president will very likely be choosing up to five new Supreme Court justices. Several are in their late 70s and 80s. Others are not in the best of health. If the next justices selected are in their 40s and 50s, the flavor of the decisions coming from this august body of jurists will set the philosophical tone in our nation for the next thirty years.

Further, there are various ballot measures and other local-to-federal issues that need to be addressed. My vote gives me a say in how this all plays out. So, as I said earlier, not voting is NOT an option.

As a Christian I believe what the Bible says is true. God raises one person up, and puts another one down. He understands the hearts of men, and though we do not necessarily see the final outcome, God alone works out his plans so that one day we will be able to look back and see that his plan was indeed the best plan. I may not like what I currently see taking place, but I know that God is sovereign. So even in the midst of man's chaos I am able to smile because God will be glorified.