

## A Political Hurricane

**Everything is Political**

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Hurricane Matthew has rolled along the southern East Coast after having ravaged several Caribbean islands, particularly Haiti, Cuba, and the Bahamas. The storm surge has flooded areas of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, and has started in on North Carolina here now. The storm surge is one of the worst things about a hurricane, especially there in the Georgia /South Carolina area where the coast turns and everything just funnels into it. It first touched land—the eyewall of Matthew—just before noon, northeast of Charleston, SC, near a little town called McClellanville. The death toll is currently at about 900, most of them on Haiti. There were four deaths that I know of in Florida, and we will have to see how damage goes. I'm sure it will be in the many hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions.

Matthew was a Category 4 storm for many days, and devastated just about everything it touched. Those storms are not to be trifled with. Luckily, most sound-minded coastal residents took the warnings seriously and got out of there.

While that is good, those who have a political stake in “climate change” have attempted to use the hurricane to score points for their side in the debate. For instance, news aggregator Matt Drudge, on the one side, has accused the weather services and the media of falsifying hurricane data to make Matthew appear to be a more formidable storm than it actually was. This, of course, supports the climate-change advocates’ proposition that global warming /cooling/whatever causes bigger storms, which is kind of ridiculous, especially since we have not had the landfall of a major hurricane in 4,000 days (11 years or so). Actually, as bad as Matthew was, it did not hit land as a Category 4 storm in the United States; it was a Category 1.

On the other side of the political aisle, believe it or not, a Black Lives Matter supporter set off a mini-war on Twitter yesterday, saying that Matthew was just another example of “environmental racism.” When you figure out what

that means, please let me know. He was attempting to make Matthew support his political agenda, however it fits in.

We are seeing this happen more and more lately. Americans have always been a political people, and sometimes politics has gotten so bad, and the backing of the candidates has gotten so rabid, that it has broken out in very fanatical and sometimes even violent enthusiasm.

But now we have mass media. We have the Internet, and social media, and more people are getting involved. More people are making their ideas or opinions known, more people are taking siding with one or the other of the two political parties, and now if you watch social media especially, *every* event, *every* activity, *every* trend, *every* phenomenon, *every* personality is made to support or oppose any given political position. It doesn't matter what it is. Somebody will take something that is in the news and make a political statement about it. Nothing can just be what it is anymore; it has to have some connection to a political position. *Everything* is political now.

*Politics* derives from the Greek word *polis*, which has to do with a city. Indiana-polis, Anna-polis, all those words with *polis* in them mean "city." Politics, then, came to denote the ideas, activities, and procedures necessary to run a city, or even to take it to war, back when there were city states. It has expanded over the centuries in the English-speaking world to mean "activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government, or getting and keeping power in a government, or in society in general."

What is so wrong about seeing everything through the lens of politics? I've got three reasons why it is a bad thing. For starters, it creates an atmosphere of "us vs. them" in the country. People who do not agree with one's political views become the enemy, and sometimes it is not just "the enemy," but "the hated enemy."

As it goes along and grows, pretty soon division/separation occurs within families, between neighbors, the community, and even churches—they can split right down the middle on a political issue. If left unchecked, this sort of an attitude is a seed that grows into the tree of civil war. Our own civil war in the 1860s grew out of an "us vs. them" mentality—North vs. South, abolitionists vs. slaveholders, Yankee vs. Rebel, Blue vs. Gray, Unionist vs.

States' Rights—and after four years of fighting, more than half a million Americans lay dead.

A second problem is that politics creates “false dichotomies,” that is, false choices between polar-opposite ideas. Life, though, is far more nuanced than black vs. white in most cases. For example, it is not a choice between immigration and no immigration. I mean, we are a land of immigrants! We are a land that cherishes the institution of immigration. We just don't like how immigration is now. So, if you are going to polarize one thing or another, there is no way this nation is going to stop allowing people to emigrate to this country. It just is not going to happen. So we have to find ways to make it work. It is not just “immigration” or “no immigration.”

The same can be said for other issues like taxation, national debt, welfare, the armed forces, gun rights, privacy, medical care. None of them are one side or the other. They are far too complex issues to be strictly black-and-white. It is very hard to do these days with the way media comes across, but people need to go behind the headline, behind the slogans, behind the sound-bites, because there is a lot going on behind the strict black-and-white issue there.

A third problem I want to talk about is that over-politicizing trivializes moral and ethical problems, which require a change of heart and attitude. It trivializes it into matters of votes or programs or procedures or platitudes or slogans. Those things cannot be handled in slogans or platitudes or even votes and programs for laws. Racism is not a matter of one party winning an election because it is a problem with the heart. Nor are things like crime, corruption, or out-of-control spending. You cannot legislate morality. If you could, everybody would be keeping the Ten Commandments because God legislated them 3,500 years ago from the Mount. But hardly anyone keeps them.

Politics will not solve those kinds of problems, which are the responsibilities of churches and of families. But those two institutions have lost their power in this country to the media, where “values,” most of them twisted into unrecognizable shapes, are pumped out 24/7/365 in TV, movies, magazines, books, and social media. They have far more power than the churches anymore, and the things they are pumping out are not Christian. It is almost

impossible to fight against and prevail. We have God's power, but it might now be His will that we actually prevail against it at this time.

God's system does not make use of politics, at least not in its present form. It employs government, yes, without the partisan jockeying for leverage, position, and power that we see in the world. The church is to run according to God's will, and there is no politicking with that. You cannot try to change God's will when He has set His mind to do something. But we see politics in the church, and we know that human beings are involved. Even converted ones sometimes succumb to taking political actions. You can bet that when politics enters church affairs, there is an ego or two involved that will not submit to God's will. This is another area in which we must come of the world.

I want to finish by reading Hebrews 13:

**Hebrews 13:20-21** Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Politics is working to get one's own will, whereas our job as Christians is to do God's will.