Reece Frith 1 – 11 – 26

"It's Sunday but There's an Elections Coming!"

1 Timothy 2:1 – 4:

> "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

1 Peter 2:11 – 17:

> "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.
> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of the foolish.
> Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.
> Show proper respect to everyone, love your fellow believers, fear God, honour the emperor"

Romans 13:1 – 5:

> "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.
> The authorities that exist have been established by God.
> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.
> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.
> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.
> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.
> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.
> Give to everyone what you owe: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour."

So… this morning that's our readings.
And next Saturday is the official date of the 2026 New Zealand election.
Having said that, who's voted already?
I'm a bit of a traditionalist and so I'll be voting on Saturday – anyone else like that?
Also who here are the political junkies? When it comes to elections you enjoy the intrigue and the surprises.

There have been 54 general elections since 1853.
Tell the person next you how many elections you've voted in?

It used to be said, growing up I heard this a bit, that you don't talk about two things: politics and religion.
That time is well and truly gone, especially in the sphere of social media.
There is a lot of talk about religion, about the Christian and about God.
And with politics it is the same.

It also has to be said, that when it comes to Scripture, that sooo much could be said about politics and governments and voting.
So what I share morning isn't in any the final or definitive word on the subject.

It may also be this morning that some of us are suffering from election fatigue.

If we you are, I do ask for a bit of grace for just fifty minutes to an hour... ☺

So when you come to the texts the first thing that has to be said is that Paul and Peter's letters were written in a settings vastly different from our own.
There was no representative democratic voting system.
There were not multiple parties to vote for.
There weren't different leaders vying for your support.
The emperor was the supreme ruler with various powers delegated to officials in different provinces.

However, the undergirding principles are the same.

So what I thought I would share today is a number of thoughts when it comes to politics, governments and voting.

Maybe what I'll share with you isn't new or earth-shattering but I hope it will stimulate wider discussion on this area.

First and foremost, over every other consideration, ***We live under the kingship of God.***

Jesus never formed a political party, adopted a political program, or organized a political protest.
He took no steps to influence the policies of Caesar, Pilate, or Herod.
On the contrary, he renounced a political career.

However, kingship language is all throughout the gospels.
The Gospels contain 76 different kingdom sayings.

When Jesus is talking about the kingdom of God as good news what is He talking about?

Where I am up to is this: when Jesus is talking about the kingdom he is talking about himself.

The kingdom has a king and Jesus is saying he is the king in the kingdom.

In other words Jesus was saying the world desperately needs a new ruler and I am it.

He is the world's true King and one day the kingdom will one day established over all the earth.
It's not currently geographical but one it will be.

As King, Jesus rules and he reigns, and he establishes His rule in lives and hearts of people.

The people of the kingdom are those who have bowed their hearts and bent their knees to King Jesus.

It's a radical change in direction, affection and course correction centred on King Jesus.

God rules through King Jesus, and King Jesus' citizens live under him.

The Kingdom of God Jesus proclaimed and inaugurated was a radically new and different social organization.
It had values and standards challenged those of the old and fallen community.
In this way his teaching had "political" implications.
It offered an alternative to the status quo.
His kingship, moreover, was perceived as a challenge to Caesar's, and he was therefore accused of sedition.

The kingdom project has always been the people of God ordering their life together in accordance with God's ultimate will for creation as an example for the rest of the world.

We trust in the sovereignty of God
God is sovereign.
God is the true King.
Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth,

So when we read Romans 13 verse 1:

> "…there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."

We have to hold it in tension with verses like Daniel 2 verse 20:

> "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever;
> wisdom and power are his.
> He changes times and seasons;
> he deposes kings and raises up others."

Both Peter and Paul paint an idealised picture of governments.
Paul teaches in Romans that the *institution* of government is ordained by God to maintain social order and restrain evil, acting as "God's servant for your good".
In other words, these are governments acting in accordance with God's intentions.
Peter also paints a similar picture.

Paul and Peter cannot mean God personally appoints or endorses every tyrant (such as Nero or modern dictators), nor does it mean state authority is never to be resisted.

However when you read these passages you immediately come up against these verses:
Peter states:

> "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors…"

Paul in Romans is very similar:

> "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."[1]

When point to these verses the inevitably mention Nazi Germany.
(You could add to that the Soviet Union and modern day North Korea or Afghanistan).
And let's be honest, it was tested when the mandates were introduced.

So the question you have to ask, is this:

"What are the limits in submitting to governments?"

How would you answer that?
If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

Where I am up to is this:

> If the government forbids us to do that which God commands,

or

> requires us to do that which God forbids, we must obey God rather than human beings.

That still requires wisdom.
Faithful Christians have disagreed at times on what that looks like.

For one, ***we recognise that no political party perfectly represents the values of the God's kingdom.***

We are remind ourselves that no leader or party is perfect.
All people are fallen and therefore all political parties are fallen.
That means they will also disappoint us.
So when then have to ask, which policies, candidates and coalitions best serve the common good, within the limits of what politics can achieve?
Answering that sometimes takes a lot of thought.

[1] Romans 13:1

It is complicated, because all political parties tend to have some mix of good and bad.

Christians will differ over the weight they give particular issues, and no ideological package automatically contains all the Christian answers.

One of the things that remains true is the Bible is concerned about how to live under imperfect governments.

How then do we vote?
Not *who* do you vote for but as people who follow Jesus what guides our voting?

What would you say?

Some examples. Do parties and policies…

– express any concern for the inherent value of all life, especially the young, the elderly and the unborn?

- appear driven by ideologies counter to biblical and biological reality?

– support the extension of euthanasia?

– favour more funding for palliative care?

– want to protect freedoms of religion, conscience and expression?

- want to limit free speech and/or compel certain types of speech?

– support the decriminalisation of harmful drugs?

– show reflect love, generosity and a desire to significantly help all those who struggle with poverty

– reflect care for God's creation, with well thought through, responsible environmental policies?

- value and uphold the place of marriage and families?

No doubt there are more.

We pray

Paul urges the Timothy and the church to pray for all those in authority remembering that at that time they were under a form of government that had no say in creating.

We not only pray that governments govern well but also for our own good.

> He says, we pray so "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"

Christians are to pray for governments – even ones we vehemently disagree with – so we are in no way hindered from living as God wants us to live – peaceful and quiet lives, not agitated by the government or civil strife, and in godliness and holiness.
"Godliness and holiness" means with worship of God and holding onto God's standards of morality.

Then he goes on to say

> "This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

The ultimate object of our prayers for nation leaders is so that we can to worship freely and morality can flourish *and* evangelism can happen without interruption.

The duty of the state is to keep the peace,
to protect its citizens from whatever would disturb it,
to preserve law and order in just and fair manner,
and to punish evil and promote good,
so that within such a stable society the church is free to worship God,
obey his laws and spread his gospel.

The church is to pray for the state.