

The Politics of Jesus (4 of 7) Small Group Discussion Questions

SUNDAY WORSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The global pandemic COVID-19 has forced us to adjust and adapt how we do church and stay connected to one another as a congregation. We're not closed as a church, we're just doing church differently! So, please stay connected to the body at Grantham Church. Join our congregation for worship online at 10:30 am each Sunday morning. Follow the worship liturgy and watch our [Vimeo](#) videos at granthamchurch.org/liturgy.

As usual, the sermons will be posted to the [recent sermons page](#) on our website and at the [Grantham Church Podcast](#) the following day, along with the small group discussion questions under Worship Resources. Thank you for engaging with us online!

Sunday, October 18th 2020



Sermon Title: The Patience & Empathy of Exiles

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:9-21; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Sermon Focus: The early church did not see themselves as the moral guardians of society or try to impose their will on the world. They had no political power, yet they turned the empire upside down. How did they do it? They faithfully lived out the Messianic agenda of Jesus as citizens of the Kingdom. They trusted God to work in his time. Listen as Pastor David invites us to embrace the patience and empathy of exiles.

1. Pastor David began his message by showing a movie clip from *Paul: Apostle of Christ* (2018). A young man named Cassius wanted to fight, free Luke and Paul from prison, and revolt against Nero. A young woman says, "Christ called us to care for the world, not rule it." Aquila ends the argument by saying, "If any of you take up arms, you have no place in this community." What do you think about this scene? Do you believe the American church is committed to Christ in this way?
2. Reflect on how the early church was despised in the Roman world:
 - Not swearing & pledging to Caesar
 - Refusing to glorify violence & war
 - Having high ethical & moral standards
 - Denouncing lust, greed & materialism
 - Valuing all life (the unborn, the poor, women, widows, the elderly, etc.)
 - Rejecting the gods of Rome to worship a crucified criminal as the one *true* God
 - Rumors due to novelty & secrecy

How does our faith compare with that of the first Christians?

3. Read Romans 12:9-21 together. Paul contrasts the church (agents of love) with the state (agents of wrath) in Romans 13. Also, we can hear echoes of Jesus' teachings in Paul's words. How does this passage of Scripture speak to you?
4. Reflect on the radical love of the early church. What challenges and/or inspires you?
 - They welcomed everyone to the table, regardless of gender, social status, etc.
 - They took up regular collections for widows, the poor, & prisoners
 - They took in abandoned babies, orphans, & unwanted children
 - They loved those who opposed their faith & values—to the point of death!
 - They cared for the sick during the 15-year "Plague of Cyprian" (c. AD 250)
5. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 together. Connect and apply Peter's words to our own socio-political and cultural context. What might the Spirit want to say to the church in America through this passage? How ought this apply to our situation today? What does it look like to live as "aliens and exiles" in a post-Christian America?
6. Reflect and respond to this quote that Pastor David used in his sermon:
"Christendom tries to control morality through civil means because they have failed to uphold the truth in their own assemblies. They have diluted the Gospel and rendered themselves savorless salt. Now they turn to human government to do what the church should have done through Christian influence."
Michael S. Martin, *Cup & Cross: An Introduction to Anabaptist History*