



THE EYES ON THE FUTURE ARE LOOKING BACK AT US AND THEY ARE PRAYING FOR US TO SEE BEYOND OUR OWN TIME. **TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS**
 RELIGION SHOULD PLAY A ROLE TO BRING US PERSPECTIVE: THERE IS A HIGHER IDEAL, A HIGHER PURPOSE IN LIFE. **JAN EGELAND**

Both in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross, Jesus was watching and listening to God. As his disciples fell asleep, he prayed, "Not my will, but thine be done." On the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" We know that even in his greatest hour of pain Jesus' vision was not taken off God.

What will it take for us to have these kinds of eyes - this kind of vision? And how does this all relate to Jesus' humility and reconciliation? Wes Avram writes, "We can live as if we are reconciled, even before our politics catch up, even before we agree...And by so living, we will humble the political for the sake of a new politics, God's politics."

Jesus offered himself humbly, trusting God and extending to others, relying on God's vision. This lesson will ask you to ask yourself if this way of viewing things is applicable and possible in our civic life, and what role the church can have in that vision.

SESSION OBJECTIVES: Consider "God's politics" and discuss unique possibilities the church has in offering a new way. Identify dangers of limiting religion or politics to "hot-button" issues.

Christian Anarchy and Reconciliation - Wesley Avram

1. Name risks in trusting political action to solve problems.
 List religious words or ideas that you have seen become distorted when used in politics.
2. As a group, make a definition of what it would mean to be a "blessing" to a city, rather than simply being "useful."
 What is the difference?

3. Write or draw something that represents the idol of power. Share the idols of power you see that conflict with God in our nation.

4. How would working with a vision of what Jesus has already accomplished change your ideas of the every day?

5. Break into groups of 2 and 3 and brainstorm ways your own faith group can live in the reconciliation that God has accomplished in Christ.

Less Partisan, More Political -Kathleen Kennedy Townsend

FOR THE CHURCH, CHARITY IS NOT A KIND OF WELFARE ACTIVITY WHICH COULD EQUALLY WELL BE LEFT TO OTHERS, BUT IS A PART OF HER NATURE, AN INDISPENSABLE EXPRESSION OF HER VERY BEING. – POPE BENEDICT XVI

1. Name ways in which “private virtue” can prevent religious communities from effectively relating the Gospel to daily life.

2. “We are not just called to avoid evil but to do good.” Have you ever heard anyone say that Christianity is only a list of rules? What did you say to them? What would you say?

a. What can you do to make faith more than “rules” in your own life?

3. Name ways faith, hope and love can be considered political ideals.

Close your time in prayer, meditating on the eyes of Jesus and his vision fixed on God’s power alone.

GOD TAKE AWAY OUR FEAR. HELP US TO STAND IN AWE OF YOUR POWER AND LOVE. HELP US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HEALING AND RECONCILIATION YOU HAVE BROUGHT TO US THROUGH THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS. WE KNOW LIFE IS POSSIBLE THROUGH YOU AND ONLY THROUGH YOU. GUIDE US IN BRINGING THE HEALING AND HOPE YOU HAVE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED INTO OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR LAND. HELP US PUT ASIDE OUR SELFISHNESS AND NEED FOR POWER. BRING US, INSTEAD, INTO YOUR LIFE.

4. Imagine you are someone who is poor or sick. How does the church communicate to you about who God is?

a. Discuss ways your political action is important in how it affects others’ understanding of God.

“Christmas Trees” -Geoffrey Hill

1. Have some read the poem aloud from page 35.

2. Discuss the “flares’ candescent fall” and the themes of sacrifice and praise alluded to in this poem.

3. Compare Bonhoeffer’s action as “quiet but not too quiet” with the image of Jesus born as a powerless child.

Re-engaging Mainline Christianity for Critical Citizenship -Peter Laarman

1. Draw a picture of floorboards at the top of a piece of paper. Underneath those, write or draw those things that could be described, as Laarman puts it, as “the torment that lies groaning beneath of the floorboards of the ‘typical American lifestyle.’”

2. Consider Laarman’s quotation of Susan Thistlethwaite, “If we want to salvage American democracy, we should start by disembedding and re-evangelizing the mainline church.” Define “re-evangelizing” the church.

3. List ways in which the church offers a different narrative or framework than the American lifestyle.

a. What ideals does Laarman suggest are mixed up?
b. What would you add to that list?