

January 13, 2021

As events of unprecedented nature have unfolded across our country, lines are being drawn and battles are being pitched: both claiming to promote democracy; both claiming to want the best for all Americans. I was reminded of the fragile state of my own mortality when I saw an oversized gun safe being moved into my neighbor's garage and realized there were only two walls between my driveway and the headboard of my bed. Were we on the same side?

Joshua had that question the night before marching on Jericho. We find the story in Joshua 5:13-14 *Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"¹⁴ "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."*

Let me share a humiliating story about my own bad behavior to give you an example of what the **'neither side'** looks like: I was having a telephone conversation with one of my brothers, and it turned political, which can be dangerous for relationships. I expressed an opinion, and he expressed another, so I had to make my point stronger which triggered a comeback and there we were – in the toilet bowl swirl to the septic tank. There would be no civil discourse unless the focus changed from political positioning to something Christ-centered.

Jesus said: *'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.'* Could that be true in this instance? In this situation? I said in my heart, "Okay Jesus, here's your chance!" and when there was a pause, I reduced my volume to stop the argument over who was right and who was wrong. Instead, I referenced the words of Jesus – *Blessed are the peacemakers...*—violence from anybody is counterproductive.

My brother immediately calmed down ... and honestly, it's not something my family is known for doing well. This is the power of Jesus. This is the power of the **'neither side.'**

If I be lifted up ... I will draw all men unto me. John 12:32

There was no way under the sun I was going to convince my brother to change his political allegiance and he didn't want to listen to me try. But he **was willing** to embrace the principles of Jesus. It was over the principles of Jesus that we found common ground. The rest of the story – well – Jesus said **HE** would write the rest of the story.

So -- Choose the Lord.

According to Joshua 5:14, our God transcends "sides"; and His directive applies today just as it did when Jesus first spoke these words. *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*