



WHAT ABOUT...? • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • ACTS 17

But What About Christian Nationalism?

A guided conversation from the July 5, 2026 sermon by Kent Keller

SUMMARY

On the weekend America turned 250, Pastor Kent Keller took on a question that flares up every July: is America a Christian nation — and what about 'Christian nationalism'? His answer is more careful, and more freeing, than either side tends to give.

Kent starts with his own loyalties, plainly: 'I love my God. I love my country. I worship my God. I do not worship my country.' Patriotism is good — even beautiful — but it becomes something else when we wrap the cross in the flag and treat being a good American and a good Christian as the same thing.

Was America founded Christian? The historical evidence is real — the Mayflower Compact, Winthrop's 'city upon a hill,' the Declaration's four references to God. Yet the founders deliberately refused to establish an official state church, because they had seen how fusing church and state corrupts both, and because faith can never be forced. The gospel persuades; it never coerces.

Underneath the whole debate is the confession the church has made for 2,000 years — the very thing the believers in Thessalonica were dragged into court for saying: 'there is another king, Jesus' (Acts 17:7). Grateful citizens; faithful first to Christ.

PRAYER OPENING PRAYER

Father, we thank You for the country we live in and the freedoms we enjoy, and we refuse to make an idol of any of it. As we talk tonight about faith and nation, guard us from both cynicism and idolatry. Remind us that we have no king but Jesus, and make us grateful citizens who are faithful first to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

START ICE BREAKER

When you hear the phrase 'Christian nation,' what's your gut reaction — pride, suspicion, confusion, something else? Where do you think that reaction came from?

ACTS 17:1-7 • ESV

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica... And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures... saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." ... But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar... they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also... and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

JEREMIAH 29:7 • ESV

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

GALATIANS 5:1 • ESV

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

01**LOVE, NOT WORSHIP.**

Kent drew a hard line: 'I love my country. I do not worship my country.' Practically, where is that line for you? Name one way patriotism is healthy in your life — and one way it could quietly slide toward worship.

02**WRAPPING THE CROSS IN THE FLAG.**

Kent defined Christian nationalism as conflating Christianity with patriotism — treating being a good Christian and a good American as the same thing. Where have you seen that happen? Why is it dangerous for the church's witness?

03**THE HONEST HISTORY.**

Kent laid out real evidence that America was settled and shaped overwhelmingly by Christians on biblical principles. Does knowing that history change how you see the country? Does it obligate the country to anything today?

04**NOT SO FAST.**

The founders deliberately refused to make America officially Christian by charter, because 'you can force people to submit, but you can't force them to believe.' Why is that instinct actually good for the gospel? What goes wrong when the church grabs the power of the state?

05**SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY.**

Read Jeremiah 29:7. God told exiles to pray for and bless pagan Babylon. How do we genuinely seek the good of a nation without worshipping it? What would that look like for you this year?

06**ANOTHER KING.**

Read Acts 17:6-7. The Thessalonian Christians were dragged into court for saying 'there is another king, Jesus.' What did that confession cost them? What might it cost you to truly put Christ's kingdom above every other allegiance?

07 THE FREEDOM THAT LASTS.

Read Galatians 5:1. On America's 250th, Kent pointed past political freedom to a deeper one. How is 'freedom in Christ' different from the freedoms we celebrate on the Fourth of July? Which one is doing more to shape your daily life right now?

08 PERSUASION, NOT COERCION.

Kent said the power of the gospel is 'moral and spiritual persuasion, not coercion.' How does that change the way you talk about faith with people who disagree with you – in your family, at work, online?

APPLY LIFE APPLICATION

Kent's message lands on a settled allegiance that reorders everything else. Pick at least one of these to actually do this week.

- 1 Pray for your nation – as a citizen, not a worshiper.** Following Jeremiah 29:7, pray this week for your city and country: for its leaders, its good, its healing. Thank God for real blessings, and ask Him to keep you from making an idol of any of it.
- 2 Audit your allegiances.** Honestly ask where love of country, party, or politics has crept toward the place only Christ should hold. Name it to God – and to one trusted person in the group. Then reset: 'We have no king but Jesus.'
- 3 Share the King by persuasion, not pressure.** Think of one person who sees the world differently than you. This week, aim to persuade with grace and listen well – not to win an argument, but to point to Christ. Start the 5-day devotional on this message at app.christchurchmiami.org/devo.

You can love your country with a full heart and still say, without flinching, that there is only one King. Grateful citizens; faithful first to Christ.

REMEMBER KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Love your country; worship God alone.
- ▶ America was settled and shaped by Christians on biblical principles – that's history.
- ▶ But the founders refused a Christian nation by charter, because faith can't be forced.
- ▶ Christian nationalism wraps the cross in the flag; the gospel will not let us.
- ▶ Seek the welfare of your city without worshiping it (Jeremiah 29:7).
- ▶ We have no king but Jesus (Acts 17:7); the freedom that lasts is His (Galatians 5:1).

There is another king, Jesus. – Acts 17:7

Lord Jesus, You are the King above every king and the Lord above every earthly power. Thank You for our country and its freedoms; keep them from ever becoming our god. Make us the kind of citizens who bless the place You've put us, and the kind of witnesses who persuade by grace and not by force. Until You come, we have no king but You. Amen.

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