

A couple of years after the 9/11 tragedy, I was meeting with a UCC Conference Minister in the office of my new settled call in Crown Point, IN. Since that fateful day, I had been struggling with how to faithfully address the disaster. The wise and experienced executive minister said two words followed by a question. The two words and question:

American
Christian

Which is the noun, and which is the adjective?

As I continue to reflect on this question steeped in wisdom and faith, I find, first, that the response matters...the answer is important and telling. I find, second, that we continue to wrestle with these words and this question, almost 21 years later.

Jesus offered many lessons to many people during his earthly ministry. Those lessons continue as they are shared in the Holy Scriptures...primarily in the New Testament Gospel accounts. Let me offer this lesson found in the Synoptic Gospels but also includes the idea that the religious leaders of His day were conniving ways to trap Jesus and gain evidence against Him:

“Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Luke 20:25, NRSVUE)

Of course, Jesus would have nothing of it. Jesus saw through the priest’s deceit, reminding us of obligations to both government AND God.

In today’s life and living, we continue to experience those same obligations to “state” and “God.” Trouble arises, though, when God is co-opted for “state use” and the church and Christians (the non-capitalization is intentional!) fall in line with political leadership...leaving the HOLY outside of all activity. This, brothers and sisters, is called Christian nationalism. It is this humble blogger’s belief and understanding and faith that this Christian nationalism is a perversion...it is a perversion of the Constitution...and, more importantly, it is a perversion of God, Son, and Spirit...the Holy Scriptures...and our faith. Christian nationalism is a perversion of all that is HOLY. Christian nationalism makes “American” as the noun and “Christian” is a mere adjective.

We brothers and sisters of God and for Christ and in the Holy Spirit...we sisters and brothers who seek to “Do Justice and Love Kindness and Walk Humbly with Our God” must combat these un-holies who are using God as a weapon and making Jesus a tool of all that is evil. We must proclaim without hesitation and fear that God is LOVE...that Jesus is LOVE INCARNATE...and that the Holy Spirit transfigures evil and hate into justice and righteousness founded in the transformative power of LOVE.

Do you know what else flows from LOVE? Forgiveness. Mercy. Grace. Jesus prayed for those who persecuted Him and, ultimately, killed Him:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34, NRSVUE)

God, through Christ Jesus, forgives. God and Jesus and Spirit remind us of what is holy and good, what is just and righteous. Jesus commanded the disciples of HIS today, “... to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NRSVUE). Gifted by the same Holy Spirit as the 1st Century disciples, Jesus commands us today:

to be Jesus’ witnesses for justice and righteousness, for peace, hope and love,
in our own neighborhoods and towns (locally),
in our counties and our state (regionally),
and to the ends of the world (globally).
May it be so.
Amen.

For further information and insights on this subject matter, please refer to this article in the May 2022 issue of *Sojourners* --- <https://sojo.net/articles/sponsored/our-moral-pandemic-christian-nationalism-and-political-idolatry>

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