**Citizens of Heaven Living in America**

**The Word**

Read together Philippians 3:17-21 and Romans 13:1-7

**The Big Idea**

As American Christians we are called to live as “dual citizens.” On the one hand, our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, and so we reserve our deepest allegiances and hopes for God’s kingdom. On the other hand, we are called to live within the structures of our nation and are given the responsibility to work for the good of our nation, always with a view towards our faithful witness to God’s kingdom.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What idea stood out to you most from Sunday’s message?

2. On Sunday we discussed the idea that we are ultimately “dual citizens” (both citizens of heaven and citizens of America). A tension or balance was struck between how we live out those two citizenships. Do you agree with the general balance that was struck between the two? How would you add to or change the perspective that was shared on Sunday?

3. Consider the three implications mentioned for how we can navigate this election season as Christians. Which one do you most need to be reminded of and why?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. What does it mean to be an American Christian? How should we understand our identity as Christians who live in America?

II. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:17-21)

A. “citizenship” implies where my true country/home is

B. The terms “savior” and “lord” (v. 20) had political overtones in the first century.

C. We are called to live as “aliens and strangers” here (1 Peter 2:11)

D. Our ultimate allegiance is not to America but God’s kingdom (consider the language of the pledge of allegiance and the example of civil disobedience in the book of Daniel).

E. Our ultimate hope is not in the U.S. but in God’s kingdom (U.S. has no ultimate future)

III. But we are also Americans

A. Paul did not abandon his Roman citizenship, rather he appeals to it at times

B. Romans 13 calls us to live within the political structures of our time

1. Human authorities are established by God (v. 1)

2. The authorities are “God’s servant” to do us good and to punish wrongdoers (v. 4). This both legitimizes and relativizes their authority.

3. Therefore, we are called to submit to the authorities whenever possible (v. 1 and 5). This includes paying taxes and honoring the roles of our leaders (v. 6-7)

C. Implications for us as Americans

1. We are to appropriately honor our leaders

2. It is very appropriate to honor and appreciate our history, those who have fought for our nation, as well as all the good we experience through our country. It is appropriate to be patriotic.

IV. So we are dual citizens who are called to “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” (Mark 12:17)

V. Implications for us in this political season

A. We are called to be hopeful people during this political season

1. Psalm 46 paints a picture of the world falling apart all around God’s people, but of God still being firmly in control and on his throne.

2. The command is to “Be still and know that I am God.”

B. We are called to gracious and civil speech during this political season

1. Colossians 4:6 should be applied to our speaking about political issues.

2. Being citizens of God’s kingdom is not just about what we believe but how we speak to others.

3. We should share our views and challenge ideas but always in a gracious and loving way.

 C. We are called to loving engagement in this political season.

1. We are not called to withdraw or to engage with anger and defensiveness, but to engage with love

2. “Love your neighbor as yourself” has implications for engaging politically so that our American neighbors are part of a flourishing nation of justice and freedom.

 3. We engage through prayer for our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

 4. We engage through staying informed and voting

 5. We work for the good of our nation in whatever ways we can