

This week Dr. Baucom continues his sermon series, ***In and Out***. Let's look at how we are being challenged as Christ's disciples to live differently in the world while not becoming a part of it through Dr. Baucom's sermon "***In the State, But Not of It***."

1. Politics and religion are two subjects we're often told NOT to discuss. Why are they so difficult for our typical conversations?
2. We hear a lot today about the political division of the United States – red states and blue states, extremes on both sides with a discontented middle. We hear people say "I hate Hillary," or "George W. Bush is an idiot."
  - What do you think? Do you know either of those people well enough to know if you can hate one or ridicule the other?
  - How would you react if tomorrow's editorial page included the statement "[insert your name] is mentally incompetent and we officially declare our hatred for you?"
  - Why is it so easy to condemn public figures with whose policies/views we disagree? Is it OK to do that?
3. Despite our differences, we will all celebrate our freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion on the Fourth of July. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Sookhdeo with the Barnabas Fund talked about countries where people are not as free to speak their minds, to gather together, or to worship the God they choose.
  - Why are these freedoms so important to us?
  - How should we use our freedom in the U.S.? How should we support brothers and sisters in Christ who don't have the same freedoms?
4. **Read and reflect on Romans 13:1-7.**
  - What is a Christian's role as a citizen of a particular country?
  - Do we have obligations as citizens? What are they?
  - How do those compare to our obligations as citizens of the Kingdom of God?
  - How are they similar? Different?
5. Historically, some Christians have taken a view that they should not be a part of government - as a legislator, employee, etc. (At Columbia, that might cause a large number of people to lose jobs if we adhered to that principle!) Dr. Baucom talked several weeks ago about being in the workplace but not of it. He reminded us that we all, essentially, work for a Jewish carpenter.
  - How can a Christian be part of a government in a way that's faithful to Jesus?
  - Are the considerations here different than they are for people who are self-employed or work for corporations or non-profits? If so, how?
6. **Read Matthew 22:15-22.** Jesus tells us to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.
  - As a citizen of the U.S., what do you give to the U.S./state/local government?
  - What do you give to God?
  - How are they different? Similar?
7. Some people express the view that they shouldn't, as taxpayers, have to support something they believe is morally wrong. For example, some people don't want tax dollars paying for stem cell research. Others don't want tax dollars paying for war in Iraq, or art they consider offensive.
  - Given the passages we've looked at in Matthew and Romans, is it acceptable to withhold tax dollars for any of these items?
  - How should we object if we believe it's wrong?
8. **Read Matthew 21: 12-13.** In the 1960s, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., led protests of civil disobedience to object to how blacks were treated in society – from where you can sit on the bus, to which drinking fountain to use, to where you could eat or stay in a hotel. What other forms of protest are permissible for a Christian?
9. **Read Romans 12:17-21.** Just before Paul's words on how Christians should submit to governing authority, he talks about living at peace with everyone. Have you been living at peace with others? If not, what might you do to begin changing your relationships?