

Point of View



A LEADERSHIP COMMENTARY ON LIFE TODAY BY BOB SHANK

October 4, 2010



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Dear Marketplace Friend,

It was a little early for my blood to start boiling, but it happened, nonetheless. Pulling into S'bucks at the opening bell this morning (5:00am, if you're a late-arriver), the political ads were the bridge between the latest Monday morning traffic reports and the terrorist caution for European travel.

A gubernatorial candidate was attacking the opponent for his/her desire for a lower capital gains tax rate. This position was labeled a "give-away" that would only benefit "millionaires and billionaires."

In a deep study of the four gospels 20 years ago, I made it my focus to examine how Jesus lived out his mission, during the three years between Carpenter and Cross. One observation: when people came to Jesus looking for answers, he often countered their query with a question. Conclusion: the human tendency is to assume that wisdom is demonstrated by having the right answers; divine wisdom often manifests as having the right questions.

The underlying questions in today's political theater are not often asked. The question exposed in the rancid radio ad this morning is this: who owns it all?

The two positions warring for control in November ask – and, answer – that question quite differently. One side says that the title to the wealth of America resides with the individual; the other side – the polar opposite standing – is that the title to the wealth resides with the government. If individual ownership is the ideological starting point, then government must make the case for any tax on capital gains. If government ownership is affirmed, then any reduction in taxation can be deemed a "giveaway." The position belies an answer to the underlying question, and it becomes political.

There is a third voice in that conversation, and it isn't heard enough. Does title reside with government, or the individual? Position #3 isn't running any radio ads, but it needs to be heard: neither government or individuals are the rightful owner of everything. God owns it all...

The foundational issue is sovereignty. **Sovereignty** is the exclusive right to exercise supreme authority over a geographic region

or group of people, such as a nation or a tribe. Sovereignty is generally vested in a government or other political agency, though there are cases where it is held by an individual. A monarch who rules a sovereign country can also be referred to as the sovereign of that country. There are those who refer to America's original documents – Declaration, Constitution – to find the answer. That's a good place to go; in them, the confirmation of a Creator who delegates is woven into our political foundation.

Old Testament's Haggai spoke for God in staking a claim: *"The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord Almighty.* (Haggai 2:8) He (God) isn't invited into the modern debates between candidates – and, political philosophies – but His declaration has been sent ahead.

In this fight-to-the-finish Fall of 2010 – with the Super Bowl scheduled four weeks from tomorrow – allow me to make the only political counsel you'll hear from me: vote stewardship.

God's stated interest is that His resources be used to advance His purposes. The question you and I must answer on November 2nd is really simple: is government more likely to take God's purposes into account in the management of resources, or are you more likely to play the part of a steward?

If your plan is to hoard for yourself, the fight is between people. If your plan is to steward for God, you act on His behalf in determining the direction of our great country.

Don't be fooled by the purported answers; ask the right questions. The ultimate question behind tax policy: who owns it all? Rise above the partisan options, and answer with the biblical truth: God owns it all... and you, as His steward, are more likely to please Him with what you do with His money.

Caution: you live in the "no spin zone." *Don't claim that it's all His... if you manage it like it's all yours...*

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

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