

Hungering for a Righteous Nation
Putting Our Hearts in the Right Place
Psalm 97, Matthew 6:25-34
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Our God is as set on world dominion as any Islamic militant will say Allah is. What makes the biblical God's governance so different is how he governs, and this has deep implications for how we should join with him in his plan

I) How the God of the Bible governs

With holy love

A) In Eden

B) Fast forward to Jesus

Mark 10.42-45: ...Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

There is no god who governs like this One.

"Power politics" is the antithesis of God's politics

II) What does God's form of governance mean for us as we seek to live out our faith publicly?

A) We will love what he loves

Psalm 97.10: O you who love the LORD, hate evil

Psalm 97.2: ...righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne

Don't confuse patience with tolerance

Meaning for us

We won't be content to be safe and happy

Cynicism?

B) We will throw down our idols

Psalm 97.7: All who worship images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols

How to spot an idol

Meaning for us: Faithfulness > results

C) We will rejoice in the Lord

Psalm 97.1: The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice

Matthew 6.25, 32-33: Do not be anxious about your life...For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Conclusion: The Lord does not contrast trust to working. He contrasts trust to worrying. So as we work, patiently and steadily, to make this world a better place, we do so without frenzy or fear. We "whistle while we work."

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Read over Psalm 97. What challenge does it bring to the Christian who is content to be personally safe and happy? What questions does it raise in the light of the agenda and methods of militant Islam?
- 2) The first expression of God's kingdom on earth is his administration of the Garden of Eden. Read over Genesis 2:4-3:24. What things characterize God's method of ruling in that story? How might he have governed differently?
- 3) God's appointed Ruler over the nations this side of the cross is his Son the Messiah Jesus. Jesus claims to reveal the Father, which must mean that his method of ruling is consistent with how God has always ruled. Compare Jesus' way of governing to God's way of governing in Genesis 2-3. What are the similarities? What is new? Note Mark 10:42-45.
- 4) Reflect on the following: "Power Politics' –what we are used to- is in its very essence the very opposite of God's politics. We rightly accept it and work with it in our still broken world, for God still uses power to restrain our natural impulse to hurt each other. But it does not reflect Deepest Reality and will one day be behind us. That day has begun with Jesus."
- 5) The disciple of Christ will love what God loves (Psalm 97:10: "You who love the LORD, hate evil"). How does this fact challenge both our cynicism and our tendency to be content simply to be safe and happy? As you reflect on your answer, think of the things in Scripture that you know God hates. Reflect as well on the fact that Jesus makes vivid, both by his teaching and his death on the cross, that we are not to hate people.
- 6) In our discipleship, both private and public, we are supposed to expose and throw down our idols (Psalm 97:7: "All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols"). But our deep idols are often difficult to spot. Some symptoms of idolatry are anger and fear—both of which show up in political wrangling. What about the present sociopolitical scene in America, or your own country if you are not an American, makes you either angry or afraid? What idols (god substitutes—things you rely on too much) stir up your anger or fear? Talk to God about your idolatry.
- 7) Rejoicing in the LORD (Psalm 97) and trusting in the heavenly Father's care (Matthew 6) are two ways of talking about the same thing. And they are the great antidote to idolatry and the fear and anger that often accompany it. But it is not always easy to trust the Father enough to let go of our fears and to "seek first the kingdom and his righteousness" knowing that He will take care of the rest. What fears are limiting your capacity to love your neighbor as yourself? Confess them and ask for help to put them behind you.