



Theme: Building a Bridge Over Troubled Waters
"Disturbed by the Law of Christ"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

October 17-18, 2020

Scripture: John 17:20-21

Weekly Memory Verse:

²³ I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.
1 Corinthians 9:23

Scripture Readings:

1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 6:2-3; John 13:34-35; John 15:12-13

VIDEO Sermon Intro

SLIDE "Disturbed by the Law of Christ"

My name is Jeff Huber and I serve as lead Pastor here at Summit Church in Durango. We are so glad you are worshipping with us today. If you are worshipping with us online today, we ask at some point you will let us know that you are here by putting your name in the chat box or sending us an email from our website. Today we continue in a series of sermons on how we might **build a bridge** over troubled waters during this tumultuous season

with a **presidential election, a pandemic, racial unrest**, and everything else we are experiencing in today's world that feels tumultuous. This series is supposed to help us be better and grow a bit. It also should make us **uncomfortable** because the **church should be the safest place** to talk about difficult things like politics, yet it rarely is. I figure we will be talking or hearing about politics constantly for the next few weeks, so it's good to stop and ask ourselves some tough questions.

We're spending four weeks on this topic because most of us think we have it figured out. I hope we will **dig down and face some difficult truths** inside our soul. I'm **not** going to ask you to **change political parties**, but I want you to think critically as a follower of Jesus about this question, which I asked you to do last week. **Are we willing to critically view our politics through the lens of our faith and following Jesus?**

Most of us who follow Jesus are not able to do this very well if we are honest, especially in the climate we are in today and the next few weeks leading up to the presidential election. It's easy to be divided and **it's easy to rush to our side** and it's easy to assume that God and Jesus are on our side and in our corner. Are we willing, or are we even able, to put our faith filter ahead of our politics? **Are we willing to put being a follower of Jesus first** and being a Republican or Democrat or Libertarian or independent second? Let me put it another way.

SLIDE ***Are we willing to follow Jesus when there is a gap between what he says and does, and our political leanings?***

I'm **not** suggesting that you **not be political**, or you **not wade** into politics or **not talk** about politics or **not run** for office. If we feel called to enter into the fray, then we should **step right in**. If we do that, however, we must remember to put our faith first, which is challenging.

We began by talking about how **Jesus built a bridge by stretching his**

arms out upon the cross and that he **didn't use his power over people** but instead showed a sacrificial love and said that if we are to follow him, we must be willing to do the same. We talked about how the **church is at its best when we are giving ourselves away instead of demanding our way.**

Last week we looked at **John 17 and the uncomfortable prayer of Jesus** in which he asks that we remain united as his followers, and in doing that we show the world what it means to follow Jesus. Jesus asks us, even in the midst of our political differences which we will always have, to love each other unconditionally. Jesus prayed for unity and as his followers expects us to do the same. To do this, last week, I invited you to prayer this prayer daily.

SLIDE Gracious God, make us one so we can connect with many.

We talked about how our **votes will determine who will win** or lose on election day, but **how we treat one another and pray for each other**, especially those who are different than we are, will **determine if the church**, the bride of Christ, wins or loses.

SLIDE Look for an opportunity to grow and learn by loving someone with whom you disagree.

The second thing I invited you to do is one of our central values as a church when it comes to **offering grace**. I challenged you to look for an opportunity to love unconditionally someone with whom you disagree politically. I invited you this season to **disagree politically; pray for unity; love unconditionally**; and in doing so **build a bridge over troubled water**. Tony Evans, the great African American preacher, put it this way in terms of the importance of unity in the church.

SLIDE "God is a God of unity, and where there is disunity and division, God's Holy Spirit is not free to dwell."

Unity was as **challenging in the first century** as it is today. If we read

the Gospels carefully, **everybody wanted Jesus to be on their side**. They would often try to pigeonhole him with questions and get him into their corner and agree with whatever their viewpoint might be. Everybody wanted to have a piece of Jesus and have him choose their side, and not so different than it is today. Both parties are convinced that Jesus would be on their side if he came back to earth today. **Republicans are absolutely convinced** that Jesus would be a Republican because of their **values**. Democrats believe Jesus will be a **Democrat because of his concern for people**.

The interesting thing is that I could come up with an argument that the **Republican platform is in line with the teachings of Jesus**. I could also come up with the sermon on why the **Democratic platform and values are in sync with the teachings of Jesus**. When we interpret the words of Jesus through the filter of our political leanings. **It's amazing how red, or incredible how blue, and how often Jesus agrees with you**. Both sides quote Jesus and both sides quote the Bible and it's amazing how often they **pick the same verses**, like the very first sermon of Jesus where he quotes the prophet Isaiah.

Let's not forget that the **first sermon of Jesus was very political** in the first century and even for us today. In Luke 4, Jesus is that his boyhood home in Nazareth in the synagogue when he preaches from Isaiah is very first sermon.

BIBLE ¹⁸ **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, ¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."**

We can easily read that list that Jesus talks about and apply it to **economics, healthcare, racial issues, immigration, prison reform**, and being involved in places where there is **oppression**, just to name a few. The

question is if we can put our faith filter first, which is very difficult to do. Once again, I think of something Tony Evans said recently.

SLIDE “God doesn’t ride on the backs of donkeys or elephants. Jesus did not come to take sides. He came to take over.”

Tony says it a lot better than I can, but it’s a powerful truth because **Jesus came to introduce the upside-down Kingdom of God** to earth and all of humanity. Jesus came to live and show us upside down Kingdom values where those with wealth and power use those resources for those without resources. This is a Kingdom where the **King will lay down his life** for his subjects **rather than demanding his subjects** lay down their lives for him. It is a Kingdom in which everyone is invited to the banquet, the feast which is held in their honor and not to honor the king. Here is the challenge for us in today’s world.

SLIDE The Kingdom of God will always conflict, in some ways, with human kingdoms.

The Kingdom of God will always conflict, in some ways, with every **political party and every political platform**. There will always be this tension, which is why it is absolutely **foolish for the church to be divided over a candidate or political party**. At the end of the day, **no human political party or candidate will completely line up with the Kingdom values of Jesus**, even though each party might have a little bit of those values within it. I know that’s hard for some of you to believe, but it’s true. We are not to be divided over politics because **we are meant to be Kingdom people first** and political people second.

Today, I want to suggest a process where we can discern where **agreement ends, and diverse opinions begin**. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, quoted another theologian from the 17th century when he said these words that have falsely been attributed to him, but no doubt

embodied his theology and understanding of God.

SLIDE “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity or love.”

While this statement sounds beautiful and can be helpful to remind us to offer charity even when we disagree, we still must decide **where essentials and non-essentials begin**. It can be helpful to turn to the apostle **Paul** when trying to discern this, because he is someone who **hated Christians** when he was younger. He was a well-educated **Jewish Pharisee** but had Roman citizenship. He eventually becomes a Jesus follower, but he also was someone who killed Jesus followers early in his life. The apostle Paul, in two of his letters, gives us a great starting point. It is a phrase which is only used twice in his letters which survive antiquities.

SLIDE “The Law of Christ”

This phrase, “the law of Christ,” **was Paul’s way of referring to the new commandment** that Jesus gave his disciples during the last meal they shared together. We find it in **John 13**, and we looked at it last week together. There were 613 laws that Jesus boiled down to one commandment to establish a new covenant. It was simple and challenging at the same time.

SLIDE “Love one another, as I have loved you.”

This was not just a lovefest, because there is a qualification in how we love one another. We are commanded to love as Jesus loved us. **Jesus then says that by this unique brand of love, which is a two-way street, everyone will know that we follow him**. The apostle **Paul** takes this idea and **weaves** it into every single letter. It is the **uniting ethic** for all Jesus followers in the first century as Paul is starting churches. This phrase, “the law of Christ,” is meant to take every follower of Jesus back to this new commandment ethic.

In 1 Corinthians 9, we read these words from Paul.

BIBLE ***¹⁹ Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. ²⁰ When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. ²¹ When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.***

This is strong language, especially the day and age where **slaves were everywhere**. Paul is clear that he is on a mission because he did a lot of damage to the church and he is willing to do anything short of sin to convince Gentiles, those who are not Jewish, that God has done something on their behalf in the world. Paul is saying that **he is no longer under the law of Moses or what was called Torah, but he still was under the law of God which he called the law of Christ**, which is about loving one another as we have been loved by God.

In Galatians 6, Paul gets specific about what this looks like.

BIBLE ***² Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.***

When we see someone who is burdened **financially**, struggling with their **children or family**, having issues at **work**, dealing with **physical ailment**, or just been tripped up in life, feeling **isolated because of a pandemic**, we are meant to **carry each other's** difficulties. This is the body of Christ functioning together and it's a **two-way street**. When we do this, we are fulfilling the law of Christ, loving others as God has loved us. **When the concerns of others concern us, and we act on it, we are fulfilling the law of Christ** and doing what Jesus told his disciples to do on that final night they

were together. These are the **New Testament marching orders** for those who follow Jesus.

Regardless of our political leanings, if we are Jesus follower, **the law of Christ should inform our conscience**. Our conscience should be hardwired the law of Christ so that **when we do something contrary to loving as Jesus loved us, it should bother us**. It should bother our **collective conscience** so all of us, as the body of Christ, are **disturbed, irritated and convicted by some of the same things**. We should all be disturbed by the law of Christ when we **see injustice**. We should be disturbed by the law of Christ when we **offend someone or disrespect them**, even when we do it by accident. When we see people **undermining their own future**, undermining their **health**, undermining their **relationship with their kids** or the **integrity of their family**, or the **integrity of society**, we should be disturbed and moved internally.

We should be moved to action and it should bother us whenever we see someone **exercising autonomy which undermines the health of their family or their community**. When we, or others who are followers of Jesus, are not living by the law of Christ, it should disturb us. When we see it outside the church, it should also bother us. We are to love others, respect them, and uphold their dignity, and when that's not happening, we should be disturbed.

Jesus left the heavenly realm for us, which tells us that **Jesus is not afraid of guilt by association**. If Jesus had been concerned with guilt by association, he would've stayed off the earth. Instead, **God entered into our world to show us what love looks like** and that it's about **proximity** and being willing to go into those places which are difficult and challenging. Jesus was clear that if we want to set **policy, it's about what is good for people** and for the community because that's why Jesus came.

Let's look at a complicated example of how this law of Christ has been applied in the history of the church. At one point, all over the world, and in every community, it was self-evident and obvious and unquestioned that some people should be owned by and controlled by other people. **The idea of slavery was considered a fact of life.** It was not a moral issue or question for most people because it's the way things operated. In the **4th century BC, the Greek philosopher Aristotle** wrote this about slavery.

SLIDE "For that some should rule, and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule..."

But, in the 4th century AD, about 800 years later, **St. Augustin who was the leader western Christianity began talking about slavery being the result of sin.** The perception of slavery begins to change, but the truth is that the more the **Christian faith became aligned with the powers of the world,** there began to be arguments that **slavery was designed by God.** This is the challenge of our **faith being co-opted by the Kingdoms of this world.** There were many leaders who claimed to be followers of Jesus who began to use the Scriptures to support slavery. In the 1700s, reformers like John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, and William Wilberforce came together to insist that slavery was not God's will but was evil. In the very last letter that he wrote, on **February 24, 1791, just six days before his death at the age of 88,** John Wesley penned these words to Wilberforce.

GRAPHIC John Wesley on Slavery

"Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? O be not weary of well-doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall

vanish away before it.”

It was the law of Christ which disturbed and pushed people like Wesley and Wilberforce to say that **slavery was not expedient or natural**, but the result of **human kingdoms filled with sin and brokenness** where people put their earthly filters on before their Jesus filters.

Just as John Wesley did in the 1700s, we are called today to live out the law of Christ and stand up to **racial injustice and inequity**, especially when it **sometimes means opposing the kingdoms of this world**. Someone asked me recently what it means when people talk about, “**institutional racism**,” and if we still have that today. Many try to argue that it doesn’t exist, but it’s really very simple. When our country did away with slavery with the addition of the 13th amendment to the Constitution, there was a **clause which said that if a slave had committed a crime**, they would forfeit their freedom. Many slaves were then charged by their former slave owners of things **like loitering or trespassing** because they had nowhere else to go and soon were enslaved again, or worse yet, **put into prison**. From that time forward, our **prisons have always had more people of color** than are represented in our population.

This is **not a liberal or conservative issue, but a human one** where I think Jesus would enter directly into it and invite us to be a part of figuring out how do we **liberate the captives and those who are oppressed**. This is a **very disturbing** issue, and it should **disturb us greatly** as we seek to live by the law of Christ, which means loving others as Jesus loved.

Before the time of Jesus, **most cultures viewed women and children as expendable** and not counted. They were not included in the Roman census and women could not own property and needed men in their lives to take care of them or they wouldn’t be able to survive. It was **Jesus who brought children upon his knee** in public, which was a radical departure for what

rabbis are religious teachers did, that begin to change this perception. It was Jesus and then Paul who **accepted women into their groups and who reached out to them and cared for them, often inviting them to lead.** It was first century Christians that began to take care of the **widows and the orphans** and began to shift how culture saw people who were seen as expendable.

They did this because **they were compelled by the law of Christ to live differently than the kingdoms of this world.** When we see women and children and any group of people being mistreated, we are **meant to be disturbed by the law of Christ.** Our church is active with a group called the **Jewels of Obaga** in Kenya because we were disturbed when we saw women and children, who in that culture are disowned when the husband or father dies, left with nothing. Our teams which go to Kenya each year work to help the Jewels and the children they care for **become self-sufficient and have the power and resources to care for themselves** because this is why Jesus died. The law of Christ should disturb us and change us, helping us bring about the upside-down Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdoms of this world.

Operation Christmas Child and Compassion International happen because followers of Jesus are disturbed by the Law of Christ to care for children who are unseen or who feel unloved. **The teachings of Christianity are meant to affect the conscience the world** around it and it does so because of the unity of the church which lives out those teachings of Jesus. When the law of Christ influences an individual, or a village, or city, or nation's conscience, things change. There has been much change, even within our nation, because of this dynamic, and there needs to be more. The single new covenant command of Jesus is meant to be **powerful and ahead of its time.** This new commandment model is **baked into the crucifixion and resurrection**, that it becomes transcultural, transgenerational and sits at the

epicenter of the Kingdom of God values. It will **never go out of date** and doesn't have a **shelf life**. We are **forever and ever**, within every **generation**, to **do for others and to love others the way God, through Christ, has loved us.**

This new commandment ethic and value and morality to love others as Jesus loved is meant to **influence and inform and disturb us**, so we might impact the world around us, even **those who don't follow Jesus**. This is why the **church** is so important and why believe it is the **hope of the world**. What it means to be a follower of Jesus is to be **salt and light** so we might **shape the conscience of the world** around us. It's also why we **cannot be divided**, and **we dare not let political leanings become the source of that separation.** Candidates and political parties and platforms **come and go and the change**. It is incumbent upon us to be one, as Jesus prayed we would be, so that **essential and eternal truth around Jesus as Lord and Savior** would **unite us** and help shape the world around us, **in spite of our political differences**.

We start with the **essentials** which has to do with **Jesus as Lord and Savior because we discover that in the Scriptures and is part of our tradition and what it means to follow Jesus**. There is another element which then informs us as we **grow and discover more about who Jesus is** and how this law of Christ is meant to work in our world. **Just as Christians changed their ideas about slavery, women and children**, there are many issues in today's world in which we should **allow our thinking, wisdom and reason to intersect with our faith and help us live out this new commandment of loving others as Jesus loved**.

SLIDE Knowledge, Wisdom and Reason

One of the unique realities of being human is that we can collect wisdom and knowledge which we can pass on to the next generation. **I have had many dogs in my life**, and I have loved them all because they become a

part of my family. But they **are all equally dogs**. None of them have ever showed up in my life and said, ***“I got this all figured out because my mom taught me and pass on this wisdom to me.”*** They are dogs and their wonderful, but they really **have no way to pass wisdom** on from one generation to another. Do they change from one generation to another? Yes, of course they do. But **none of them ever go to school and learn to read and write** except for that cartoon dog Mr. Peabody.

GRAPHIC Mr. Peabody and Sherman

Learning to talk, read and write has allowed one generation of humans to **gift the next generation** everything they learned. Our Old Testament originally came from an oral tradition, which was just as accurate as written tradition for those who couldn't read or write. Consequently, **every generation, at least in theory, is smarter than the generation before**. With knowledge comes extra wisdom and the ability to reason. We gain insight from generation to generation.

As 21st-century followers of Jesus who are seeking to live out the law of Christ in this new Kingdom of God ethic of loving others as Jesus loves, we should **add to our informed conscience the knowledge of science, psychology**, how our world works and how we are made. Think about it this way. If someone asked you, **“Where do babies come from?”** Our answers that question is determined by the **age and ability of the person asking**. One **4-year-old** asks us this question, we don't lie to them, but **we accommodate to their capacity**. When an **11-year-old** asks us this question we send them to someone else because we don't want to have to deal with! No, we begin to have that conversation about the birds and the bees and try to help them understand. When a **16-year-old** asks us this question, we say, **“You should know that by now and if not then Google it!”** If someone in their **30s** asks us this question, then... well... **I'm not really sure what we say!**

I think you get the idea without trying to make any of us **more uncomfortable than we already are talking about both politics and sex** in the same sermon! God, in the same way as our heavenly Parent, has accommodated to the capacity of those who follow him. When we read **Genesis**, we see God accommodating to the capacity of an ancient people who were **pre-literary and instead everything was oral tradition**. This was before any modern science was understood. There was **no Tylenol or warm showers** for goodness sake! I guarantee you that **we understand Genesis differently** than they did in the first century and that's the way it should be. **It doesn't mean there are not timeless truths within Genesis**, but it would be foolish to think that we are reading it through the same lens as those who lived 4000 years ago.

When **Jesus** comes along, he **explained God in a way that is different** than is fully revealed in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible. **People's capacities have changed in the world has changed**. Jesus reveals God in a new way for a new time. **God is constantly revealing new things** to us as we grow and change. Most of us who don't live in an **agrarian world** don't fully understand some of the teachings and parables of Jesus until we put them in our context.

I would argue that as followers of Jesus, we should **never resist science or discovery**. We should be the **most curious** of all people because our **faith is tethered not to an interpretation of the text. Our faith is tethered to an event in history**, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This means that we **don't need to fear what is new** because the **story of Jesus which informs us is about something dying so something new can be born** within us. That's the **core of our gospel**, that the **old has died and something new is born**. **This happens in every generation** and can happen in **every culture** which is why we find the story of **Jesus so compelling** no the matter the **time or the place**.

We don't need to fear science, but, every once in a while, a generation comes along which feels the need to get into a **spitting contest with science** which becomes a foolish endeavor and eventually pushes more people away from Jesus then draws people towards him. We are meant to incorporate into our informed conscience the knowledge and wisdom which is been handed down to us by those who came before. **Knowledge and wisdom combined with an informed conscience should determine which policies and platforms in legislation we support.**

The law of Christ, which tells us to love others as Jesus loved us, is nonnegotiable. Our conscience is shaped by this and the things that we learn about and grow from overtime. We intuitively understand how this works because when your **children are sick**, you call me? You **might call me to pray**, but your **first call is to the doctor** because they know and have the tools to help you deal with most illnesses. **Hundreds of years ago**, when children got sick, parents did call the priest, or the pastor was a religious leader. Now, you don't call me anymore, but **you call the doctor**, not because you don't believe in the healing power of God but because we have accumulated knowledge and wisdom in terms of how the human body works. **As followers of Jesus, we don't see any conflict between those two things, do we?** If you call, I will pray for your child, but most of you don't call and ask the church to pray for you when your kids are sick.

We have **naturally and intuitively incorporated knowledge into our thinking**. No one has called and asked me **how the virus spreads** that we are dealing with today, and for that I am glad! Here's the rub. **When it comes to our politics and even sometimes our science, there will always be a challenge** and we will have work to do as followers of Jesus. This is where I hope you will **open up your mind a bit** and understand that the reason we always have work to do in the area of nonessentials is because of something that was captured and appraised by **Rufus Miles in the 1940s**. Miles served

in the **Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson presidential administrations**. He said these powerful words that are true in every time and place.

SLIDE “Where you stand depends on where you sit!”

This is called Miles Law and the idea is that each of us sits in a cultural and temporal context. We all are, in many ways, **bound by our place and time in which we are born and live**. Where we **live**, who we are **related** to, how much **money** we have, our **language** and **culture**, will all determine our perspective in life. These things determine what we see and what we experience and **how we read the Scriptures**. This is why **most of us don't see any conflict between our faith and our politics**. We love this series because we have friends who need to hear it! Each of us are fine, it's everyone else that needs this series of sermons. ***Am I right, or what?!***

Let's be honest. **Most of us have been thinking** this entire sermon and maybe the last one, “You're so right Pastor Jeff. **People need to put their faith first and there politics second** and that's why everyone should be a **Republican!** When I put my faith first, clearly the **Republicans are right!** I am **100% with you Jeff, that's why I'm a Democrat**, because I put my faith first and then my politics.” **Maybe, but probably not.**

None of our political views were shaped in a vacuum. Pausing long enough to recognize this and incorporate this into our thinking, is what it means to be mature. **Can we all agree we need a little bit more maturity in the political discussions going on in our nation?** I would argue that pausing to recognize this is the way forward. When we find ourselves on the extremes, if we want to be **mature, we must be willing to work towards the middle to build a bridge**. I want to be clear that I'm not suggesting we all moved to the middle and have a moment of **Kumbaya** and all of our differences will go away.

SLIDE There will always be differences when it comes to political

leanings.

That's okay as long as **we are mature enough not to allow this to divide us**. If we are mature enough to not be divided and be able to hear our differences, we will be better off and moves us towards political unity in spite of political diversity. **Political views and values, like all our views and values, are shaped by many things, most of which we have little control over**. If we can take a deep breath and acknowledge this truth, we might all learn something. **It doesn't mean we have to change what we believe**, but we can **gain understanding** as to why other people look at the world differently and see through a different lens. Where we **live**, how we were **raised**, where we are **educated**, if we were educated, what we've been **told**, what we've seen, what we've **experienced**, what we've **seen others experience** are just a few of the dynamics which **shape our political viewpoint**.

A great example of this might be your **parents** or another older person whom you respect. If I would ask you **why that person is a Republican or Democrat, you most likely wouldn't tell me about their theology** or even their faith, but about the world in which they **grew up** and the things that **affected them** and **made them who they were**. The same is true for each one of us and **it does not mean we have dismissed the significance of our faith**. The problem is that when these two things come together, our faith and all the other things which have defined who we are, **one tends to prop up the other**.

What if, over the next few weeks, **we were able to step back and begin to do it a bit differently**. **I'm not asking you to change political parties or what you believe or who you vote for**. What if we were willing to simply see it a bit differently because **where we stand depends on where we sit**. Recognizing this allows us to **open our hands** and our **minds** and our **hearts** without changing our political viewpoint. I think of verse 3 which follows

verse 2 in Galatians 6 that we read a few moments ago. It's one of my favorites in all the Scriptures.

BIBLE ***³ If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.***

If we think we are too important to help someone or **get to know someone or understand were someone else's sitting**, we are fooling ourselves because we are not that important. The law of Christ commands us to love others as Jesus loved and **Jesus was constantly entering into places and worlds that were outside of his Jewish heritage, like Samaria and the homes of those who were seen as unclean and messed up.**

Beware, because when we head down this road, we **often change** what we think and even some of what we believe in terms of our politics. That's not the goal, but it's an **unintended consequence**, much like what happens when we say yes to Jesus and we begin to live our lives differently because of what we experience with him as our Lord and our Savior.

Let me end with a couple of suggestions as we reflect on this idea of being disturbed by the law of Christ. None of this is new but it is something we sometimes need to remind ourselves or we forget.

SLIDE **Listen to people who experience the world differently.**

Listen to people who don't experience the world the way we predominately do. The **haves and have-nots**, the Christians and **non-Christians**, young and **old**, **black-and-white**, gay and **straight**, married and **single**, new citizens and **old citizens**, people have been in the military and those who have not, anyone who has experienced the world differently than our predominant worldview can help us learn and grow what it means to love people as Jesus loved them.

In the text in 1 Corinthians 9 that we read earlier, Paul drives this point

home when he continues in verse 22.

SLIDE ***²² When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some.***

Notice that Paul also recognizes that the key to reaching those who are far from Jesus is to **be weak and not overpower others**, but instead to **enter into those places where there is brokenness and hurting by coming alongside and not ruling over**.

SLIDE **Learn something.**

The second thing we can do is learn something when we are willing to listen. **We are followers of Jesus and our faith is tethered to an event**, so we don't need to be afraid of new information or new experiences or new perspectives. **We don't need to be afraid of new knowledge or new opinions**. Be curious. One of my favorite atheists is Sam Harris who said these words that are good for all of us.

SLIDE **Pay attention to the frontiers of your ignorance.**

I must constantly tell myself not to turn away, but to **stay engaged with things that disagree with my worldview**. We should be students and not just critics. **All of us are amazing critics without one single lesson in criticism**. I know some people who turn down the television so they can **give their own commentary** to the people in the room, which is just lovely isn't! If we are not willing to pause and become a student, then we make the mistake of discounting every bit of information that doesn't fit perfectly into our current, flawed, and very human, worldview. **If we don't listen and learn from each other we will discount anything which doesn't fit perfectly in our flawed, human, worldview and then our lives become an echo chamber**.

When we quit learning, something bad happens on the inside. Research

is clear that those who are lifelong learners live longer because they keep their brains engaged. Those who insist on seeing the world only in one way often die younger and alone. God wants more for us and we should be better than that. If we are **Democrats**, we remember that our Republican brothers and sisters **are not crazy**. If we are **Republican**, are Democratic brothers and sisters are not crazy. **Nobody iss crazy, we just all sit in different places** and so we see the world differently. Within the body of Christ, why would we take time to understand and learn something new? Here's a universal truth when it comes to humanity.

SLIDE Everybody's behavior makes sense to them.

Everybody's response makes perfect sense to them. Everybody's viewpoint and everybody's politics makes perfect sense to them. When we don't understand is because we don't understand and **there is something we need to learn**. All of us are taking a stand based on where we sent, whether we are Republican or Democrat or something else in between.

SLIDE Love like Jesus

Finally, if we are going to be a follower of Jesus during this political season, we must be willing to be disturbed by the law of Christ and love like Jesus. It's not easy. I hope you will never burn a relational bridge over a political view. Sometimes we see someone **start a fire or damage** their end of the bridge and if our response is to **burn our end of the bridge, everybody ends up drowning**.

This goes back to the **new commandment, the cross** and the **epicenter** of what we believe as followers of Jesus. **The person beside us is more precious to God than our potentially flawed view**; of you that we may have changed 10 years ago and one that we might change in another five years. We should remember that there is one thing in common for people on both ends of every political divide...we all are broken and fall short of God's glory.

None of us is perfect. None of our views are perfect. **Jesus died for all of us on every side of every divide to build a bridge.** How dare I burn down a relational bridge with someone for whom Jesus Christ died! How dare we do the same thing as a follower of Jesus.

Let's make it simple this political season.

SLIDE Listen. Learn. Love.

I said this last week, but if you think this is naïve, please remember that once upon a time there were just a handful of Jesus followers, crushed between the Roman Empire and the Temple. They gave to **Caesar** what was Caesar's, and they gave to **God** what was God's, which **was their lives**. Now that feared and powerful Roman Empire is no more, and the Temple was destroyed. Rome's most famous emperor and the leader of the Temple are now foot notes in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Earthly kingdoms come and kingdoms fall. Empires rise and empires fall. And Jesus said I'm going to build my church and neither the gates of hell nor any powers on earth will be able to overcome it. And we've been invited to be part of it, the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, the body of Christ.

Our responsibility, especially in a season like this, is to show our divided nation and are divided world that it is possible, and what it looks like, to disagree politically and love unconditionally while we pray for unity. We do this because at Calvary, we witnessed on the **cross** a Lord and Savior who **stretched out his arms to build a bridge**. That image, and the **law of Christ, which was poured out on that cross, should disturb us so we would listen, learn, and love.**

If we do that, then we can do what Paul encourages us to do in the last line of that section of his letter in 1 Corinthians 9. It's our scripture memory verse for this week, so let's say it together.

BIBLE *²³ I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.*

I pray we will do that in the days and weeks ahead.

Let's pray.

SLIDE **Prayer**

Gracious God, always be differences because you are a God who loves and created variety. May the law of Christ disturb us, so we are moved to love others as you loved, even when it's difficult. Help us to remember that where we stand depends on where we sit. Give us patience and courage to listen, learn and love well so we might be a part of you work in the world, building a bridge over troubled waters. Most of all, we thank you that your son Jesus did this for us to show us what it means to live by a new commandment. May that new commandment invade our hearts this season always. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen