

Whatever Happens Responding to the Election and to Calvary's Financial Challenge

Thesis: Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Text: Philippians 1:27-28

This morning, I have a two-part message.

1. I want to share a word about what I feel the Lord is doing in the church in the U.S. and how the Lord is asking us to pray and show up in response to the election.
2. I want to share about where we are financially as a church. This is an opportunity to cast vision for the need to finish the year strong.

Part One of the message today: responding to our elections

We are living in a challenging season: pandemic, lockdown, economic trials, racial unrest, and 28 named tropical storms including 8 hurricanes in this hurricane season. Can you believe that 8 named storms hit the Gulf Coast this year, with another one in the Gulf right now?

To top it all off, we find ourselves living through a contentious election cycle.

Here is how the Lord is leading me to pray and show up at this time.

Passages from which God is speaking to me:

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" 15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so (Joshua 5:13-15 NIV).

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without

being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28 NIV).

Joshua had a clear prophetic word from the Lord to possess the land. God was leading and guiding them. Yet, when Joshua gets to Jericho and when he encounters the Lord Jesus, he gets it wrong. Joshua asks if the Lord is on his side or the side of his enemy. **The Lord said he didn't come to choose a side; he came to take over.**

Christians on both sides of this election believe that they have heard from God as to who should be President in 2021.

I believe the Lord is confronting his church right now about where we are putting our trust and whom we are following.

Our mental model is: Whose side are you on? Are you for us or for our enemy?

The Lord says that he is here to take over. He is not here to join our side or our political party. He is here to lead. He wants to know if we will join his side.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ. We believe the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of David, the Messiah, the rightful heir to and ruler of the throne of David. He is the appointed and anointed one of God. Jesus was vindicated by his resurrection and ascension. Now, he rules and reigns over all of creation. One day, Jesus will manifest his rule and every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

During this election season, some people are fearful, some people are angry, some people are depressed, some people are thrilled, some people are hopeful, and some people are celebrating.

Since Tuesday morning, I have been praying, "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us." Yes, I have been praying many other ways. I have pages of verses, prayers, and notes which I am praying. But this week, praying for mercy has topped the list.

Here is what I wrote on Tuesday morning in my spiritual journal and have continued to pray all week.

Journal: a divided nation and church, Tuesday morning, 11-3-20

Dear Lord:

Today, I awaken to a divided nation. This nation is divided politically, religiously, economically, racially. The divisions are deep and painful.

It hurts most of all that Christians are so divided from one another and against one another.

Christians from both parties have said, “You can’t be a Christian and vote for that candidate.”

I have read posts from various leaders calling for Christians to stop judging one another and to stop rejecting one another because of political views.

Lord, I lift up my nation to you today and I pray for mercy.

Lord, I lift up the body of Christ, and I pray for forgiveness.

Lord, I hold up the vision of what you have called us to live toward.

Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. Lord, help us, I pray. Have mercy on my nation and the people of this nation. In the name of Jesus.

Whatever happens, *conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God (Philippians 1:27-28 NIV).*

1. *Whatever happens:*
 - a. We are distraught and fearful of what may happen if our candidate and party are not elected. The Lord is calling us to a level of spiritual and emotional maturity that is challenging us at every level. Unfortunately, we are being reactive rather than reflective. And, we are taking out our reactivity on one another.
 - b. Lord, help us to love one another and to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the good news of Christ, whatever happens. Help us to be agents and ambassadors of your good news, Lord, whatever happens.
2. *Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the good news of Jesus:*
 - a. Right now we are conducting ourselves in a manner unworthy of the good news of Jesus. We are fearful, judgmental, unloving, angry, reactive, and attacking. We have looked to the elections, politicians, and parties for good news. It is not the good news of Christ.
 - b. Help us, O Lord.
3. *You stand firm in one spirit:*
 - a. Actually, we are divided, deceived, confused, and biting and devouring our own and one another.

- b. O Lord, help us to embrace the unity (not uniformity) for our lives that you desire and deserve (John 17:21-23).
4. *Contending as one for the faith of the gospel:*
 - a. I think our faith is misplaced. Our confidence is not grounded in faith in God and the faith of his good news. Our faith is dependent upon which party or candidate wins. We are contending for and fighting for people to think, feel, and believe like us (me). If they don't agree with us, we treat them as an enemy.
 - b. Lord, help us to contend as one, in unity, based on faith in you, Lord, and faith in your kingdom will and good news.
5. *Without being frightened in any way:*
 - a. I would say that we are reacting very much out of fear. We are anxious. We are frightened by the present. We are frightened by the future. We are frightened by the unknowns. We are scared of losing. We are scared of losing our nation, the Supreme Court, the Presidency, our place of power and influence, and our voice. We are afraid of judgment to come for the blood of abortion. We are afraid of where we are headed as a nation. And, we are afraid of not getting our way.
 - b. Lord, help us to live as you instruct us: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified [frightened, afraid]; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9 NIV).*
6. *This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.*
 - a. Such reactivity and brokenness embolden our enemy, who believes we are down for the count.
 - b. Rather, help us to be full of faith, hope, and love, united as one, and contending as one in such a way that it strikes fear into the enemy and the enemy's camp.

Here is what I believe:

1. I believe that we can disagree respectfully and see things differently without hating, judging, or rejecting each other.
2. I believe that we can be clear, authentic, and passionate without condemning or attacking.
3. I believe that we can say what is so for us— what we think, feel, and believe—and still seek to stay connected with others, as much as it depends on us.
4. I believe that we can care about issues passionately without ceasing to care for those who see things differently than we see those issues.
5. I believe that we can find men and women of peace (shalom) on both sides of the political spectrum and seek to work with them for the common good.

During a prayer meeting on Wednesday, **the Lord showed me that I wasn't showing up like he wanted.** The Lord showed me that I was impatient. The fruit of the Spirit is patience; it means long suffering. I just wanted the election to be over. I didn't want to wait for days or weeks for a resolution. Then, the Lord reminded me: "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." I need to learn to wait on the Lord and his timing. I need to learn how to suffer long.

What is the Lord putting his finger on in your life?

With God helping you, you can change!

Join me in prayer: Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. Lord, help us, I pray. Have mercy on my nation and the people of this nation. In the name of Jesus.

Here are three other passages of Scripture that the Lord using in my life in this season.

I choose to hold onto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith (Hebrews 12:2).

The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people. He said: 12 "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. 13 The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, 14 and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. 15 Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured." 16 Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples. 17 I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him (Isaiah 8:11-17 NIV).

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD (Psalm 27:13-14 NASB).

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. 21 He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings..." (Daniel 2:20-21 ESV).

Summary: Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Part Two of the message today: responding to Calvary's financial situation

This year has been full of opportunities and challenges.

1. Opportunities:

- a. In response to COVID, we worked to get online immediately to stream our services; so, that has provided a whole new ministry opportunity for us with church members and the community.
- b. People stepped up to help us get some significant projects done that we could never have afforded. They helped us do the work for about a third of what it would have normally cost. That included streaming, repainting the parking lots, remodeling the youth room, installing new network infrastructure and equipment, and much more.
- c. We have had the opportunity to partner with Helping Hands and other groups and assistance ministries to help provide food and support to community members through volunteering, using our facilities, and giving financially to meet needs.
- d. Our children and youth ministries have continued to reach new people and to give children and youth a place to connect. This connection is especially important in this season, because many people have felt cut off from friends and support structures.
- e. Even during the pandemic, people have joined the church and people have decided to follow Jesus. We continue to share good news and to baptize followers of Jesus.
- f. Our partnership with Hairgrove Elementary, which has an 85% at-risk population, continues to go well, even in the midst of COVID. Since our partnership and involvement at Hairgrove, the academic achievement of the school has increased measurably. Our churches are proud of the positive impact and opportunity to change the trajectory of children for good.
- g. We are giving missions funds to our friends and ministries in countries where national lockdowns have meant unprecedented hardship and starvation for folks in poverty. Such places include Myanmar, Liberia, and Nigeria, to name a few.
- h. Our members are coming alongside neighbors in various acts of service and helps.

2. Challenges:

- a. Dealing with COVID is a challenge.

- b. Re-engaging people who have dropped out is a challenge. We are working on how to re-engage people who have stopped participating either online or in-person.
- c. Reaching new people online is a challenge. We are working how to reach out to people who are online, to share the good news of the kingdom of God with them, and to help them become committed followers of Jesus. We have a lot to learn and are growing in this area.
- d. We are also dealing with a financial challenge. A few of our members have lost their jobs. A few of our business owners have suffered financial setbacks. (Interestingly, some businesses are flourishing; it is a mixed bag.) We have a high percentage of givers, so loss of jobs and business income has impacted giving for 2020. By the grace of the Lord, some of our members have stepped up with increased generosity in this season.

Back in September, I started working on the budget for 2021.

1. The Lord has provided miraculously all year long.
 - a. Members and regular attenders have stepped up and given over and above their regular tithes and offerings, and some people have given a double tithe.
 - b. People from outside of Calvary have given because they are committed to our vision and assignment from the Lord.
2. In August and September, our giving was way down.
3. When I was working on the budget in September, we were running about \$100,000 behind year-to-date on tithes and offerings, which was about 16% short of our budget through September. We closed the gap a little in October. Our income through October is 86% of budget.
4. Our expenses are running just over 97% of budget because of all the projects and needs that we have addressed.
5. We have fixed costs that makes up a large percentage of the budget, just like you do in your home budget.

Report on the budgeting process for 2021.

1. So, as I looked at our current reality and at the first budget drafts for the 2021 budget, I was stuck in considering how to budget for next year.
2. Pastor Steve suggested that I meet with the Budget and Finance and the Personnel Committees to share the burden of what I was carrying.

3. For the first time in our history, I brought our two financial committees together. We had two meetings with the B/F and Personnel Committees on Oct. 13 and 20.
4. I needed direction because my preliminary budget work for 2021 produced a large deficit. I wondered if it was best to make huge cuts or to make some cuts but to adjust income as needed.
5. Our committees processed and shared well. I believe in the spiritual practice of discerning the voice of the Spirit through dialogue. The Lord met us, and I believe we heard from the Lord.
6. We came to a consensus on how to approach the budgeting process, making make some cuts and going with a budget increase.
 - a. Make cuts in expenses as possible, but don't gut the budget.
 - b. See if we can get reduced loan payments through refinancing.
 - c. Reassess: If our giving doesn't pick up for year-end, we will meet in early January to discuss our options.
7. The committees felt like it was very important to share with you about our current reality and to cast vision for where we are going.
 - a. One of the committee members said: "It is called a faith budget. I hear: 'Let it be according to your faith.'"
 - b. Several of the committee members voiced the importance of getting all of us on the same page and giving you the chance to express your support.

Summary:

1. We need to finish the year strong financially.
2. To finish the year strong, we need to go from 86% to 95% of budgeted income. So, we need about **\$260,000 over the next two months**. Our monthly budgets for November and December total **\$195,125**.
 - a. Finishing the year strong means hitting our budgeted income numbers for November and December. We actually took in 102% of our budget in October.
 - b. With the help of the Lord and your generosity, we believe finishing the year strong is possible.
 - c. It will require each of us to be faithful in the giving of tithes and offerings.
 - d. And, I want to invite each of us to ask the Lord what part God would have us to take on, and to consider giving over and above our regular tithes and offerings as the Lord gives grace.
3. To do all that we are called to do for 2021, we need to see our giving increase throughout the year by about \$116,000.

4. Note: if you are struggling financially because of loss of job or loss of income, we are here to pray with you, to counsel you, and to see how we can help. Please let us know how about your need.

Giving to support the Immanuel Calvary Church Missionaries and Church Planters in Myanmar.

1. I also want to mention another significant opportunity before us.
2. We have been funding about 30 missionaries, church planters, and teachers on the ICC team which works with Pastor John Cung.
 - a. Those funds have been coming from generous donors outside of Calvary.
 - b. Because of different circumstances, those resources and gifts are no longer available.
3. We have been giving \$100 per family for about 10 years to help these indigenous missionaries reach their communities and villages for Jesus.
4. We need to increase that amount to \$150 per family per month for 2021. So, we are looking for people to take on giving \$150 per month to support a missionary or a missionary family.
5. Our goal is to raise \$1,800 per missionary for the year. In other words, we are seeking to raise \$60,000 for the year of 2021 in order to fund the missionaries and ministries of the ICC Team in Myanmar.

Closing: I have just shared with you where we are financially as a church. Thank you for the opportunity to cast vision for the need to finish the year strong financially.

And, thank you for the chance to share about the opportunity in Myanmar.

Ministry Time

1. We want to pray for people without jobs, for end of year bonuses, for your business to flourish, and for financial breakthroughs.
2. We want to pray for you if you are downcast, discouraged, fearful, anxious, or depressed. The Lord is here to help you and to encourage you.
3. We want to pray for you if you need healing. The Lord is here to heal, save, and deliver.

Addendum: Testimonies from our online presence

Testimony of healing Gloria Cooper 11'1'20

Facebook: Calvary's private page

I have a praise report!

I have been having migraines and nausea this past week that have left me bed ridden and unable to do much even with pain medication on some days. I was assuming it was due to stress. I woke up with the onset of one and nausea again today. I decided not take medication and just hope it would be tolerable.

I was watching the live stream this morning and Jeff McGee was mentioning prayer for healing for some things. I told God "I know that's me LORD" as he began to pray, I felt the migraine leave. I've been migraine free and I am believing that it's gone for good! Thank You Jesus!

Keep praying, keep hoping and keep believing. He's still healing.

From: _____

Sent: Tuesday, November 3, 2020 4:02 PM

To: Cheryl Moses <cheryl@calvaryhouston.com>

Subject: Re: As promised, the extra video!

Dear Cheryl, I am not sure we have met - if we did it was years ago... I wanted to encourage you and thank God for you and your passion for His Word!

I look forward to your sharing... and I just found today's extra video come in! Have a blessed day and week! You are ministering to some of us who are not going out and need fellowship and the SPOKEN WORD into our hearts, minds, souls!

Grateful

From: _____

Sent: Wednesday, June 17, 2020 7:14 AM

To: Cheryl Moses <cheryl@calvaryhouston.com>

Subject: Re: Beautiful Inheritance, Week 8

Cheryl,

This message was fantastic and oh so timely for me. I had been struggling a bit but prayed and listened for God and he turned everything around. And then listening to you this morning felt like confirmation that I had chosen what was best in response to my struggle. Thank you for the encouragement and wisdom and inspiration. You are wonderful!

From: _____

Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 8:12 AM

To: Cheryl Moses <cheryl@calvaryhouston.com>

Subject: Beautiful inheritance

Good morning Cheryl. This is _____.... I am _____'s sister. She has been sending me your study of beautiful inheritance and I believe you have an anointing as you look into the camera and open up Psalm 16 verse by verse. I have been blessed by getting to see your heart through this podcast.

So, I have decided to study this psalm with my group here in Oklahoma. We have just finished a deep study of the Holy Spirit that was very broad.... all over the Bible. I really love taking a short psalm now and savoring it verse by verse..... and what a timely psalm. I am watching you each week, but I am doing the teaching on zoom with my group and using some of your homework. We had our first lesson last night and such a good discussion on verse one!!

I wanted you to know that you are impacting for Jesus more than you can possibly know. You are a beautiful sister. Love from Oklahoma

From: _____

Sent: Sunday, May 3, 2020 11:21 AM

To: Jeff McGee <jtm@calvaryhouston.com>

Subject: Sunday 5/3

Thank you, Pastor Jeff!!! Your sermons are always good, but today's was VERY good and VERY anointed, as was your prayer!!! I appreciate you and thank you!!! So looking forward to all of us being together again!

From: _____

Sent: Sunday, April 19, 2020 11:55 AM

To: Jeff McGee <jtm@calvaryhouston.com>

Subject: Live Stream

Pastor Jeff,

Thank you for the Live Stream church services you do each week. We know that a lot of work goes into them and we appreciate it. We are all learning from the experience. We missed the first ones simply because we were not technologically proficient to make it happen. We've got it now and will continue to be blessed by them until we can all meet again in the Prayer Room.

God bless you.