

Could This 40-Year-Old Prophecy Come to Pass in November?

I suppose you've noticed all the gallows humor going on regarding the presidential election. And for good reason.

So, have you heard this one? Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are stranded at sea on a life boat. Who survives? Ha! America does!

Ok, now that I've offended everyone: What a bizarre election year this has been. As my BreakPoint this Week co-host Ed Stetzer has said quite a few times, "When political historians look back on the early 21st century, the phrase we'll hear the most is, 'except for 2016'."

Now, despite the dire warnings from both candidates about the consequences of electing their opponent, the most important thing about this election is not who becomes president. The most important thing about this election is what it *reveals* about us as a society.

Nearly 40 years ago, in a famous speech at Harvard University, the great Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said: "There are meaningful warnings which history gives a threatened or perishing society. Such are, for instance, the decadence of art, or a lack of great statesmen."

Talk about prophetic!

Folks, I might as well just say it: I am convinced that this election is an indication that God is judging America.

Now claiming to know God's mind both *for what* and *with what* He is bringing judgment is theologically indefensible and only makes us look silly. (You may recall a few notable Christians

who stuck their foot in their mouths after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina). And yet, as Stephen Keillor argued in his book "God's Judgments," it is also theologically indefensible to not acknowledge God's working in history, including through acts of judgment.

And in this case, I am ready to say, God is judging our country. Why? As my colleague Roberto Rivera often says, "The five scariest words in the Bible are, '...and God gave them over'."

The most common way God judges is with the natural consequences of our choices and behavior. This is especially true in politics, which is mostly downstream from – and a reflection of – the broader culture. In other words, especially in our country, we tend to get the leaders we deserve. Which is why this November we should cast our vote with fear, trembling, weeping, praying for mercy, and maybe even while wearing sackcloth and ashes.

Whenever I think of stepping into the voting booth on November 8, I somewhat melodramatically think of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christmas letter: "One may ask," he wrote, "whether there have ever before in human history been people . . . to whom every available alternative seemed equally intolerable, repugnant, and futile..."

Look, I realize that many of my brothers and sisters in Christ have found a level of clarity about the upcoming presidential vote that I have not—perhaps out of resignation or from some political calculations. Perhaps I will too, but until then, I hope there are some things on which we Christians can agree.

First, our deepest problems aren't political ones, and the state is not able to address them. Looking to the state for hope is always misguided, but every four years we seem to fall for it.

Second, although the presidential race is the only one being

talked about, the most important political decisions we will make this year, I'm convinced, will be the local ones. The only thing to mitigate the chaos created by an ever-encroaching federal government convinced of its own indispensability is a stronger local, civil society.

Third, as Eric said recently on BreakPoint, the Church must be the Church. Look, the Church is not reliant one bit on the state to do the life-giving, Gospel-proclaiming, brokenness-restoring work God has called it to do. The Church is the most effective institution of social change, period.

And finally, but most important, we pray for God's mercy. He judges the wicked by leaving them to their own devices. The sooner we abandon those devices and turn back to God, the better. And, I am not speaking here about "them," those outside the Church. No way. As Peter wrote in his first epistle, "it's time for judgment to begin in the house of God." {eoa}

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