BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

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Through his death and resurrection, Jesus broke down all of the barriers that divide us and that includes political ones. The gospel is incredibly radical and it is the only hope for a divided nation - but we have to be prepared to model that hope.
Category: Observations

I don't know if you have noticed, but there will be a general election in the UK in the next few days.

I think that for many Brits, their reaction is captured by this wonderful video of "Brenda from Bristol" which was filmed when the last election was announced.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3PKE8uTSp8

However, not everyone is as despairing as Brenda and there are those who are highly motivated politically and see the election as an opportunity to advance their agenda. This is all well and good, it's what elections are for, after all. The problem is, that British politics is becoming increasingly nasty. Let me give a few examples:

A huge amount of political rhetoric is negative. Parties hardly longer try and sell their own vision of the future, they simply send out dire warnings of what would happen if we voted for the other lot. This election is all about stopping Corbyn or getting rid of the Tories. I realise that negative campaigning has always happened, but it has reached unprecedented levels. Multiplied by the echo chamber that is social media, the election is getting increasingly nasty and the country becoming more divided. Without even delving into the murky waters of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, the levels of invective and hatred are quite staggering at times.

I suspect that once the election is over, things will calm down and we'll sort of muddle along as a society until something else (another election?) happens to blow things up again at which point the anger will come back to the surface with increased ferocity. To be honest, I fear that we are caught in a rather unpleasant spiral as opinions become more polarised and less nuanced. Complex, negotiated solutions to our problems are rejected in favour of easy sound bites which breed cynicism, distrust and division and it's only going to get worse. I'm not sure where it will all end, but it may not be pretty.

Christians cannot stand aloof from these things. Those of us who have strong political opinions have to learn to express them without belittling or insulting those who see things differently. We have a deeper loyalty than our party convictions and next Sunday we will have to break bread with people of very different opinions. It's hard to do that honestly if we've been insulting them for their political views this week. Those of us who are floating voters cannot afford to ignore the election either. The government is important and we are commanded to pray for it - at this point, this means praying for the British electorate that we will make wise choices.

The New Testament presents the church as a united multi-lingual, multi-cultural entity, but that unity was hard-won and difficult to maintain. In the same sense, the church is a place where Labour Conservative, Lib-Dem, Green, SNP and Plaid should be able to meet and break bread together. It's not easy, but we are called to make peace and to model peace for a broken world. Simply ignoring our divisions and pretending they don't exist is probably the easiest way forward, but it doesn't do anyone any favours. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus broke down all of the barriers that

divide us and that includes political ones. The gospel is incredibly radical and it is the only hope for a divided nation - but we have to be prepared to model that hope.