

FAITH AND POLITICS

A FIVE-WEEK SERMON SERIES

#3: GOD ON OUR SIDE...OR, WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?



1887 cartoon printed in the satirical magazine *Puck*, depicting Republican Senator John Sherman for his use of "bloody shirt" memories of the Civil War

Sermon 3: Main Points

1. Main points from last week: 1) The church is called to be *political* but never *partisan* in its proclamation; we can never identify Christianity with any political ideology, leader or party.
 - a. A fine but bright line; these things are often in tension.
2. Today's question: How can we be passionate about our perception of the gospel's truth, while being open to those who see things differently?
 - a. Twain's *The War Prayer*. Warring parties each believe God's on *their* side.
3. The context of Lincoln's *Second Inaugural Address*
 - a. The North was days away from complete victory.
 - b. Most of the great theologians of the day (E.g. Henry Ward Beecher) saw the north's victory as God's vindication of their cause, and a justification for vengeance.
 - i. Victors "waving the bloody shirt," later became a rally cry for white supremacists
4. Lincoln's understanding of God's providence much more subtle than the theologians.
 - a. Lincoln wrestled with God's will: God can seemingly only be for one side.
 - b. A quote from Lincoln's personal notes: "In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party."
 - c. Astonishing theological idea: responsibility for the war may fall on both sides
5. Lincoln: God has judged both sides, all are suffering. The providence of God is NOT seen in God choosing winners and losers, but in our *compassion* toward one another.
6. An attitude appropriate for the Christian involved with politics: to be passionate enough to act with moral courage, and humble enough to listen to those who differ, as we *all* seek the truth.
 - a. In American we need people who believe in the truth; we have many who believe they are right. There's a large difference.