Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
May 12, 2021

"DOING MY DUTY!"

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)

As mentioned in the email that this update is attached to, I served jury duty in Charlotte County, Florida this week. It turned out to be a "travesty of justice"! They made me wear long pants for TWO WHOLE DAYS. At the same time, it gave a deeper meaning to the phrase "the wheels of justice turn slowly". Every part of the process took forrrrrrrrrrrrrrr-ever. I thought that I'd be dismissed early on in the jury selection process, due to my current employment (call) as a pastor, and my previous career in local TV news. That got me kicked out the only other time that I've been summoned for jury duty. But NO! I think that I was selected this time because of these circumstances. By lunch recess on Wednesday, which wasn't until 1:30pm, it was obvious that I was in this for the long-haul. Once the proceedings got underway there were more conferences before the judge at the bench than the average member of TLC has had birthdays. In the end, late yesterday afternoon, the jury, "6 angry men" (none of us ever got angry, but it was 6 men and I was probably the youngest) came to the immediate conclusion that the defendant in this case was not proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and that this case should never have come to trial. The initial investigation of the "crime" was incomplete and insufficient. There was a glaring lack of evidence introduced, and those testifying for the state gave very conflicting accounts. The state's only credible witness was the recording introduced into evidence of the defendant's statement following the alleged "crime", given to the Charlotte County Sheriff's deputy, which only served to validate his/her side of the story. The defense called no witnesses, but it was the deliberation part of the process was the most efficient of all. But that's now behind me. It's time to get to work. Oh, a few details about the case…I can give them out because the trial is over and the verdict has been returned…it all happened on Christmas Day of this past year, 2020. You'd think on Christmas Day there'd be "peace on earth, goodwill toward mankind". The Assistant State's Attorney used that Biblical quote in both his opening and closing statement, although completely out of context. Anyway, there was alcohol and marijuana involved, and an underlying end/break-up of a "romantic relationship. But these were very much secondary issues. What was behind the alleged battery of the victim was an argument about politics. Imagine that? Citizens of our nation are so polarized over politics and political affiliations that they are willing to and some actually do "go to war" over them. We get so wrapped up in the issues and conflicts of this world that we lose our minds and sense of right and wrong because of which side of the political spectrum our view of the world and how it should be run is; liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. Have you ever noticed that Jesus never got involved in political issues and disputes? When asked by the Jewish religious leaders, who were trying to find grounds to arrest him, *"Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* (Luke 20:22), Jesus didn't take the bait. "*He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. He said to them, 'Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'*" (23-25) We are citizens of two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Power, that of the world, and the Kingdom of Grace, that's the Church, the family of God. Our home is in heaven so we *"are aliens and strangers in this world".* (Hebrews 11:14). *"Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."* (1 Peter 2:11) As believers in Christ and children of God we are called out of this world and worldly thinking to behave according to the precepts and tenets of our God. We find those in Scripture, God's Word, which is the source of our renewal. The Apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 12 tells us that we are to be different. *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."* (v. 2) Assault and battery, under whatever motivation, is not good and pleasing according to the perfect will of God. We just don't do that! Being in the Word of God on a regular basis changes us, it renews our minds. The Word moves us out of our worldly focus, passions, and selfishness to live a life that is more the way that God