

TWO KINGDOMS ONE CALLING

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE STUDY

OCTOBER 4, 11, 18 • NOVEMBER 1, 8, 15 • 10:15 AM

WEEK 2 • GOD'S TWO HANDS

A WORD AT THE START *This study is not intended to elevate one party or political system above another, or to endorse or encourage any particular policy or candidate for office. Its purpose is to help us navigate our calling to be both Christians and citizens in a divided world.*

BIG QUESTION

How does the same God rule both the church and the world — and what does that mean for how we live as Christians and citizens?

LAST WEEK: THE REIGN OF GOD

- Last week we saw that the kingdom of God (Greek *basileia*) means God's _____
- It is announced and inaugurated by _____
- Its King came as a _____
- And it is already _____

THE TWO-HANDED REIGN OF GOD

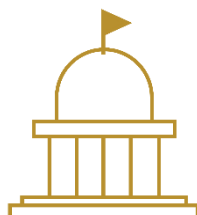
Martin Luther taught that the one true God rules the world in two distinct ways at once.

He called these _____

With his **right hand**, God rules the church through the Gospel — Word, sacrament, grace, and faith. With his **left hand**, God rules civil society through the law — government, courts, and the ordinary structures that restrain evil and preserve order. Both hands belong to the same God, and both are necessary, but they work in completely different ways. This doesn't mean faith and public life are unrelated. Christians live in both kingdoms at once — members of Christ's body, and citizens of an earthly community. It means God doesn't rule governments and courts with the Gospel, and he doesn't rule the church with the Law.

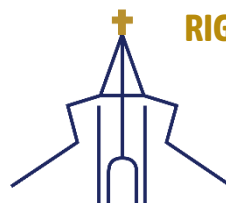
LEFT HAND

Government
Law



RIGHT HAND

Church
Gospel



THE TWO HANDS, SIDE BY SIDE

	GOD’S LEFT HAND	GOD’S RIGHT HAND
Realm		
Primary Word		
Purpose		
Primary means		
Power		
Who is included?		
Source of authority		
Justice & mercy		
Our calling		
What it cannot do		
WHO IS LORD OF BOTH? God alone.		

GOD’S MASKS

Luther called the people through whom God works _____ of God (Latin *larvae Dei*). God heals through the doctor, teaches through the teacher, protects through the officer and the judge, and feeds us through the farmer and the baker. This is vocation at work in the left hand, and it works whether or not the person wearing the mask believes. In the right hand God also works through ordinary things — a pastor’s voice, water, bread, and wine — but there the masks carry his promise of forgiveness.

Would you want a doctor who used only medicines named in the Bible? A teacher who taught only Bible stories? Why not — and what do we want from them instead?

BIBLICAL STUDY

John 18:36

"Jesus answered, 'My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I wouldn't be delivered to the Jews. But now my Kingdom is not from here.'"

CONTEXT

Matthew 22:17–21

"'Tell us therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?' But Jesus... said, 'Why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me the tax money.' They brought him a denarius. He said to them, 'Whose is this image and inscription?' They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'"

CONTEXT

Romans 2:14–15

When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, by nature do what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, as their own conscience also bears witness . . .

CONTEXT

Romans 13:1–4

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God ... for it is God's agent for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the agent of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.

CONTEXT

Acts 5:27–29

The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching . . . But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority.

CONTEXT

1 Corinthians 12:12–14

"For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... For the body is not one member, but many."

CONTEXT

Matthew 20:25–28

“Jesus summoned them, and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them... It shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant... even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

CONTEXT

A HARD QUESTION

If God rules the world with his left-hand through law, why shouldn’t Christians push for laws that reflect Scripture — posting the Ten Commandments, or writing biblical teaching into statute?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before today, how would you have described the relationship between faith and government? Where did this framework confirm or challenge that?

2. If “two kingdoms” really means “one God, two hands” rather than “two separate places,” how does that change what it looks like to be a Christian citizen?

3. Where have you heard “the Bible says” used to support a law? What changes if we have to make that case to a neighbor who doesn’t share our Scripture?

4. Matthew 20:25–28 says kingdom greatness looks like service, not domination. Where might the church be tempted to borrow the left hand’s tools of the Law — power, coercion, control — instead of the right hand’s Gospel tools — compassion, welcome, invitation, service?

5. Luther described civil government as a gift — something we need in order to safely enjoy any of God’s other blessings. Does that match or challenge how you usually think about civic life?
