

"A wise man's heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left."

Ecclesiastes 10:2

"³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need."

Acts 4

Politics and the Bible

- ✓ **The Bible seldom addresses political issues directly.**
- ✓ **What it does say is unpopular.**
- ✓ **Most of the ethical instruction is addressed to the covenant community's inner life.**
- ✓ **There are Kingdom principles that have broad implications.**

A basic political value

The way we use power will shape our story.

Matt.18:23-27

Matthew 18

"²¹ Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ "And when he had begun to settle {them,} there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents (**several million dollars**)."

Matthew 18

"²⁵ But since he did not have {the means} to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' ²⁷ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt."

Two tragic political values

1.
People in **low places** tend to
play the victim card.
2.
People in **high places** tend to
protect their turf.

The truth about victims

- ✓ People who see themselves as victims seldom get better.
- ✓ We all are victims of something.
- ✓ There are those who have a selfish interest in keeping victimization alive.

The truth about turf protectors

- ✓ The rich and powerful did not get there on their own.
- ✓ The sign of true power and wealth is in how it is used.
- ✓ Those in high places do well to associate with those who are not.

Two challenges from this text

1.
People in **low places** need to
take ownership.
2.
People in **high places** need to
show compassion.

A word to those in power

Don't

stand aloof
from the
poor and
vulnerable.

Do

show mercy
to those
who struggle.

✓ **The rich and powerful tend to receive more justice than the poor and vulnerable.**

Proverbs 31:8
[Commandment to kings]

“Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.”

A word to those not in power

Don't

play the victim,
expecting others
to bail you out.

Do

show ownership
of your
situation.

✓ **Affirmative action can backfire.**

Leviticus 19:15

“You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”

Political implications

- ✓ **Create incentives for responsibility and compassion.**
- ✓ **Pursue the “common good.”**
- ✓ **See justice as a part of compassion.**
- ✓ **Provide for a “safety net.”**

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living.” **2 Thessalonians 3:10-12**

Political implications

- ✓ **Promote the “right response.”**
- ✓ **Pursue the “common good.”**
- ✓ **Protect the “middle class.”**
- ✓ **Provide a “safety net.”**

A life truth

**The way we remember
our story will effect
our behavior.**

Matt.18:28-30

Matthew 18

“²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' ²⁹ So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' ³⁰ He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.”

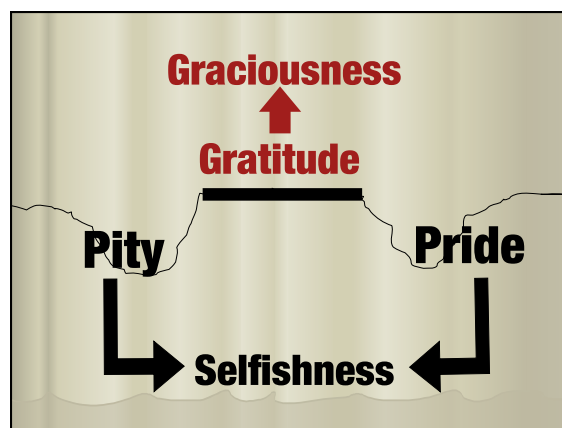
Two tragic ways we recall our story

The Pity Party

“Its just
not fair!”

The Pride Party

“Thank God,
I am not
like all
the others.”



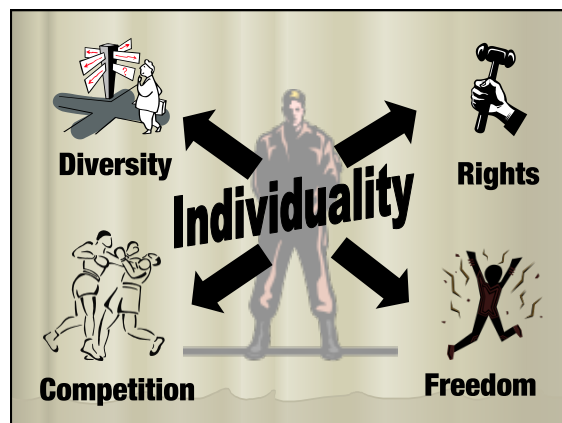
Two challenges from this text

1.
People who are **bitter** need to
count their blessings.
2.
People who are **proud** need to
remember their support.

A values reminder



“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” **Ephesians 4:31-32**



Two tragic political values

1.
People are **bitter.**
2.
People are **proud.**

Two insights from this text

1.
Self-talk is key to a gracious walk.
2.
Gratitude kills both the pity party & the pride parade.

Political implications

- ✓ **Renew your mind** - Gratitude kills self pity and pride.
- ✓ **Recognize your sources** - Thankful people are generous.
- ✓ **Repeat the pattern** - Generous people build community.

A political reality

"What goes around comes around"

Matt.18:31-35

Matthew 18

³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. ³³ 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵ So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Two possible interpretations

<p>God takes back His grace if we Don't share it.</p> <p>God is an "Indian giver."</p>	<p>God turns us over to a world that will treat us the way we treat others.</p> <p>God will discipline us to see our error.</p>
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Ecclesiastes 11:1

"Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days."

Proverbs 19:17


"He who is gracious to the poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed."

Two tragic political truths


1. **"Civil servants" too often are neither civil nor servants.**
2. **"When elephants fight the grass suffers."**

"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"

"The pursuit of happiness" was originally understood to refer to -



- self-sacrificing virtue



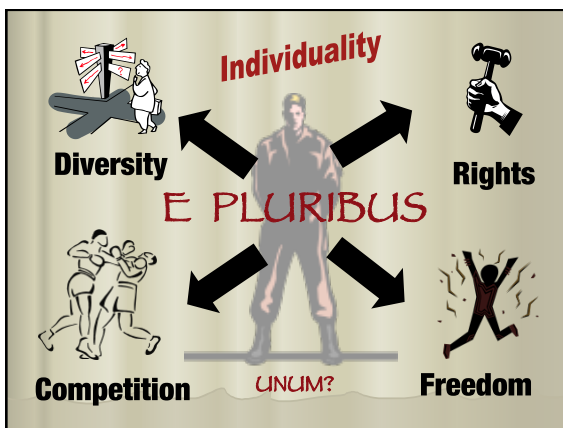
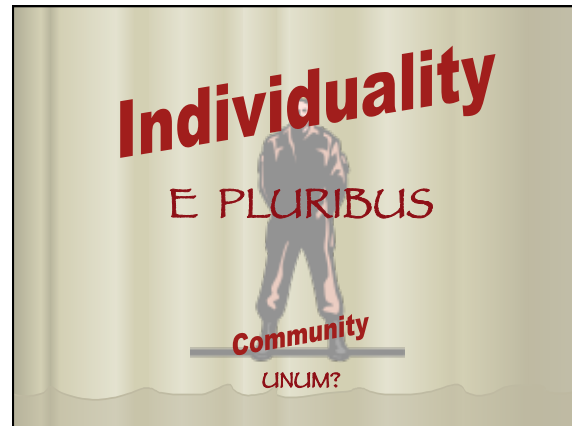
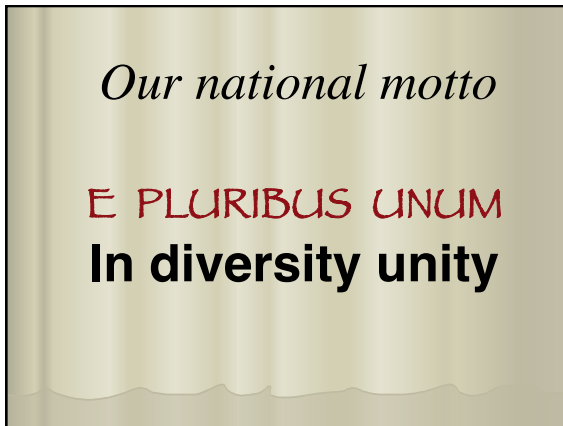
- not selfish indulgence."

Without this virtue

Capitalism becomes the exploitation of the economically weak by the economically powerful.

Democracy becomes an endless litigation of rights and the manipulation of the naive by the clever and politically powerful.

Pluralism dignifies every kind of moral divergence as a form of human creativity.



Two insights from this text

1.
To chose a life without grace
**is to invite a tortured
existence.**

2.
The way we treat others
tells them how to treat us.

Political implications

- ✓ **Set the pace** - We will be treated the same way we treat others.
- ✓ **Model the system** - Show others how to act.
- ✓ **Get the point** - Don't learn the hard way.

A Christian political creed

1. I will not be a victim nor allow others to see themselves as such.
2. I will view my power and wealth as an opportunity to be compassionate to those less fortunate.
3. I will remember my blessings as a reminder to bless others.
4. I will treat my political opponents the way I want to be treated.