

Jim Wallis on the Common Good

adapted from *On God's Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn't Learned about Serving the Common Good* (Brazos Press, April 2013)

Christianity and the Common Good

The gospel does indeed say that we are our brother's keeper. All the biblical prophets say that the test of any society's character is how it treats the poor, the vulnerable, and the stranger. The next battle is to understand and practice that vision by seeking the ethics of the common good in an age of selfishness.

Drawing a Circle of Protection Around the Poor

Here is the principle still absent in our current political debate: we must agree not to reduce deficits in ways that further increase poverty and economic inequality by placing the heaviest burdens on those who are already suffering the most.

Neither Political Party Solves Problems

Both political sides take a problem and do two things with it: first, they try to make us afraid of it, and second, they blame it on the other side. What they don't do is work together to confront the underlying causes of our problems and solve them.

Learning from Both Sides

It's time to challenge the hateful ideological warfare between the conservative and liberal sides and their inability to listen to or learn anything from each other. The common good needs the best ideas from all sides.

Money: Last Great Barrier to Democracy The last remaining obstacle to democracy is the dominant power of rich people, their money and their institutions over the political process—a power that absolutely corrupts democracy.

A Call to Civility

We don't need to give up our values, water them down or throw out our convictions to have civil discourse. Too often the church has reflected the political divisions of our culture rather than the unity we have in the body of Christ.

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Why Strong Marriages Are Important

The first and most important question about marriage in our time is not gay marriage, but the loss of the integrity of the institution and practice of marriage itself. Liberals could change the conversation by affirming the ideal and goal of marriage to young people who are shying away from such an important commitment. Lift up the personal, spiritual, and social strength of marriage for everyone and then work to find ways to include same-sex couples in those benefits.

Making Children an Absolute Priority

The choice to make our children an absolute priority in our lives may be the most important personal and social decision that any of us parents can make. How we raise our young is what will most determine the future not just for them but for the ripple effect it will have on their own families communities and world.

Massive Inequality

Inequality is an inevitable part of the human condition. But when it becomes extreme it is a moral and a religious issue. Something has gone terribly wrong in the U.S. when the middle classes have experienced stagnant wages for decades, the poverty rate is the highest in fifty years, and the richest just continue to get richer.

Making the Transformation from Appetites to Values

People were made for family, community, and human flourishing, not consumerism, materialism, addiction, and empty overwork. We must always ask what people are created for, and confront what distracts us from that.

Why I Love My Country.

Baseball, for one. But especially for our best national values: freedom, opportunity, community, justice, human rights, equality for all citizens of every race, creed, culture, and gender, not just the rich and powerful.

The Church's Vocation

Our vocation as faith communities is to offer unexpected hope to the world. The church is supposed to be saying, and showing, that our life together can be better. Jesus is calling us to a completely different way of life that people are supposed to be able to see. When people see the kingdom of God actually being lived out, they are first surprised by it and then attracted to it.

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