

### *The Table of Duties*

If you're not sick of political ads yet, just wait. With Wisconsin targeted as a "swing state" in the upcoming election, the "fun" is just beginning. It's going to be a long, long haul from now until November.

What can we do about it?

Some might immediately jump up and say, "Be quiet, Pastor! Politics is not the Church's business!"

It's true that politics is not our primary concern. To us, God has given the task of preaching His Law and Gospel, particularly proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. That is the unique business of the Church, work that we sometimes refer to as the kingdom of God's "right hand."

That said, there is another kingdom over which God also reigns, the kingdom of God's "left hand." This kingdom involves God's governance of this world, which He does through earthly authorities. Some of these authorities are elected, some appointed, some self-appointed (depending on where you live). All are corrupted by sin, for we live in a sinful world, yet all of them receive their authority from God and all remain ultimately under God's control.

As God's people living in this world, we are part of *both* of these kingdoms. Just as members of the Church have responsibilities regarding the Gospel, so too as citizens of our nation we have responsibilities regarding earthly authorities that govern us.

What are those responsibilities?

At the back of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, there's an often-overlooked section entitled "The Table of Duties: Certain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities." Bible passages are listed under various headings, offering Biblical guidance as to how we should treat one another.

So, for example, the first section is addressed "To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers." It cites 1 Timothy 3:2-4, 1 Timothy 3:6, and Titus 1:9. That section corresponds to the one that follows, which is entitled, "What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors," which cites 1 Corinthians 9:14, Galatians 6:6-7, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, and Hebrews 13:17.

The next two sections deal with the "left hand" kingdom. Under "Of Civil Government," Romans 13:1-4 is noted. That corresponds to "Of Citizens," which includes Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:5-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-3, Titus 3:1, and 1 Peter 2:13-14.

While I encourage you to look up all of these passages for yourself (and the rest of the Table of Duties as well), I will cite one particular passage as an initial answer to the question I asked above: "What can we do about it?"

*"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)*

Yes, pray for our leaders, those who are elected and those who wish to be. Pray for those whom they appoint, and those who find ways to appoint themselves into positions of power. Pray that they all may be guided by God's wisdom, and work together according to God's will for the good of all. Pray that His will be done in them and through them, that we all may be blessed in ways pleasing to God. And pray that our citizens act responsibly and wisely as well, as we elect those who will govern us.

May God be pleased in all that we say and do, and bless our land in the journey ahead!