**1 Peter 3:13-17**

I. We are living in challenging political times

A. State of political discourse:

1. Ugly: candidates are talking about each other in ways we’d never allow our kids to speak

 2. Empty: there is almost no content about

3. Divisiveness: polarizing. And the two most polarizing figures are likely to be running for president

B. State of public policy

 1. We can feel shut out/disempowered as Christians in this climate

2. We cannot speak about our views without paying the consequence of being verbally flogged

3. There’s an attitude of strong opposition and vengefulness: it’s not an issue of what individual people should be allowed to do but what any individual should be allowed to think today.

C. State of our political candidates

 Where are the next generation of quality leaders?

D. In light of these realities, what should we be doing?

 1. The temptation is to become passive aggressive

2. We don’t say these things ourselves (passive) but we listen to all the people who say all the things we want to say.

 3. We live in frustration, anger, fear, and despair

II. The audience of 1 Peter was similarly challenged

There is a very political context to this passage (which starts back in 2:13) and it focuses especially on those who are suffering for doing what is right in a difficult political context.

III. How are we called to live in this political climate?

= Do good, have hope, practice prophetic civility

 A. Preconditions for prophetic civility

 1. Do good

Peter’s audience was being called to good, faithful acts whether they are persecuted for it or not

2. Have hope

Peter’s audience was called to hope in spite of the challenging circumstances.

v. 14-15: Don’t fear what they fear

And this is a hope that causes people to pause and ask questions about the hope

3. Example of this today: Marriage

a. Are we “doing good” in regard to marriage?

Consider divorce rates today, or marriage rates, or children rates. We should have been worried about doing straight practices well rather than focusing on same-sex marriage. Our marriages have become about personal satisfaction in romantic love.

b. Are we hoping in regard to marriage?

When the Supreme Court ruled on same sex marriage, did the Christian community respond in hope?

B. “Prophetic civility”

1. Meaning: v. 15: 1) speak the truth to people (prophetic) 2) with gentleness and respect (civility)

2. Jesus offers us the perfect example of prophetic civility. He was incredibly gracious with sinners but never shrank back from identifying their sins as sin.

3. Many Christians are so prophetic that they are uncivil. Other Christians are not at all prophetic and simply don’t speak up.

4. How do we practice prophetic civility?

a. Clarify our own thinking on what we disagree with and what we agree with. For example in marriage, we need to talk about where we agree and where we disagree on (e.g. monogamy vs. fidelity)

b. We need to be skilled in laying bare the differences between viewpoints in ways that are civil. We need to get clear on what the issue is, so that we can build bridges and agree on what we can agree on.

IV. Conclusion

We are going to be responsible to God for answering: how did we live in the times in which we were placed?

**Discussion Questions**

1. Spend a few minutes in 1 Peter 3:13-17. Read it several times together. What truth from the Word is striking you and raising issues for you?

2. As you consider Sunday’s message, what was said that was convicting to you? For example, how have you been engaging the current political environment in ways that you want to change, or how haven’t you been engaging in ways you want to change?

3. What was said that was encouraging to you?

4. As an example of a current political issue, consider the comments made about marriage on Sunday and the ways the meaning of marriage has changed within the straight community. How do you respond to those comments, and how does that impact how you approach the issue of marriage in today’s society?