

# God's Revolution and Our Response Politically



**Tony Campolo**

Human history is not an absurdity. The good news is that history is going somewhere wonderful, and God is taking it there. Eventually, God will triumph over all the forces of evil that seem so omnipresent.

The good news is that God is going to get back what belongs to God. That means that all social institutions and cultural systems someday will be transformed into instruments that will embody God's love and justice. The Bible describes this as a done deal because the outcome is so sure, but the various governments, corporations, labor unions, media systems, etc., that constitute the principalities and powers are still in need of recognizing that Christ is their Lord and that they must come into obedience with His will. As God carries out this great design for the future of the world, we are invited to participate, and one of the ways we do this is through evangelism. In evangelism we not only declare this good news about the new world that's coming but we also invite people to join God in creating that new world. In evangelism we not only speak, but also enact the good news. We invite people to join in God's great revolution. God is going to get back what belongs to God, and a major way God does this is through *you* – through your words, your witness, and your life.

You may think it strange that we would start the discussion about evangelism by declaring what God is doing in the world, but the decision to do so is deliberate. Americans, with their overemphasis on individualism, have been prone to make evangelism into something that is only personal. I want in no way to mislead you into thinking that the good news we are to declare to the world doesn't involve eternal life for the individual who believes and makes a life commitment to Christ. Nor

do I want in any way to deny that there is a dark and awesome abyss for those who reject the free gift of salvation offered by Christ.

It is just that the gospel is more than a way to heaven for those individuals who say "yes" to the call of Christ. It has cosmic dimensions. It transcends the egoistic interests of people who are concerned about only saving their own necks by escaping the damnation of the lost. As Christians, we are required to make such things known, but there is more to evangelism than this. If you think evangelism is only about getting individuals "saved", then consider what the apostle Paul says: "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

When you evangelize, you also invite men and women to surrender their lives to Christ so that God can work through them to change the world. The salvation message that you are called to declare is that God *so loved the world* (John 3:16)! The word world is *cosmos* in Greek, the language in which the Scripture was originally written. This is a declaration that God loves not only people, but the whole world and everything that's in it.

It means that God loves the natural world and calls upon us to work to prevent environmental destruction. It also means that God loves the institutions of society, ranging from the family to economic institutions, such as the AFL-CIO and Microsoft, and He invites us to be a Church that is at work in the world transforming these institutions into optimum instruments of blessing for all humanity. It means that God loves the school you attend and expects you to be at work as an agent of change so your school delivers all the good it is supposed to give both to students and to the larger society.

## God's Kingdom on Earth

Those who are willing to let God change their lives will find themselves "led by the Spirit" into participating with God in moving society toward the glorious future envisioned when Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God was at hand: "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15).

You will find that when Jesus started His preaching ministry some two

thousand years ago, He came declaring that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Matthew 10:7; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43). In Matthew, because the audience of this book was Jewish, the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" is used. The Jews were reluctant to use the word *God*, so Matthew used "heaven" as a code word when referring to God. But the phrases "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" were the same thing. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, He taught them to pray for God's Kingdom to come *on earth* as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). His Kingdom is no "pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die" sort of thing, like some neo-Marxists on your campus may mockingly claim. It is a kingdom that is to be realized in history. It is something God wants to see happen in the here and now.

## Am I Supposed to Try to Convert People to Christianity?

The Kingdom begins as Jesus transforms individuals into Kingdom people – who call Jesus "Lord" and seek to do His will in the world. This emphasis on personal salvation is something liberal theologians in the Church sometimes neglect. But there is also a social dimension to it. The Kingdom of God also encompasses the institutions of society, which means that in addition to people needing to be transformed into what God wants them to be, social institutions also must be transformed into what God wants them to be. This latter emphasis is often missed by evangelical theologians. The two emphases belong together. The Kingdom of God is a transformed people living in a transformed social order.

## Christians are Called to Change Society

One of the primary reasons Christ delivers us from sin is so He can have a people through which He can work out His plan to change the society into the society it ought to be. God wants us to go to work endeavoring to bring His will to bear upon the family, the workplace, educational institutions, the media, the political sphere, and the economic structures of society. Whenever the question comes up as to whether one can live out a Christian vocation in law, in the arts, in government, or in education, the answer has to be "Of course!" Jesus calls us to be a transforming leaven in each of these sectors of society. To do so is to