TITLE: ACCOUNTABILITY

TEXT: Ro. 14:11-12; Heb. 4:13; Mt. 12:26; 1 Co. 11:23-26; Jn. 6:48-58; Gal. 5:24-25; 1 Co. 11:27-32; Ro. 14:22; Ezek. 33:1-9; 2 Co. 5:20

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about accountability. Have you noticed how much the subject of accountability has been in the news lately?

Back on November 11th of 2011 the American Embassy in Benghazi, Libya was attacked by Islamic terrorist. Our Ambassador and three other Americans were killed.

The IRS has targeted Certain American groups with conservative values refusing to give them their 501c status as a non-profit organization.

The NSA has been found to be collecting data and spying on ordinary Americans..

The current Congress is holding hearings today on all these things looking for accountability.

Oswald Chambers once said, *“The essence of sin is the refusal to recognize that we are accountable to God for all.”*

**Romans 14:11-12 (NIV) 11It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.****”**

**12So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.**

The truth of the matter is that whether we want to admit it or not, we all will one day be held accountable.

One day each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)**

**13Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

Jesus tells us in:

**Matthew 12:36 (NIV)** **36But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.**

Scripture assures us that **----Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

We will even have to one day give an account for every careless word that we have ever spoken.

We will all one day be held accountable to God for the lives that we have lived and the way that we have lived them. Every action, every inaction, every deed and every motive that drives our deeds, even every word that was spoken carelessly, spoken without thought of consequence, we will eventually be held accountable for by God!

God created us as accountable beings. Accountability comes with free moral agency. Accountability is a by-product of free will.

When God gave us free will we became accountable to Him for the choices that our “free will” would make.

There is something else that made the news a couple years ago about accountability that I want to talk about this morning…

It came out of the Catholic Church… A prominent political leader who happens to be a Catholic was initially denied Communion from the Church because of his stance and voting record on abortion. His being Pro-choice.

Later a number of Catholic Bishops made the proclamation that anyone who votes for a politician that is in favor of such things as abortion or gay marriage will be denied Communion.

The Catholic Church’s view is that these things are grievous sins and that it you vote for a person who is for these things then you help enable these things to happen.

Question? Is what these Catholic Bishops have done right or wrong?

Before you contemplate the answer to that question let’s examine just what Communion is….

Let’s look at what Scripture has to say about Communion….

**1 Corinthians 11:23 - 26 (NIV)**

**23For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,****24and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”****25In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”****26For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

What is Communion?

Jesus instruction regarding communion was**: do this in remembrance of me.” 26For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

Jesus said: **do this in remembrance of me!**

Remembrance…the Greek is:

***an-am'-nay-sis***

***recollection:*—remembrance (again).**

This is a combination of two Greek words that come together to mean:

**Reflexively to *recollect:*—call to mind.**

What does it mean to reflexively recollect?

**re·flex·ive (r¹-flµk“s¹v)1. Directed back on itself. 2.Of, relating to, or being a verb having an identical subject and direct object.**

This doesn’t just mean to call to mind Jesus, remembering Jesus in some kind of passive or abstract way, but it means to direct oneself back to Him.

This is, I believe, what Jesus is talking about in….

**John 6:48 - 58 (NIV)**

**48I am the bread of life.****49Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.**

**50But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.****51I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**.”

**52Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”**

**53Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.****54Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.****55For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.****56Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.****57Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.****58This is the bread that came down from heaven.**

Now did you catch that?

**56Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.**

This speaks of real communion with Christ.

In fact it tells us what real communion is.

His remaining in us and our remaining in Him.

Now if He is alive within us and our life is in Him then what is it that should happen?

#1. We should strive to do as He would do.

We can’t do un-Christ like things and then say that we are in Communion with Christ.

To be in communion with Christ means that we are striving to do as Jesus would do!

**Galatians 5:24 - 25 (NIV24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

How is it that we keep in step with the Spirit?

We keep in step with the Spirit by doing what the Spirit directs us to do…

The Spirit will always direct us to do what Jesus would do. It is His Spirit that we are to keep in step with.

OK. So what about these Catholic Bishops who have said that they are going to withhold communion from those who vote for political candidates who support abortion or gay marriage? Are they right or wrong?

And just how are they to know how their parishioners voted to know whether to withhold communion from them or not?

The only way that they could know is if the parishioner tells them ahead of time.

And maybe this is their whole point…

I don’t believe that these Bishops are planning on asking each person how they voted in the previous election before they give them communion.. I believe what they may be trying to do is simply make their parishioners feel accountable for the decisions that they make in this area of their lives before they partake of communion.

There is no real way that a Catholic Priest, or a protestant Minister for that matter, can know the individual heart of any man.

It is not up to me to know if you are in a position to partake of Communion or not. The only one who knows the answer to that question is going to be you and God.

I believe that is why Paul goes on to say this when he gives instruction on the partaking of Holy Communion….

**1 Corinthians 11:27 -32 (NIV) 27Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.****28A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.****29For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.****30That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.****31But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.****32When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.**

**27Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

Ok, so let’s get back to accountability for a moment…

Are we going to be held accountable to God for even things like how we vote in the ballet box?

Let’s say that we lived in 1930’s Germany. Adolph Hitler is running for president.

He has not yet killed a single Jew but the platform on which he is running is one that speaks of hatred of the Jews and he speaks of white supremacy.

If we would vote to put him into office knowing his character, knowing that he has a vicious hatred for a particular race of people and once he is in office he commits some of the worst atrocities that the world has ever witnessed, do we bear any of the responsibility for what he has done? What we helped enable him to do by our voting for him and putting him in a position where he could do those things.

Do you think we would be held accountable to God for our actions in that case scenario?

**Romans 14:22 (NIV) ……. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.**

Do you realize that we are not just accountable for our actions but we can also be held accountable for our inaction?

Do you realize that when we see evil and have the power to help stop it and do absolutely nothing that we can become accountable to God for that evil?

There is a concept, a principle in Scripture that was part of the Law of God to His people called bloodguilt….

**Ezekiel 33:1-9 (NIV) 1The word of the LORD came to me:****2“Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman,****3and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people,****4then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head.****5Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself.**

**6But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.’**

**7“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.****8When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die forhis sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.****9But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.**

Here is the thing….

As A Christian God has called each of us to be His watchmen in the world in which we live..

**8When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood.**

And not just his blood but also for any innocent blood that that wicked man might shed!

In our society one of the ways that we can speak out to dissuade men from their wickedness is in the ballot box.

We have a neat little Christian saying that we use a lot today.. WWJD What would Jesus do?

If there were a politician who was openly for Abortion, the shedding of the innocent blood of our unborn children or who was for allowing two people of the same gender to enter into the covenant relationship of marriage making a mockery out of the most sacred of human institutions, what do you suppose Jesus would do?

Can you really picture Jesus voting for anyone who would promote the murder of unborn children to represent Him in the affairs of government?

Can you picture Jesus voting for a person who thinks that sexual perversion is something that should not just be accepted as normal behavior but actually give a person rights based solely on their perverse behavior?

We talk about gay rights --well what about adulterer rights or pedophilia rights or bestiality rights? Are these sexual preferences to be constitutionally protected as well?

WWJD? I think that we know what Jesus would do.

Church, we have not just been called to be watchmen but we have been called to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ to our world!

**2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)** **20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.….**

An ambassador doesn’t represent himself but an ambassador is to represent the one who sent him..

To vote for people to represent us in the area of government who are for such things as the killing of our unborn children and the promoting of things that the Scripture says are sexually immoral behaviors and lifestyles and then say that we are an ambassador of Christ is something that I think each of us should be held to account for.

Could it be that these Catholic Bishops are simply being faithful to their calling to be watchmen who are watching from the wall? Could it be that they are being faithful to their calling as an ambassador of Christ holding their parishioners accountable for the actions of their hearts?

Again, Scripture tells us to not condemn ourselves by what we approve of!

You don’t have to do something wrong yourself to show approval of it. We can show approval of wrongdoing by doing absolutely nothing when we have the opportunity to do something!

In our nation God has blessed us with a democracy, a true republic, a government that is of the people, by the people and for the people. We have the right and the privilege to actually select the people who will lead us as a nation. It is upon the choices that we make in the voting booth that will reflect the direction that our nation will take.

God is the one who has blessed us with this democracy and God will hold us accountable for it.. Both corporately and individually!

We have already heard the cry from some in the secular part of our society that say what these Catholic bishops have done has violated the 1st Amendment issue of separation of Church and state…..

THAT IS HOGWASH! THAT’S UTTER BOLOGNA!

That is the revisionist attitude that has gotten us in the mess that we are in today.

Do you realize that the words “separation of Church and State” are nowhere to be found in our Constitution or Bill of Rights.

The 1st Amendment simply says **“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”**

The first amendment’s original intent was not designed to protect the state from the Church but to protect the Church from the state!

It wasn’t to keep Christianity out of politics but to keep politics out of Christianity…

John Jay, the first chief justice of the United States Supreme court and one of the three men most responsible for our Constitution declared:

**“Providence, (God) has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty---as well as the privilege and interest---of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for our rulers.”**

Founding Father, James Madison, the chief architect of the Constitution had this to say about the subject: **“We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”**

The political and judicial revisionist of our day wants us to believe that the founder’s original intent was to keep God out of our political institutions. Nothing could be farther from the truth! History simply doesn’t back up their claim.

In fact, just the opposite is true! Our founders realized that it is a part of our Christian duty to be involved and take part in the governing of our nation…They understood very well that it was God who ordained and gave us this great democracy ….

Thomas Jefferson himself once said: “**And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis---a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but by His wrath? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: That His justice cannot sleep forever.”**

What most all of our founding fathers understood about our democracy, about self-government--- a government of the people, by the people and for the people, was that with the blessing of democracy comes a high degree of accountability to the one who has blessed us with it.

Scripture tell us that to whom much has been given much will be required..

I don’t believe it is my responsibility or any minister or priest responsibility to withhold communion from anyone.

However it is my responsibility and the responsibility of every Christian minister and priest to hold up the standard of Christ and not dilute the Word of God or try to conform it to meet worldly lusts and worldly standards..

If we are a Christian who wants to remain in communion with Christ then we need to give supremacy to Christ in every area of our lives….even at the ballot box.

God will hold us accountable for our inactions just as much as He will our actions wherever morality issues are concerned….

In the movie Casualties of War, Michael J. Fox plays Private Erickson, a soldier in Vietnam who is part of a squad that abducts and rapes a young Vietnamese girl. He didn't participate in the crime.

Afterward, as he struggles with what has happened, he says to the other men in his squad, "*Just because each of us might at any second be blown away, we're acting like we can do anything we want, as though it doesn't matter what we do. I'm thinking it's just the opposite. Because we might be dead in the next split-second, maybe we gotta be extra careful what we do. Because maybe it matters more. Maybe it matters more than we ever know."*

Death, for all of us, is a breath away. And the nearer death is, the closer we are to answering to God for all we have said and done.

My admonition to you this morning is not to try to tell you who you should vote for in the next election or what political party you should support, but my admonition to you this morning is simply this: always vote your Christian conscience…not just your pocketbook….keeping in mind that we are ultimately responsible to God for everything that we do and we will one day have to stand before Him to give an account of all the choices that we have made…

Benjamin Franklin once said: **“If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We’ve been assured in the sacred writings that, except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.”**

A question to ask ourselves is this….Are the issues that are the most important to Jesus the issues that are most important to me?

If they are not then are we really in communion with Christ?

What God has blessed us with in this nation; the freedom to be a self-governing people is a great blessing but with it comes great responsibility!

How responsible will we be with that blessing?