

“SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY”
SEPTEMBER 6, 2020 SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Ray Holmberg

HYMN #191 (AH) #42 (OVH) “This is My Father’s World” (congregation remains seated for all singing)

This is my Father’s world,
And to my list’ning ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father’s world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—
His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father’s world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker’s praise.
This is my Father’s world:
He shines in all that’s fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father’s world:
Oh, let me ne’er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father’s world,
The battle is not done:
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and Heav’n be one.

PRAYER

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: Romans 13:4 *“He is God’s servant to do good”* Our parents are God’s gift to us to help us to do what is right and to protect us. ...say for example your authority (parent, boss, governor) asks you to take a day off to rest and relax. Can we obey that? Easy! How about if our authority asks us to do unpleasant jobs like take out the garbage? We should still do it. But what if our authority asks us to answer the phone and tell people that they are not there, to lie for them. What are we to do? Are we to obey or not?

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 13:1-10 *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 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 he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

**SERMON TITLE: "SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY"
Romans 13:1-10; Pastor Tom Olson; September 6, 2020**

QUESTION: What would you do if your boss or your parent had you answer the phone with a lie and tell the person calling that he is not there? This is one of many such issues that makes submitting to authority so difficult. All of us have been trying to weigh all these new government mandates with the wisdom that we have in our own hearts and there comes up some real cognitive dissonance at times. That is why we are having so many church services because there are so many different needs and opinions about what to do. Many, many churches are avoiding the complexity of doing something by doing nothing at all. It is being estimated that up to 20% of churches in America will not survive COVID 19. I think doing nothing is a big mistake. It is better to try and make mistakes rather than "bury our talent" in order to avoid the possibility of making a mistake or assuming responsibility. I am so thankful you let me try things.

COMPLEX: At first glance, it looks like we are called in the Bible to submit to leaders without question. But this illustration from the children's sermon shows how complex the topic is. (*Say for example your authority (parent, boss, governor) asks you to take a day off to rest and relax. Can we obey that? Easy! How about if our authority asks us to do unpleasant jobs like take out the garbage? We should still do it. But what if our authority asks us to answer the phone and tell people that they are not there, to lie for them. What are we to do? Are we to obey or not?)*) Let's look together at this important topic of submission to authority as we work our way through the book of Romans...our three points today are **RULERS, RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

I. RULERS

Romans 13:1 “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

TRY: I think we all agree that the Word of God teaches us to be cooperative with people in authority over us as much as possible. We also know that this command is general but has limits. We can't obey if we are asked to sin against higher authorities. The principle I believe we should follow is ***Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*** We are to cooperate with people in authority as far as our conscience allows us to cooperate. Many years ago, the Amish in Ohio could not in good conscience send their children to the public schools. The Amish fathers were arrested and put in jail until the general public pressured their lawmakers into allowing the Amish to have their own schools.

WHO? So, who are those in authority? In kingdom, it is the King that is in authority and those he appoints. The king has the final authority from a human point of view. We are not a kingdom, so our president, governor and other leaders merely represent the authority. Instead of a King, we have a constitution. (It is appropriate to say that the “King” of the United States is the US Constitution that all judges and politicians swear to defend.) In Wisconsin, 5 out of 9 supreme court justices ruled that some of the governor's mandates were unconstitutional and he had to back down and submit to the written constitution. We are a constitutional republic; we are not a democracy. In a democracy it is ultimately mob rule...the “King” is the majority. There are no protections in a pure democracy for minority rights. The biggest and strongest mob gets to have their way. We are seeing the beginnings of this kind of rule in places like Portland, Kenosha even parts of Minneapolis. The constitution can protect us in court, but it can't stop the mob from attacking us. Ultimately our final authority we must submit to is God and His Word.

KNOW: It behooves us in times like these to know the Word of God and the Constitution of the United States very well so we can appeal to their authority.

II. RULES

Romans 13:3 “For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong.”

RIGHT: Rulers make rules. Teachers make rules. Government agencies and employees make rules. God only requires one thing of a rule made by a human being. It must be RIGHT. So, you are asking me, “Is it right to wear a mask?” The answer to that question is not easy. If you are ill and it helps prevent the spread of water droplets that are infected to others, it would make sense. But if you have a deaf child that needs to “read” your lips it makes no sense. If you have bronchial issues that make the bacteria build up and CO2 inhalation dangerous, it makes no sense. From the point of view of crime reduction through facial recognition it makes no sense. There are two sides to this issue.

VACCINE: What will we do if we have a rule where we are mandated to take a vaccine made from stem cell lines from aborted babies? What if the vaccine has (firefly) marker chemicals in it (Luciferase), or nanoparticle technology, or DNA altering mRNA or aluminum that stays in our brain for life and contributes in the development of dementia? Should we obey those rules?

SING: The Bible tells us to sing to the Lord hundreds of times. What should we do when a rule tells us we can't sing in church to the Lord? What if an athlete asked to bow down to BLM and they only believe in bowing down to God and standing in respect for the flag? What if we are asked to support a non-biblical definition of marriage or morality? There comes a point where we must obey a higher authority than the rules made by man. The Ten Commandments are above any statute in our law books.

PRINCIPLE: We are only to obey our rulers if what they ask us to do is right. I saw a video of an Uber driver pulled over merely because he looked suspicious to the police. Little did the traffic officer know that this man was moonlighting, and his real job was as a lawyer in the courthouse. The police officers tried to get this man to do many things that were not legal. He refused to cooperate and finally told them that he was a lawyer in the courthouse and those officers back peddled, told him to have a nice day and got out of there. Not every authority asks us to do what is right. We obey rules if they are right. If they are wrong, we are to try to change them through correct means.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

Romans 13:6-10 Pay taxes...Give respect...Obey God's commandments...Love one another

RESPECT: As good citizens we are to fulfill our responsibilities, if we like it or not. The inspired author gives us a list here of some responsibilities. They include things like paying taxes we owe, giving respect to those who are in positions of authority, to obey the commandments of God and to love each other. One thing I am trying very hard to do is speak respectfully of those leaders that I disagree with. I am forcing myself to say President Trump, former President Obama, Governor Walz and not just Trump, Obama and Walz.

HONOR: I will never forget the time that a man in the church where I was intern wanted to discuss something about the senior pastor. He asked his son to leave the room. After his boy was gone, he said that he never wanted his children to hear him say anything negative about their pastor. His boy today is a fine young man who is serving the Lord as a Bible translator. That respect for the office of pastor made an impression on me. Another thing I am trying to learn to do is pay my quarterly tax payments without grumbling.

DISOBEDIENCE: Is there a time and place for civil disobedience? Of course, without it, bad rules and bad rulers would have no accountability. It is like my one friend who is really into politics said to me recently, "You have to force politicians to do the right thing." Wealthy entities can lobby and bribe, but regular citizens must find ways to express themselves without the advantage of money. For the Amish fathers it was willingness to go to jail for the sake of the education of their children. This caused public outcry and forced politicians to listen to the people rather than the public-school officials and National Education Association.

CONSCIENCE: There is a Bible verse that calls on us to follow our conscience in these areas. Different Christians will come to different conclusions about masks, vaccines, shutting down small business, and singing in church. The verse that is this the real test for these issues of conscience, *James 4:17 "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."* This is not "*each man doing what is right in his own eyes.*" It is coming to serious, personal conclusions in areas where sincere Christians disagree. It is our responsibility to wrestle it out and then follow our convictions respectfully but without apology.

CONCLUSION

So, what should we do when authorities ask us to do something:

1. Obey if it is not against your conscience.
2. Get to know our laws, constitution and God's Word so you know the right thing to do.
3. Refuse to obey if the authority is wrong and appeal to a higher authority. Like Paul said to the judge, "I appeal to Caesar."
4. Always have a good and respectful attitude and spirit.

If we do these things, we will be a good testimony and a good citizen. May God give us the grace to do the right thing no matter what the cost. Amen

HYMN #557 (AH) #87 (OVH) “Nothing but the Blood of Jesus”

**What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

Refrain:

**Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

**For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

Refrain

**Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

Refrain

**This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

HOLY COMMUNION & LORD’S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

DOXOLOGY: *(To the tune of Edelweiss) May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.*

POSTLUDE: Ray Holmberg