

**Sermon Series: “The Bible and Some Election Issues”**  
**“Marxism/Socialism”**  
**Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.**  
**Sunday, October 25, 2020**

When was the first time you realized you were better off materially than others? E.g., I recall in the summer of 1986 I went on a six-week mission trip to West Africa. I stayed on a missionary boat called the Doulos, which had about 300 other people onboard from various nations, and we had a book store on the ship which sold Christian and educational books, and we reached out to churches in the area. Our first stop was to spend two weeks in Liberia, and in the first week we were there our team of about six of us from seminary went for a tour of downtown Monrovia. While we were walking down the streets visiting different shops, a man started following us. As he followed us he shouted out loud, “Are you Americans? Are you Europeans? Give me your money!” It made me feel very uneasy and as though we stood out as very conspicuous before everyone else in the city. Fortunately we made it back to the ship without an incident taking place. The experience taught me, though, what it means to be a Westerner, especially an American, in another country. It meant that I was rich. The strange thing is, though, that if you were to ask the average American if he or she is rich, the answer one would probably be, no. No, at least compared to other Americans. But rarely do we compare ourselves to those of other nations— at least until recently. Americans have been comparing ourselves to how we have done with such things as COVID-19, with our healthcare system, and with our very fundamental form of government. Today we will explore a bit about a very different form of government which some would like to see in our nation and what that looks like. And we will look to Scripture to see how we should view this different form of government.

I will begin with an illustration which helps us to see the essence of Marxism/Socialism. It come from a progressive economist named Amartya Sen (from his 2009 book, *The Idea of Justice*, pp. 12-15, as cited by Dinesh D’Souza, *The United States of Socialism*, pp. 181-182). Sen tells the fictitious story of Carla, Bob, and Anne who are fighting over a flute. Carla made the flute, Anne is the best flute player of the three, and Bob has never had a flute. To whom should we give the flute, asks Sen? Let us come back to this illustration later, but consider it as we go forward.

“What is Marxism?” First, some qualifications: I have not read Karl Marx’s works like *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867) other than excerpts. I realize Marxism is a huge subject and I am a novice. Nevertheless, secondly, I have begun to read on Marxism and socialism, and I will offer you some gleanings of what I have learned. So then, from what I understand, Marxism is more a worldview than an explicitly economic program. Marx divided the world between the capitalists and the workers and he desired to settle the inherent economic injustices found in the world. The gap between the haves and the have nots was too large and unbearable to him. He believed that workers would become so fed up with the economic injustices that the economies would be naturally overthrown and become fair, just, and communal, working well for all. Private, individual ownership of land and farms and businesses would be transformed into communal enterprises, in other words, state-owned and run. So the problems in society will find a human-centered solution. God and religion have obviously failed, to Marx, and now it is time for the realists to take over, humanity will now find the way of deliverance. Klaus Bockmuehl describes it this way: “Marxism is nothing less than a program for creating a new humanity and a new world in which all present conflicts will be solved, a world in which humanity will totally rule over nature and at the same time be totally reconciled to it. To shape a society of— paradoxically— total individual freedom and at the

same time, the complete realization of communal life, is the aim of Marxism. . . For too long religion has been unable to grant humanity the realization on earth of this lifelong dream. So man himself has taken over” (*The Challenge of Marxism: A Christian Response*, p. 17). An expression of this may be found in Acts 4:32-37; 1 John 3:16-17; READ. Marx would probably see that while perhaps Christianity started out well at first in this, that the religion itself could not sustain this momentum. Humankind can take over now. From what I have read, Marx believed this overthrow of the capitalistic economic system with private businesses and private ownership of property would happen peacefully. The problem with Marxism, however, was that in the late 1800’s as the industrial revolution grew, the middle class grew with it. Wages went up, the standard of living increased, and the general worker felt he or she participated in the growing economy— all things which squelched the desire to overthrow the current system of government. Hence, in the 1900s the forms of Marxism which overthrew governments occurred through violence— witness Russia, China, North Korea, and China. This form of Marxism is often called Marxist-Leninist, or Communism— a one-party system which is totalitarian in its often harsh, absolute authority.

Let us now read what Britannica.com says in defining Marxism. It is “a body of doctrine developed by Karl Marx and, to a lesser extent, by Friedrich Engels in the mid-19th century. It originally consisted of three related ideas: a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political program. There is also Marxism as it has been understood and practiced by the various socialist movements, particularly before 1914. Then there is a Soviet Marxism as worked out by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and modified by Joseph Stalin, which under the name of Marxism-Leninism. . . Became the doctrine of the communist parties set up after the Russian Revolution (1917). Offshoots of this included Marxism as interpreted by the anti-Stalinist Leon Trotsky and his

followers, Mao Zedong's Chinese variant of Marxism-Leninism, and various Marisms in the developing world.” Marxism understands the social reality in bascially two ways. “1. Underlying everything as the real basis of society is the economiic structure. This structure includes (a) the ‘material forces of production,’ that is, the labour and means of production, and (b) the overall ‘relations of production,’ or the social and political arrangements that regulate production and distribution. . . 2. Above the economic structure rises the superstructure, consisting of legal and political ‘forms of social consciousness’ that correspond to the economic structure. Marx says nothing about the nature of this correspondence between ideological forms and economic structure, except that through the ideological forms individuals become conscious of the conflict wiithin the economic structure between the material forces of production and the existing relations of production expressed in the legal property relations.”

“What is Socialism?” Britannica.com states that Socialism is a “social and economic doctrine that calls for public rather than private ownership or control of property and natural resources. According to the socialist view, individuals do not live or work in isolation but live in cooperation with one another. Furthermore, everything that people produce is in some sense a social product, and everyone who contributes to the production of a good is entitled to a share in it. Society as a whole, therefore, should own or at least control property for the benefit of others.” The question comes, can we have Marxism without Socialism? No. Let's turn the question around: Can we have Socialism without Marxism? Yes. Socialism today exists in many countries in western Europe in what we would call Social Democracies, a kind of hybrid form of Socialism.. The United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and France all can be called Social Democracies from what I can tell. They are all capitalistic countries, but all have significant collectivistic, government-run aspect to their countries. Healthcare for

all and free college education are examples of this. When we lived in Scotland I was told 60% of the homes were government subsidized.

“Where do we see evidence of Marxism and Socialism in the United States?” In the U.S. we began with socialism essentially with President Franklin Roosevelt with Social Security in 1935. About 30 years later President Johnson expanded government provision with Medicare in 1965. Today we hear from socialist politicians that they want to expand the government to run not only healthcare and provide free college education, but also have the government pay for all or most college debt, a universal basic income for all, expand the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, Labor unions are a common expression of socialism, where people can band together to have a more powerful bargaining power in demanding provisions from their employers. The Marxist expression of correcting inequalities in society, however, have never and would never lead to the U.S. overthrowing capitalism because everyone is benefiting from our vast economic affluence. So the Socialists with a Marxist mindset have not been able to drive a wedge between the capitalists and the workers, the employer and employees, the haves and the have nots. So they have tried a new tactic and have had great success, and this new tactic has been pointed out by Dinesh D’Souza in his insightful recent book, *The United States of Socialism*. D’Souza is an immigrant from India who went to Dartmouth University and has written books with great insight. He believes the Socialists with a Marxist bent have created a new identity for division— not so much an economic socialism with rich/poor divisions— of course this still exists, as we have seen with the Occupy Wall Street movement and the decrying the “1 percenters”. But D’Souza sees a new emphasis— an *identity socialism*. As he puts it, “. . . , whites against minorities, men against women, heterosexuals against homosexuals and transsexuals and natives against immigrants. Whites, men, heterosexuals and native-born are all bad, but nothing is worse than a combination of these four attributes” (p. 144). I would add to

D’Souza’s list, biblical Christianity and secular humanism, or even simply, non-biblical Christianity, as we can see with the Affordable Care Act trying to impose on religious groups to pay for contraception and abortion; also, we have those who would have the government pay for transgender surgeries, as we have seen such attempts in the U.S. military. The hope is to create a crisis that voters will express themselves *en masse* to overthrow the current type of government we have. E.g., that is why, I believe, the protests after the tragic death of George Floyd devolved into mobs destroying property— this tragic death was an opportunity to express rage on several other felt oppressions and thus turn the tide in an extremely important election year. So how are Christians with their biblical worldview to understand the current situation in our nation?

“A key principle in Scripture from Jesus’ ministry”. READ Matthew 6:25-33. We see here Jesus says, (1) God is our provider ultimately, and (2) Jesus’ followers are to seek His Kingdom and His righteous first— which implies, for example, that we love God first with everything in us and in turn love our neighbors as ourselves, which has great implications for employer/employee relations. Jesus is saying that our identity and satisfaction in life is found in Him, the One who satisfies our needs. Our identity is not as black or white or hispanic or rich or poor or man or woman, but as those who are of infinite value, more value than the birds of the air and flowers of the field. We are made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27) and by being Jesus’ followers we become children of God (John 1:12-13). We are not to worry and fret over what we are to eat and drink or wear— it is the pagans who are consumed with those types of worries! But our identity and satisfaction are met in Him. Therefore, we can seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that He will provide what we need. We can see how polar opposite this is to Socialism with its Marxist bent, can’t we? Marx wanted to create a disgust and division with the inequalities in life so that they could build a new humanity and a kingdom on earth; Jesus wanted us not worry

but trust God for His provision and to be thankful with what we have and to seek His will first to advance His kingdom. E.g., I recall when I saw this dichotomy when I was driving down St. Charles Ave. with a friend from a European country steeped in socialism, and he was railing against the inequalities in America where people could have these huge homes and he had very little materially, and a lightbulb went off in my head—he was emersed in envy, against which the 10th commandment warns us. And I told him that— “You are just envious of what these people have, but what if by their honest hard work and entrepreneurial efforts they achieved wealth? What is that to you? That is really none of your business. You have opportunities to do the same!” I should have added one more thing— whether we are rich or poor, in God’s eyes we are the same; our material possessions do not define us. E.g., I recall hearing about a church, I believe in Michigan, where a wealthy employer went to the same church with his employees, and someone questioned how this could be, and the employees said that he was a good employer who looked out after them— and I think this helps us to see how Jesus’ followers are to live in the business world.

“A key principle in Scripture from Paul’s ministry”. READ 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. E.g., we often hear today that healthcare is a right, but I don’t think Paul would agree. Paul does not even think that *eating* is a right. Paul says if a person does not work, that person does not eat. Of course, he saw people in need should have provisions made for them, as in widows 60 years and older (1 Timothy 5:9). But this idea of people having rights to things such as healthcare, a living wage, universal income, free college, etc. just because they exist was not an idea to which Paul would have warmed. Paul would a have liked what the Declaration of Independence states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certainn unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. That said, it is a worthy goal to have healthcare for everyone and a fair wage and free

college, but these things are privileges, not rights which I can demand. And we realize that none of these are free—they all cost heavily in taxes. E.g., in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have a Value Added Tax of 25% , and almost across the board income tax of around 50-60% (D’Souza, p. 160). We are not to be people who constantly feel we are entitled to things, that we have multiple rights, but rather that we are thankful and privileged to have employee benefits, and strive to give them fairly and generously to employees, but to emphasize a right can make one more bitter and entitled, rather than thankful to God for all we do have. Have you ever been tempted to feel entitled? E.g., I recall when I was a senior in high school at Ecole Classique all the senior class was going on a cruise to the Bahamas, a tradition trip for Ecole seniors. I asked my Dad about paying for this, and he looked at me with surprise and said, “I have never gone to the Bahamas, and you are not going to the Bahams!” That was blessing as a I look back on it-- I certainly was not entitled to this trip simply because everyone else was going. But my Dad was generous, and had me go on a family vacation to The Grand Hotel in Point Clear, AL, a trip which has left me with precious memories.

“Is there a ‘Christian’ form of government?” Let us revisit Sen’s story about Carla, Anne, and Bob who are fighting over a flute. We recall Carla made the flute, and Anne is the best flute player of the three, and Bob has never had a flute. Sen asks, to whom are we going to give the flute? D’Souza perceptively observes that the problem with this story is the question Sen asks— who is this “we”? Carla made the flute, and it belongs to her, which Sen identifies as a libertarian view. A utilitarian view says that Anne should have it, since she plays the flute the best. An egalitarian view says Bob should have it. But D’Souza is right—the flute belongs to Carla to do with as she wishes, as the maker of the flute. This illustrates well the struggle people have today in the U.S. over economic issues and what are claimed at times to be injustices. As we come to close of this series we can see there are four major areas where we should seek to

shape government as Christians. A government that protects the baby in the womb from abortion except in the most extreme of cases, as in the life of the mother. A government which protects against racial discrimination. A government which upholds marriage only between a man and a woman. And a government which provides us opportunities to flourish and be all that God wants us to be. I do not think Marxist/Socialism in the U.S. is the way forward for our nation, for at least four reasons. Marxist/Socialism fails in that it is heavily dependent on identity socialism, focusing on dividing people; it is a worldview that produces and is grounded in envy; it is an economic system we cannot afford— especially as our nation is now 29 trillion in debt; and it threatens religious liberties. May these Christian values influence the way we vote November 3rd and the way we live thereafter.