

*A friend asked me a few days ago what I thought about the current immigration debate in the US. This is my response.*

My response to this may initially seem oblique, for reasons that I hope are clear by the end.

If we understand “my kingdom is not of this world” to mean that Jesus’ kingdom has nothing to do with this world, then we are more or less up to our own devices regarding geopolitical matters.

I do not think that view accurate. I understand him to be saying rather that “the source and authority of my kingdom does not derive from this world’s systems, and you bet your bippy it has implications for them.” The overarching view of his life is that he came to reclaim authority over the planet, including its governing systems. I don’t think Satan was lying when at the temptation he indicated that the kingdoms of the world are his; there is that one fascinating glimpse of Michael resisting the ‘prince of Persia’ in Daniel that perhaps gives a faint glimmer into what he meant. God didn’t go about retaking control it in a way that we expected or might have desired or still might desire; Jesus knew that and didn’t take the bait.

The Church catholic is God’s chosen system to overthrow the dominance of this world; as we are members of the Church, we are citizens of his kingdom and his ambassadors to tell others of that coming shift in governance and change their allegiance until he choses to return and finalize his authority. Nowhere are we told that we can enact that governance, contrary to the Christian Reconstructionists. Rather, we are to be about the commission given at the end of the Gospels until he decides otherwise.

As citizens of a new kingdom, we did not commit to a civil religion; rather, our allegiance to earthly nations and race is undone. If we take our new citizenship seriously there is no more class, race or national distinction that is meaningful to us, because they are not meaningful to God. We give to Caesar what is his in the process of living our lives within our respective nations. As part of that we may not be able to accept or respond to a given argument on the terms as defined by our national governments; we must evaluate each as best we can within the system that God has set up. Where our allegiance and obedience to God puts us at odds with Caesar, Caesar may exact a price for that disloyalty, including our lives.

So be it. Our task is to be about the Gospel, which commits us to loving others without distinction. The Beatitudes, as the ethic of the coming kingdom, commit us to justice and mercy for each one, regardless of the response. Desmond Tutu noted when we heard him speak a week or so ago that there will never be peace as long as there remain conditions in the world which make people desperate. I think in the main he is right. Perhaps... just perhaps... had the world been more compassionate about the plight of people during the Weimar Republic, there would have been no occasion for Hitler.

This may sound idealistic, but I think it is the radical view that the Gospel requires.

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