

Christ Church Fall 2020 Sermon Series Study Guide

Welcome to Jesus 2020!

When I have shared that we will be doing a message series and small group material based on faith and politics, I usually get one of two responses. The first is "oh no". These people hold tightly to the axiom that there are two things you never talk about with people close to you: faith and politics, and I will do both in one series. The other response is "this should be fun". And I am not sure if these people are really interested in faith and politics or they can't wait to see me sink like the Titanic.

Faith and politics bring up many thoughts, ideas and emotions. These topics are often very personal and can lead to very passionate expressions of belief. In our current culture this will lead to arguments, hurt feelings and division. This, of course, is not my goal.

My goal is to offer us an opportunity to learn and grow as people of faith who are involved in politics.

I will start by confessing the connection between faith and politics is a newer one for me. For many years I stayed away from politics because I was "a man of faith". Jesus is my king; I don't care who lives in that white house. I felt like politics took my attention away from living my faith. I have since begun to realize that political actions deeply affect people. I want those effects to be positive and life-giving because of my faith. So it is better to pay attention to how these two interact than trying to pretend they do not affect each other. So let's talk about it.

As an opportunity to learn and grow, the focus of this series is not to change anyone's mind or political stance. I will not be telling you who to vote for. My hope is that we will learn to ask good questions, seek God's answers, and be willing to have conversations that do not belittle or demean each other in the process. I have learned that good Christians can disagree, and we can show each other grace.

We will attempt to see how faith and politics can work together and how we, as followers of Jesus, can grow in living our faith even in a political season. So prepare yourself to be challenged, to hear different perspectives and, through it all, to be loved because we serve the God of love and grace and not a human being in a political party.

May God grant us grace as we wrestle with tough situations, always looking for his kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Pastor James

Administrative Details:

- If you need a study guide, you can find the study online by clicking on the Jesus 2020 page at christchurchdavenport.org
- If you miss a message you can head on over to our YouTube page (subscribe and you'll get alerted when new messages are posted) or visit christchurchdavenport.org/media
- Review or establish your group's rules/guidelines

Study Format:

Each week, is broken into three segments:

- Experience God's Love
 - This segment always asks what from the previous Sunday's message stood out to you. It's a good idea to fill it out when you're listening to the message.
 - For Weeks 2-6, there's a second question under this category that will ask you how the previous week's Revive the World project went.
- Develop Relationships
 - This segment focuses on reading scripture and giving you the opportunity to answer questions that are designed to help you understand different perspectives of the scripture.
 - o Discuss these questions in your group.
 - o There are four days of scripture readings and questions for each week.
 - Questions vary in type, depth, and challenge. It's okay not to have all the answers.
 - Each day ends with a Prayer Exercise. Prayer Exercises are a way to apply what you learned that day into prayer. Group leaders will guide you through at least one Prayer Exercise each time you meet.
- Revive the World
 - This segment focuses on taking the main point from the week and applying it into action in some format.
 - In weeks 2-6, you'll be asked about your experience applying the Revive the World activity from the previous week.
 - Some activities will be individual, others will be for pairs or your whole small group.

Week 1



Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

Develop Relationships:

<u>Day 1:</u>

Read: Romans 13:1-8

A. What do you feel is the purpose of the government?

В.	What does this passage tell you about those in authority?
C.	What are the two reasons for submitting to the government listed in verse 5? Which one do you think you are most closely aligned to?
D.	We are to owe nothing to anyone, except this (see Mark 12:29-31)? What is it? How do you fulfill the law?
su	ayer Exercise: Prayerfully contemplate today's passage and the connection between bmitting to our government and fulfilling the law through love. Write down what comes to u during your prayer time.

<u>Day 2:</u>

Read: Luke 20:20-26

A.	Why were the teachers of the law and the chief priests trying to trick Jesus? (See verses 17-19) How does that remind you of politics today?
В.	How does Jesus' answer to the Jews affect how you feel about paying taxes?
C.	How do we know what we give to Caesar (our government) and what to give to God? (SecRomans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17)
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Think about all of the ways that our tax money is used for good. Go to God with a grateful heart and pray for blessing on the use of those funds.

<u>Da</u>	<u>ау 3:</u>
Re	ad: Titus 3:1-2
A.	What commands are in these two short verses?
B.	Given our volatile political climate, which of these commands listed do you find the most difficult to follow?
C.	In what ways can you exercise your "be peaceful and considerate" muscle when you encounter those who are on the opposite side of the political spectrum from you? How can you still be peaceful and considerate when the person you're encountering isn't exhibiting those traits?

<u>Prayer Exercise:</u> Refer back to question B. What command did you find the most difficult to follow. Find a scripture to help support you as you work towards growing in that area.

<u>Day 4:</u>

Read: Matthew 6:9-13

Α.	What does this prayer teach us about God? What attributes about God do you discover in this prayer?
3.	Describe what you think God's 'kingdom come' on earth might look like. How might Jesus praying for a God's kingdom be considered political?
C.	How might praying "God's will be done" affect your participation in politics? What issues do you think are important to God?
Ο.	The Lord's Prayer invites us to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others. Are there things for which our nation needs to be forgiven?

<u>Prayer Exercise:</u> Pray each line of the Lord's Prayer with our nation in mind or write your own prayer for our nation using the Lord's Prayer as a model.

--OR--

Ultimately, this prayer, the Lord's Prayer, asks for God's kingdom to come to be on this earth. We know that our world is imperfect and no human being will ever be able to build a kingdom that could compare to God's. We are designed to long for a perfect government, and we are each trying to create it when we vote, when we express our political views and when we look to elected leaders to lead us. We cannot create that perfect government, only God can. Today thank God that we get to be a part of His perfect kingdom. Pray for patience with our peers and elected leaders.

Revive the World:

This week, commit to finding out more about each candidate's views on the topics you feel are important to God, so you can be actively involved in bringing about God's kingdom here on earth.

Group Prayer Requests:

Week 2



Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Describe what it was like to research different candidates' platforms.

Develop Relationships:

--OR--

gifts in love.

	<u>Day 1:</u> Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7		
A.	What gifts listed are useless without love? What difference does love make in these tasks?		
B.	What good have you tried to accomplish without love as your motive? How did that turn out?		
C.	Which of the characteristics listed in verses 4-7 do you need to work on to love more fully? What step can you take today to love better?		
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Review the list of what is useless without love - rewrite that list in modern-day terms. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you lead with love in your daily activities.		

Consider your spiritual gifts, examine where you could better exercise that gift through love. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal actions you can take to better use your

Day 2:

Read: 1 Peter 3:8-12

A. What do you think Peter means when he says to 'be like-minded' or to 'live in harmony?'
Do we need to agree on everything?
B. How can you live in harmony with someone, even when you don't agree with them? In what ways are you blessed even if you suffer for what is right?
C. What topics bring you to heated discussions? How can you have healthy discussions on topics that are really important to you? (Remember: the internet is not the place to have healthy discussions!) (Leader's note: isidewith.com has a list of hot political issues for the 2020 elections; don't host a debate on these items, but instead recognize that we each have different passions)

<u>Prayer Exercise</u>: It is tempting to pray hurtful words and actions to those who do or say mean things to us. Today, spend time praying for patience to respond in a Christ-like manner when conflict arises.

<u>Day 3:</u>

Read: 2 Timothy 2:22-26

A.	In today's political climate, is it easy or hard to follow the instructions in this passage? Why or why not? In what ways can you practice following these instructions?
B.	What guidance is given here for working with people that we oppose/disagree with? Leader Note: this doesn't mean that everyone you disagree with is "working for the devil" Sometimes good Christians disagree.
C.	How open are you to the idea that you might be the one who needs to repent? How difficult is it for you to say "I might be wrong"?
D.	What is the desired outcome of Paul's instructions here?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : In Matthew 7, we learn that it is important to examine ourselves before policing other people. Consider where you need to be patient and open to learning, repenting, and moving in a new direction.

Day 4:

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

A. Based on this passage, what do you think was going on in the Philippian church? What kind of conflict do you think they were having?

B. What does Paul say would make his joy complete?

C. How can you look towards your own interests and simultaneously the interests of others? How does balancing your interests and the interests of others shape your voting decisions?

<u>Prayer Exercise</u>: As Christians, we are to have the same humble mind-set as Jesus to be an encouragement and comforter. Prayerfully consider ways you can follow Jesus' example in comforting and encouraging those around you. If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, what is holding you back? If you're ready to make that commitment, spend time in prayer offering your life to Jesus and asking him to come into your heart. Your small group leader or Pastor James can help you with any questions you may have.

Revive the World:

Make an effort this week to be unified with your small group. Find an activity to serve together that brings the love of Christ to our community. Use the attached list to serve alongside each other.

Group Prayer Requests:

Week 3



Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share how you saw God working as you served alongside your group members.

Develop Relationships:

involvement in our community?

<u>Day 1:</u> Read: Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 25:31-46		
A.	What three things does the Lord require of his people (Micah 6:8)? Explain them in your own words.	
В.	How do you see justice, mercy, and faith in your political candidates? (Example: One may look at the death penalty as a way to see a candidate's views on justice.)	
C.	Describe the difference between the people labeled as "sheep" and "goats".	
D.	What does verse 40 mean to you?	
E.	How can you apply these verses to your involvement in the community? And, our church's	

	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Pray God would show you where your actions towards others might be lacking mercy, justice, or humility and ask Him to change your heart.
Re	ad: Zechariah 7:9-10, Luke 11:42 Read Zechariah 7:9-10. What groups of people does God seem especially concerned abou in these verses? Who would these people be today?
В.	What group do you feel passionate about serving?
C.	Read Luke 11:42. What are the Pharisees being chastised for here?
D.	How does the church focus on trivial things, neglecting the important issues? Our government?

<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Ask God to fill your heart with a desire for justice, mercy and
compassion for all people (including those squirrely politicians you may disagree with).
Ask God to open your eyes, ears, heart, and mind to better help the widow, the fatherless,
the foreigners, the poor, and the people you would include today.

Day 3:

Read: Philippians 2:12-18

A. What do you think Paul means when he says "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"? Leader Note: This is not salvation by works, but the continual process of sanctification to become like Jesus. "Fear and trembling": The proper sense of awe and responsibility; humility and dependence (Phillips Translation)

B. While you work, what are you to refrain from doing (see v. 14)? Why?

C. How does this passage shape the way you respond to people who disagree with you or want to solve a problem differently than you?

	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Think of people who have shown you how to disagree gracefully. How,
	then, can you grow to do everything without arguing and grumbling? Ask God to help you learn, grow, and become more like Him and shine like stars.
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A.	What is God's instruction on treating the poor?
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В.	How do you treat those less fortunate than you?
C.	When have you been on the receiving end of help? What was the person's attitude that
	helped you? How did it make you feel?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Think about people who have helped you meet physical or financial
	needs and/or people you have been able to help. Thank God for his provision and ask him to show you how you can bless someone this week.

Revive the World:

Look at the Day 4 prayer exercise. Take action on blessing someone this week and be prepared to share with your group how it went.

Group Prayer Requests:

Week 4



Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share with your group what it was like to bless someone this week.

Develop Relationships:

to be more Christ-like in nature.

<u>Day 1:</u> Read: Luke 10:25-37		
A.	What excuses do you think the Priest and Levite might have made not to help the man? When are you tempted to behave like the Priest and the Levite?	
B.	What do you think Jesus was teaching by telling a story about a Samaritan helping a Jewish man?	
C.	How have you helped a 'neighbor' through a health crisis or how has someone helped you?	
	Prayer Exercise : Examine your heart. Do you respond more like the Priest and Levite or	

are you a Good Samaritan. Today ask God to help shape your responses to those in need

<u>Day 2:</u>

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

۹.	How does knowing your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit inspire you to make changes that will make your temple/home healthier?
3.	What goals might we set to make improvements to our temple: Physically? Mentally? Spiritually?
C.	What do you think honoring God with your body looks like?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Pick a goal from Question B to work on this week. Ask a friend to pray for you and hold you accountable.

Day	3	
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Read:	Romans	6:11-14
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A.	What does the word 'reign' mean?
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B. If we allow sin to reign in our bodies, what are some ways it can harm us physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally? Note: This is not to say all illness is caused by sin.

C. What does not being under law, but under grace mean to you?

<u>Prayer Exercise</u>: Rejoice! If you offer yourself to God in Christ, you are no longer a slave to sin or even to the law, but instead ruled by grace! Today write a note, poem, or song telling God why you're grateful for grace.

Day 4:

Read: Isaiah 53:1-6

NOTE: This passage is a prophecy that foretells of the coming Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy during his earthly ministry when he bore our punishment, dying on the cross for us.

A. How do you see these verses being fulfilled in Jesus' coming to earth?

B. How does it make you feel that Jesus endured that kind of treatment?

C. What type of healing is verse 5 referring to? Have you received that healing? Who do you know that needs to hear about it?

Prayer Exercise: Read these verses inserting your name for the pronouns referring to Israel. Offer a prayer of gratitude and praise to Jesus for his willingness to go to the cross and suffer so that you might have spiritual healing and life eternal.

Revive the World:

Ask God to give you the opportunity to be a good neighbor this week and take action. Be prepared to share with your small group how it went.

Group Prayer Requests:

Week 5



Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share with your small group what it was like to be a good neighbor this week.

Develop Relationships:

	n <u>y 1:</u> ad: Luke 21:1-4
A.	How would you feel if Jesus was watching you make your offering?
B.	What is the difference between the attitude of the widow and the attitude of the rich?
C.	If you saw someone like the widow, down to their last two cents, how would you try to help?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Consider the widow. Where do you give everything you have? Where do you hold back or only give out of obligation? Spend time in prayer today asking God to help you have a spirit of generosity toward others.

<u>Day 2:</u>

Read: Matthew 19:16-30

A.	What is telling about the rich young man's attitude about eternal life? In what ways do you relate to the young man?
В.	Is Jesus saying the wealthy cannot be saved?
C.	How can the attitude of Christians be like Peters? How do we fall into the rewards trap?
D.	What in your life have you had to give up to follow Jesus? Was it easy or difficult?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Ask God to reveal to you if there is any part of your life that you're holding back from Him. "If Jesus asked me to give up that would be a stumbling block for me." Then ask God to help you trust Him with it.

<u>Day 3:</u>

Read·	Matthew	20.1-16
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- A. How would you have felt about your wage...?
 - a. ...Being one of the first workers hired?

b. ...Being one of the last workers hired?

B. Do you feel like the owner was wrong in how he paid the workers? Why or why not?

C. What do you see as issues today regarding pay inequality?

D. What does verse 16 mean to you?
<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Think about a time when someone showed you unexpected generosity and thank God for that personand let that person know again how meaningful that was to you. Pray about how God wants you to show generosity.
<u>Day 4:</u> Read: James 2:14-24
A. What are these verses telling us about faith?
B. How have you seen faith expressed in the deeds of others recently? How do you see faith expressed in the action/programs of Christ Church? Where do you feel we could do more?
C. How have you seen your faith grow as you put it into action?

<u>Prayer Exercise</u>: Spend time in conversation and prayer with God. Examine your balance between faith and action. Ask God to help your faith bubble into action that brings Him glory.

Revive the World:

This week, we looked at stories of money, entitlement, wages, and the balance between faith and action. Where might you make a difference? Take an active role in engaging in ministry to the impoverished this week.

Group Prayer Requests:

Week 6



Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Where did you find a place to serve the impoverished last week?

Develop:
<u>Day 1:</u> Read: Luke 4:16-32
A. What five purposes for Jesus (and subsequently his church) are listed in the passage? How does Jesus fulfill these?
B. How do these purposes sound like campaign promises? What promises do candidates make today? How are many of these fulfilled?
C. What did Jesus say after he read from the scroll? How did Jesus fulfill these prophecies?
<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Consider the five purposes listed in the passage. How do those purposes

move and stir your heart? Pray daily this week for God's wisdom and discernment in selecting candidates that connect with these purposes in our upcoming election.

<u>Day 2:</u>

Read:	1	Tim	othy	2.1-8	Į
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A.	For who does Paul call the church to pray? Who would these people be in our country?
В.	What reasons did Paul give for praying for those in authority?
C.	What does it look like to pray for a leader you agree with? What about the one you disagree with? What things are similar or dissimilar?
D.	What does a mediator do? How is Christ the believer's mediator? How can we as Christians be mediators in these unsettled times?
	<u>Prayer Exercise</u> : Today, spend time in prayer for the leadership of our city, county, state and country. Pray for God's will to be done through them.

Day 3:

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-14

NOTE: Jeremiah, a prophet, is writing to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. Exile means they've been taken out of their homeland and planted into a foreign country and culture.

A. What is the essence of what Jeremiah is saying?

B. As Christians we're citizens of the kingdom of God; how does this encourage us to live while we're in exile on this earth?

C. When have you seen God bring good out of a bad situation? How does this bring you hope during this chaotic election season?

<u>Prayer Exercise</u>: If you are feeling anxious about our nation's problems, find a verse that gives you peace and memorize it. Say it as a prayer when you are feeling anxious. Some examples include: Jeremiah 29:11, Philippians 4:6-7, John 14:27, Joshua 1:9

<u>Day 4:</u>

Read: Romans 13:1-14	,

A. How do these verses show the importance of getting the right people in office? B. How can voting responsibly show love for our neighbors? (v. 8-10) C. What do you feel is the purpose of government? How has this study shaped the way you feel about the command in Romans 13:1? **Prayer Exercise**: Spend time in prayer asking God to help you know how to cast your vote.

Revive the World:

1 Timothy 2:8 says "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." Share our prayer folder with friends and neighbors and ask them to join in you praying for our nation, individually and corporately.

Discuss what you group will do/study next.

Group Prayer Requests: