

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor
July 5, 2009
“Living in Two Kingdoms”

Matthew 22:15-22 (The Message)

¹⁵⁻¹⁷That's when the Pharisees plotted a way to trap him into saying something damaging. They sent their disciples, with a few of Herod's followers mixed in, to ask, "Teacher, we know you have integrity, teach the way of God accurately, are indifferent to popular opinion, and don't pander to your students. So tell us honestly: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸⁻¹⁹Jesus knew they were up to no good. He said, "Why are you playing these games with me? Why are you trying to trap me? Do you have a coin? Let me see it." They handed him a silver piece.

²⁰"This engraving—who does it look like? And whose name is on it?"

²¹They said, "Caesar."

"Then give Caesar what is his, and give God what is his."

²²The Pharisees were speechless. They went off shaking their heads.

As we gather in worship today, we remember that morning almost 2000 years ago, when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead ... which was a Declaration of Independence from sin, death, and the power of the Devil (as Luther said).

That event followed years of human history which is captured for us in the Book of Faith which we call the Bible ... which tells the story of God intervening in human history for a redemptive purpose ... rooted in the Patriarchs Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebekah, Jacob and his several wives, Joseph and his coat of many colors, the welcome to Egypt which turned into bondage as slaves ... the Exodus with Moses ... the Conquest with Joshua ... the 12 tribes ... the United Kingdom under Saul and David and Solomon ... the division into the Northern Kingdom until it fell to Assyria in 722BC ... and the Southern Kingdom until it was overcome by the Babylonians in 586BC ... the Exile in Babylon ... until King Cyrus of Persia invites the remnant to return to their torn land about 30 years later ... that rather silent "intertestamental period" until the silence is broken by angels singing to shepherds outside of Bethlehem and astrologers following a star to Jerusalem ... and the baby who was born became a rabbi who called 12 men of miscellaneous backgrounds to follow him ... and their journey ends under a cross where their teacher has just been crucified and as far as the world was concerned "HERE ENDETH THE STORY" ... if it just weren't for that morning when God declared that men and women are freed from the power of sin, death, and the power of the devil.

As we gather in worship here in the United States of America, we are in the middle of a weekend in which our nation is remembering that day back 1776 ... 233 years ago ... that

event falls short of the cosmic dimensions of Christ's resurrection, but in this one of the seven continents it is extremely important ... it also followed a series of events:

June 7 - Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, receives Richard Henry Lee's resolution urging Congress to declare independence.

June 11 - Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston appointed to a committee to draft a declaration of independence. American army retreats to Lake Champlain from Canada.

June 12-27 - Jefferson, at the request of the committee, drafts a declaration, of which only a fragment exists. Jefferson's clean, or "fair" copy, the "original Rough draught," is reviewed by the committee. Both documents are in the manuscript collections of the Library of Congress.

June 28 - A fair copy of the committee draft of the Declaration of Independence is read in Congress.

July 1-4 - Congress debates and revises the Declaration of Independence.

July 2 - Congress declares independence as the British fleet and army arrive at New York.

July 4 - Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence in the morning of a bright, sunny, but cool Philadelphia day. John Dunlap prints the Declaration of Independence. These prints are now called "Dunlap Broadside." Twenty-four copies are known to exist, two of which are in the Library of Congress. One of these was Washington's personal copy.

And that is what our nation remembers today. This weekend is about a document ... a piece of paper ... which described an action that a group of people felt that had to make ... for those living in an area which future explorers would discover laid between two oceans ... at its widest point about 3,000 miles ... this day became the first day of the rest of its life ... which eventually resulted in The United States Constitution, which was adopted on September 17, 1787, by the Constitutional Convention (or Constitutional Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and later ratified by conventions in each U.S. state in the name of "The People"; it has since been amended twenty-seven times, the first ten amendments being known as the Bill of Rights.

This weekend we remember Patriots, Pioneers, and Politicians ... Colonists fleeing suppressive governments in Europe to find freedom for religion in a new world ... settlers heading west to unknown destinations ... senators and congresspersons who write the laws ... judges who test those laws ... presidents who support and protect those laws ... police and military personnel who enforce those laws ... and every citizen who has ever lived or is currently living who has benefited from the wisdom that those laws contain.

And, as we gather here in this place, we also remember that what happened here in 1776 was affected by what happened in Germany in 1517 when a German monk who was overcome by the power of what had happened on that day almost 2000 years ago talked about "two kingdoms."

[Martin Luther's](#) book, *On Secular Authority*, was an ardent expression of the principle of Liberty of Conscience. "Liberty of conscience" is the principle that forbids human authorities from coercing people's spiritual beliefs. In this book, Luther insisted that God requires voluntary religious beliefs.

Compelled or coerced faith is insincere and must never be allowed. Luther insisted that “liberty of conscience” was one of [Jesus Christ](#)’s principles.

According to Luther, the civil government’s role is simply to keep outward peace in society. The civil government has no business enforcing spiritual laws. “The laws of worldly government extend no farther than to life and property and what is external upon earth,” Luther insisted.

Addressing the question of whether the state should permit its citizens to believe religious views which are [heterodox](#), Luther said, “heresy can never be prevented by force... heresy is a spiritual matter which no iron can strike, no fire burn, no water drown.” In other words, it is folly to legislate and enforce religious beliefs.

Luther’s articulation of the parameters of civil government was a monumental step in the development of the separation of church and state.

He argued for a clear distinction between two separate spheres: civil and spiritual. This is known as the Doctrine of the two kingdoms. The civil sphere deals with man’s physical life in society as he interacts with other human beings; in this, man is subject to human governments. The spiritual sphere deals with man’s soul, which is eternal, and which is subject only to God. The Doctrine of the two kingdoms is articulated by Luther in these terms:

God has ordained the two governments: the spiritual, which by the Holy Spirit under Christ makes Christians and pious people; and the secular, which restrains the unchristian and wicked so that they are obliged to keep the peace outwardly... The laws of worldly government extend no farther than to life and property and what is external upon earth.

For over the soul God can and will let no one rule but himself. Therefore, where temporal power presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God’s government and only misleads and destroys souls. We desire to make this so clear that every one shall grasp it, and that the princes and bishops may see what fools they are when they seek to coerce the people with their laws and commandments into believing one thing or another.

Luther encouraged civil disobedience toward any government which would encroach the line of separation between the civil and the sacred:

We are to be subject to governmental power and do what it bids, as long as it does not bind our conscience but legislates only concerning outward matters.... But if it invades the spiritual domain and constrains the conscience, over which God only must preside and rule, we should not obey it at all but rather lose our necks. Temporal authority and government extend no further than to matters which are external and corporeal.

[James Madison](#), the 4th President of the United States often called the “Father of the Constitution,” explicitly credited [Martin Luther](#) as the theorist who “led the way” in providing the proper distinction between the civil and the ecclesiastical spheres.

[Thomas Jefferson](#), the 3rd President of the United States and the primary drafter of the Declaration of Independence, echoed Luther when he stated “The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others.” Jefferson may not have had Luther specifically in mind, but was perhaps an heir to the Protestant tradition which gave birth to this sentiment.

Two Kingdoms (from Christian Social Responsibility, A Statement of The American Lutheran Church, 1978)

Because God is active both as creator and redeemer, and his love is manifested through both law and gospel, Lutherans speak of two forms of God's rule. Through law and gospel God rules all persons, all of whom are his creatures but some of whom are his saints. Christians live "between the times" in both kingdoms, in the "now" of the fallen creation ruled by the law, and in the "not yet" of the kingdom of God through faith in the gospel.

This Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms underscores both social realism and social responsibility. It underscores social realism with its reminder that no social order can ever be identified with the kingdom of God; Christian love will always need to adjust itself to conditions of a fallen world. But it underscores social responsibility with its reminder that the "left-hand" kingdom, the secular realm, is also God's kingdom; the Christian believer acts in the world as a willing tool of God's preserving and saving purposes.

Care must be taken to distinguish, but not to separate, the kingdom of God from the "kingdom of the world." "Christian" answers cannot be imposed upon the secular realm, nor can any program or strategy be identified with the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, a knowledge of God's righteousness and love should inform and give perspective to the Christian's participation in the secular realm where one's vocation is lived; this is the arena where Christian faith becomes active in love, and where love is engaged in the search for justice.

So today, what he do here in worship in Word and Sacrament is a Declaration of Freedom from Sin, Death, and the Power of the Devil ... and in a few minutes we will make our Declaration of Dependence upon God as we join with one voice in proclaiming our faith in the words of an Apostles' Creed. This is the Kingdom on the Right ...

But everyone lives in a Kingdom on the Left ... we may all wear the same cross, but we do not all salute the same flag. Whatever flag flies over that portion of the earth in which we live is the flag of the Kingdom on the Left ... and today we remember the words that started this experiment called the United States:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all (people) are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among (us), deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that (people) are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.