

Let Christians vote as though they were not voting

Voting is like marrying and crying and laughing and buying. We should do it, but only as if we were not doing it. That's because "the present form of this world is passing away" and, in God's eyes, "the time has grown very short." Here's the way Paul puts it: The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Let's take these one at a time and compare them to voting.

1. "Let those who have wives live as though they had none."

This doesn't mean move out of the house, don't have sex, and don't call her Honey. Earlier in this chapter Paul says, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights" (1 Corinthians 7:3). He also says to love her the way Christ loved the church, leading and providing and protecting (Ephesians 5:25-30). It means this: Marriage is momentary. It's over at death, and there is no marriage in the resurrection. Wives and husbands are second priorities, not first. Christ is first. Marriage is for making much of him.

It means: If she is exquisitely desirable, beware of desiring her more than Christ. And if she is deeply disappointing, beware of being hurt too much.

This is temporary only a brief lifetime. Then comes the never-disappointing life which is life indeed.

So it is with voting. We should do it. But only as if we were not doing it.

Its outcomes do not give us the greatest joy when they go our way, and they do not demoralize us when they don't. Political life is for making much of Christ whether the world falls apart or holds together.

2. "Let those who mourn [do so] as though they were not mourning."

Christians mourn with real, deep, painful mourning, especially over losses loss of those we love, loss of health, loss of a dream. These losses hurt. We cry when we are hurt. But we cry as though not crying. We mourn knowing we have not lost something so valuable we cannot rejoice in our mourning. Our losses do not incapacitate us. They do not blind us to the possibility of a fruitful future serving Christ. The Lord gives and takes away. But he remains blessed. And we remain hopeful in our mourning.

So it is with voting. There are losses. We mourn. But not as those who have no hope. We vote and we lose, or we vote and we win. In either case, we win or lose

as if we were not winning or losing. Our expectations and frustrations are modest. The best this world can offer is short and small.

The worst it can offer has been predicted in the book of Revelation. And no vote will hold it back. In the short run, Christians lose (Revelation 13:7).

In the long run, we win (Revelation 21:4).

3. "Let those who rejoice [do so] as though they were not rejoicing."

Christians rejoice in health (James 5:13) and in sickness (James 1:2). There are a thousand good and perfect things that come down from God that call forth the feeling of happiness. Beautiful weather. Good friends who want to spend time with us. Delicious food and someone to share it with. A successful plan. A person helped by our efforts.

But none of these good and beautiful things can satisfy our soul. Even the best cannot replace what we were made for, namely, the full experience of the risen Christ (John 17:24). Even fellowship with him here is not the final and best gift. There is more of him to have after we die (Philippians 1:21-23) and even more after the resurrection. The best experiences here are foretastes. The best sights of glory are through a mirror dimly. The joy that rises from these previews does not and should not rise to the level of the hope of glory. These pleasures will one day be as though they were not. So we rejoice remembering this joy is a foretaste, and will be replaced by a vastly better joy.

So it is with voting. There are joys. The very act of voting is a joyful statement that we are not under a tyrant. And there may be happy victories.

But the best government we get is a foreshadowing. Peace and justice are approximated now. They will be perfect when Christ comes. So our joy is modest. Our triumphs are short-lived and shot through with imperfection. So we vote as though not voting.

4. "Let those who buy [do so] as though they had no goods."

Let Christians keep on buying while this age lasts. Christianity is not withdrawal from business. We are involved, but as though not involved.

Business simply does not have the weight in our hearts that it has for many.

All our getting and all our having in this world is getting and having things that are not ultimately important. Our car, our house, our books, our computers, our heirlooms we possess them with a loose grip. If they are taken away, we say that in a sense we did not have them. We are not here to possess. We are here to lay up treasures in heaven.

This world matters. But it is not ultimate. It is the stage for living in such a way to show that this world is not our God, but that Christ is our God. It is the stage for using the world to show that Christ is more precious than the world.

So it is with voting. We do not withdraw. We are involved but as if not involved. Politics does not have ultimate weight for us. It is one more stage for acting out the truth that Christ, and not politics, is supreme.

5. "Let those who deal with the world [do so] as though they had no dealings with it."

Christians should deal with the world. This world is here to be used. Dealt with. There is no avoiding it. Not to deal with it is to deal with it that way. Not to weed your garden is to cultivate a weedy garden. Not to wear a coat in Minnesota is to freeze to deal with the cold that way. Not to stop when the light is red is to spend your money on fines or hospital bills and deal with the world that way. We must deal with the world.

But as we deal with it, we don't give it our fullest attention. We don't ascribe to the world the greatest status. There are unseen things that are vastly more precious than the world. We use the world without offering it our whole soul. We may work with all our might when dealing with the world, but the full passions of our heart will be attached to something higher Godward purposes. We use the world, but not as an end in itself. It is a means. We deal with the world in order to make much of Christ.

So it is with voting. We deal with the system. We deal with the news. We deal with the candidates. We deal with the issues. But we deal with it all as if not dealing with it. It does not have our fullest attention. It is not the great thing in our lives. Christ is. And Christ will be ruling over his people with perfect supremacy no matter who is elected and no matter what government stands or falls. So we vote as though not voting.

By all means vote. But remember: "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

Voting with you, as though not voting,