

The 2013 National Religious Broadcasters Sunday - Tony Evans

by From the Pulpit & Classic Sermons

The church must take its rightful place as a legislative agency, using the keys to the kingdom to overrule hellish gates and bring order to chaos in the culture.

Duration: 36:49

Scripture: Genesis 19:1

Topics: "Radio"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that this is not a time for ordinary sermons and churches, but a time for the church to rise up and make a difference in a world that is falling apart. He urges the church to be politically engaged, but reminds them that politics is not the kingdom of God. The preacher highlights the importance of the church having the keys to the kingdom, which gives them the authority to overrule and make a difference in history. He concludes by stating that whatever the church binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever they loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Transcript

Welcome to From the Pulpit in Classic Sermons. Each week we bring you a different message from some of history's greatest speakers in the Christian faith and powerful sermons for modern preachers too. This week we have Tony Evans with his message that he spoke at the Sunday service for the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.

It was 1986 when I got my first introduction to the National Religious Broadcasters through the influence and mentoring of Dr. B. Sam Hart. Al Sanders came along and helped to put together a broadcast that we offered to many of the stations in NRB. Dr. James Dobson wrote a letter to many of the stations requesting an opportunity for a young man to enter into the broadcast ministry realm and doors that had been closed, many of them opened.

And through the work of my wife and the development of the Urban Alternative, I come here humbled today and honored for the invitation to be amongst my peers many of you who have walked with me by my side, encouraged me, corrected me, strengthened me. So I do not take this invitation or opportunity lightly. Much has gone into me being here today and of course all praise ultimately goes to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But I am also grateful for the servants he has used. It's been many years since I've been asked to address the body broadly and so letting those years go by I was getting a little frustrated so I called Frank. I said, Frank it's been a while since you've let me preach.

I said, he said, well you know this is NRB and we only invite the best of the very best. And he said, Tony Evans, the fact of the matter is you're not ready yet. I was deeply hurt by that statement and I told Frank I've been practicing, I'll send him a CD.

He said, send it and we'll re-evaluate it. So I sent him a CD, he evaluated, I called him back. He said, you're definitely moving in the right direction, Tony, but this is NRB.

And you're not ready yet. I said, please, you know I have so much to be grateful for. Please, one more chance, let me send you one more CD.

He said, okay, last time. So I sent him the CD. He listened to it.

I called him. He told me I was continuing to move in the right direction but this was NRB and only the creme de la creme, speaking NRB. I said, Frank, I'll come for free.

He said, now you're ready. So I am honored for this opportunity. Every Sunday on football fields all across America, during NFL season, three teams take the field.

There is the home team, the team that everybody's rooting for. And there is the visiting team. And then there is a conflict.

A war breaks out. A crisis ensues. Because these two teams can't get along.

One team is headed to a goal this way. Another team is headed to a goal that way. And they will never agree.

They're bumping and hitting and tackling and blocking, trying to stop each other's progress in a game called football. But in the midst of these two teams that will never agree, there's a third team that takes the field, the team of officials. These are men who have been assigned to be on the field without being of the field.

They're in the middle of the mess, but their design is to not be part of it. Because their obligation goes further than the field or the teams or the crowd. Because at 345 Park Avenue in New York is a kingdom called the NFL.

This kingdom is overseen by a commissioner named Roger Goodell. And the officials on the field are to represent the kingdom of their on the field where they are officiating. Sometimes those officials are going to be booed because either the home team or the home crowd doesn't like the call.

Sometimes those officials are going to be cheered because everybody agrees with the call. But that is irrelevant to the official, whether they are booed or cheered, because they're not there for the teams or for the crowd. They're there for another kingdom.

At 345 Park Avenue in New York, the kingdom of the NFL. Each official has been handed a book. The book outlines the governing guidelines by which all decisions on the field are to be made.

Their personal preferences become irrelevant. Their feel at a given moment is inconsequential because they represent another kingdom in New York on a field where the game is being played and all decisions are to be made by the book that they have received. The moment that they leave the book, they lose the support of the commissioner because the commissioner has assigned them to rule in the middle of chaos based on a book they have received regardless of the applause they may or may not get.

There is another kingdom with another commissioner up north. It is the kingdom of God and the commissioner is Jesus Christ and he has called forth an officiating crew. This officiating crew is to be on the field but not of it.

They are to be in the middle of the madness without acquiescing to it. They have been handed a book. All decisions on the field of play are to be made by what has been recorded in the book from the league office authorized by the commissioner.

In the beginning of this last year's NFL season, we saw what happens when replacement officials are put on the field. Instead of calming chaos, they add to the chaos because either they are not fully acquainted with what's in the book or they're not implementing what's in the book on the field of play. And those who are to bring order to madness added to it.

Jesus Christ has set forth clearly what this officiating crew ought to be about in history. And I would like to suggest to you as I begin today that much of the chaos in the culture today, be it class or racial or political, has nothing to do with the competing teams on the field. That's the way it is.

But it has everything to do with a poor officiating crew. That the officiating crew, called the church, who is supposed to be on the field but not of the field, in the middle of the chaos, but not part of the chaos, has actually contributed to it. It is my contention, it is the failure of the church that has greatly contributed to the chaos in the culture.

Officials who don't officiate well. Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi in Matthew chapter 16. He asked two questions.

His first question was to his disciples, who do men say that I am? All the answers were good, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets, but all the answers were wrong. They were complimentary, but they were incorrect. But then Jesus turns to his disciples and he says, but who do you say that I am? And you can't see it in the English, but in the Greek text, the word you is plural.

So he wasn't talking to Peter, he was talking to the group. If Jesus were Texan, he would have said, who do y'all say the son of man is? Because it was a question asked to the group. Keep that in mind, that will come up again in a moment.

Peter, who must have wore peppermint socks the way he loved to keep his foot in his mouth, was correct on this occasion. Peter said, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus declares to him, you've said correctly.

That leads him to two verses that will blow your mind, that will change the nature of this conference, of your ministry, and of the culture. Because you see, in verse 18, he introduces us to the church for the first time. It is the very first time the word ekklesia is used in the New Testament.

He looks at Peter and he says, now you are petros, a stone. But I'm going to build my program, my church, not on a stone, but on a rock. You're an articulate stone, you've got leadership skills.

Whenever the list of the disciples are given in the New Testament, Peter's name is always first. But I'm not going to build my program on a great spokesperson, a great personality, or one who has all the template for great leadership, as crucial as it is. On your best day, Peter, you are but a stone.

But the church, the thing I am building, whatever it means, is going to be on a rock. Now I know that it is traditional to interpret the word rock of Jesus referring to himself. But I would like to challenge that interpretation today as not being contextually correct.

Jesus has already concurred with Peter that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That has been established. Jesus has asked the disciples who to y'all, plural, say that I am.

So either Jesus has skipped his question or he's not skipped his question to the group. The Greek word *petra*, translated rock, was used in classical Greek of a collection of stones that had been knitted together to form a bigger slab, a bigger cliff, or a rocky ledge. It was stones connected to one another.

I would like to suggest that whatever the church is, it will be built by the coming together of individual stones that would make something bigger than any one stone could ever be on its own. In fact, Peter would be the best exegete of this particular statement. And Peter himself says in 1 Peter chapter 2, ye are all living stones come together to form one spiritual house, referring to the church.

So I would like to suggest that it is the coming together of stones to be something bigger than any one stone could ever be on its own. That would be the basis of the church, which explains why there is so much disunity in the kingdom of God. Because if the enemy can keep the stones from ever becoming the rock, he can keep the church from ever fulfilling its agenda.

He can keep the refs disagreeing with what call ought to be made on the field. He says upon this rock, I will build my church. There's a law in hermeneutics called the law of first mention.

The law of first mention simply says if you want to understand the meaning of a biblical term or concept, see the first time it's been used. And once you derive its meaning the first time it's been used, sustain that meaning unless the text itself gives you permission to change it. The reason why we believe in marriage between Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve is the law of first mention.

The law of first mention has clearly expressed itself when God first orchestrated the human race. And since God has never changed the definition, we change it neither. The word *ekklesia* means called out ones.

But the question on the floor is called out from what to what for what reason? Typically we use the word *ekklesia* to refer to people called out from sin to salvation, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, and most certainly that is true. But the word *ekklesia* was a well-known word in the Greek world. It was used of a different called out group in the Greek city states.

It was used of men and women who were called out from the general populace to legislate on behalf of the rest of the citizens of that state. It was a legislative agency. You see, I think one of the great mistakes that we have made is to limit the church and its definition to a weekly gathering for an hour, what else if you're white, two and a half hours if you're black, to limit the definition of the church to a gathering for spiritual

information, for spiritual inspiration, for spiritual education, and for acclaiming the greatness of God.

And that is much of what the church should be doing. But the word ekklesia in the world in which that word was used was used also of legislation. In fact it's used that way in scripture in Acts chapter 19 verse 39.

It says the ekklesia came together to pass the law. It was a legal entity. It is unfortunate that we have missed, in my opinion, the legal nature of the church.

And you will see that unfold as we continue. That this ekklesia has been established to legislate from heaven to history, from eternity into time. In the same way that a football official legislates from the home office in New York on the field of play in the middle of the crisis, it is the job of the church to grab heaven and bring it into history so that history sees what heaven views as it is played out through the officiating crew.

America has embassies all around the world. An American embassy is a little bit of America a long way from home. It is where the values and laws of America are in a foreign land.

All American embassies are sovereign territory. They do not belong to the country they're in, they belong to the country they're from. If you get in trouble and you're overseas, you want to get across that embassy gate because when you do you're in America now even though you're on foreign soil.

The job of the church, this legal entity, is to be a little bit a long way from home. It's supposed to be where the values of eternity are operating in the location of history so that history gets to see what heaven looks like when heaven addresses that particular issue. So explain to me if we've got all these officiating crews, if we've got all these churches on all these corners with all these members and all these preachers and all these deacons and all these facilities and all these programs and all these resources, how we can at the same time have all this chaos? There must be a dead monkey on the line somewhere.

Perhaps we have satisfied ourselves with the inspirational education definition of the church and missed its legal authorized responsibility. He says I will build my ecclesia. Notice the offensive nature of Jesus's statement.

He says I'm doing the building, the gates of hell are attempting to do the stopping. We often get it backwards. We're trying to stop hell but that's not what Jesus says the church is.

He says I'm doing the building, hell is doing the stopping. So maybe we're singing the wrong song. Maybe we're singing backwards Christian soldiers because we're operating in reverse.

Jesus says I'm building something that hell can't stop. Therefore, if hell is stopping the church, then the church must not be being what Jesus is building because Jesus said the church that I'm building, hell is not stopping. So if hell is stopping the church, we must be building our church using his name and it becomes a false definition of the church.

That's why evils are allowed to proliferate outside of the church so strongly because they've never been addressed inside of the church or if it takes 200 years for it to be addressed inside of the church, then the church that Jesus is building is not the church that Jesus is building and so the gates of hell wind up prevailing. He says gates. The word gates was used in the old testament of a legislative location.

It was where the elders met, the bible says. The elders met at the gates to legislate for Israel. So he's speaking legally.

He's speaking of the responsibility of the church to stop hell's legal operation because hell cannot do what it does unless it gets legal authority to do it. And so no matter how many songs we sing or sermons we hear, if there is not the legislative action of the church to rule on behalf of this bigger thing called the kingdom of God, then we have great services and limited impact. He says, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Well, what's going to stop hell from winning over the church? Now, of course, if Jesus comes back tomorrow, we don't have to worry about any of this. We'll be in glory. But what if Jesus doesn't come back for another 200 years and your children and grandchildren and great grandchildren have got to grow up in this world? What kind of world will the church have handed over to them? Hell is moving.

God has officials on the field. If there is chaos on the field, we must ask what is the officiating crew doing or not doing that has allowed this game to get out of hand. Jesus says the church I am building is unstoppable.

That we are not so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good, but we're not so earthly minded that we're no heavenly good. I'm reminded of Super Bowl 43 when Centennial homes caught the winning pass for the Pittsburgh Steelers to win Super Bowl 43 with less than two minutes left in the game. He goes to the edge of the end zone and he reaches high and catches the ball, but his feet are firmly planted in bounds on the ground.

If he dropped the ball, it would be an incomplete pass. But if he catches the ball, but his feet are not planted in bounds, it's still an incomplete pass. He must be able to reach high while being located low.

The job of the church is to reach and grab heaven with our feet firmly planted on earth so that heaven gets to see touchdown scored for the kingdom of God through the people of God who are operating from heaven to history. He says the way you're going to win in history is I'm going to give you the keys to the kingdom in verse 19. I'm going to give you, I'm going to give you because I'm talking to y'all and y'all are the foundation of the church.

I'm going to give the church the keys to the kingdom. Let's get this straight. Only the church has the keys to the kingdom.

So let's get this straight. The government does not have the keys to the kingdom. And if you are looking for the solutions to America to land on air force one, you are going to be grossly disappointed.

God does not ride the backs of donkeys or elephants. He is the consummate independent. In Joshua chapter five, Joshua is doing surveillance around Jericho.

This huge guy shows up just in battle array leading an army. Joshua's mom ain't raised no dummy. He said, who's side are you on? Because if you're on Jericho side, we're in trouble.

If you're on our side, we have some help. So before I go out here and make a fool of myself, whose side are you on? The captain looked at him and said, I think you're a little confused. And I know you're the leader of Israel.

I know you're my people, but you're still confused because I'm neither on your side, nor am I on their side. I am captain of the Lord's army. I did not come to take sides.

I come to take over. What we have done, unfortunately, is reduce the kingdom of God to the politics of men. And then we wind up whining when, when, when the, when the party or the candidate that we wanted to, doesn't get in like the kingdom of God is dependent upon the players on the field.

This kingdom is dependent upon the building of the church. And so there's a white church that's Republican. There's a black church that's democratic.

So there's a split in the church. So there are not stones becoming a rock. There's a split in the rock.

And when there is a split in the rock, there is a breakdown in the kingdom and there is chaos on the field because we've allowed the politics of men to rule the kingdom of the living God. He says, I'm going to give you keys to the kingdom. What do keys do? Isaiah 22, 22, they gain you access.

Access. You ever been in a hurry and not been able to find your keys? That means you're not going anywhere because you don't have access to your car. Or maybe you're like me.

You have keys on your key ring and you don't even remember where some of them go. So they're useless keys. I am going to give you the keys to the kingdom.

And he's talking to the foundation of the church. The keys to the kingdom. Please note that the word key is plural, not singular.

I'm going to give you the keys of the kingdom. Why? Because in verse 18, he talked about gates of hell. So for every hellish gate that seeks to stop Christ from building the kingdom, there is a corresponding kingdom key that unlocks a heavenly door that brings to bear against a hellish gate.

That which overrules its attempt to stop the building of the ecclesia of God. Kingdom. It is my conviction today that the church has been using the wrong keys.

Not every church, not every denomination, not all the time, but I'm talking more collectively. We've been using the wrong keys. I was in New York City at the Marriott in Times Square.

I had to check out and fly to Chicago to the Hilton in Chicago. I went, I checked in, I took my bags up to the 30th floor or whatever it was. And I got there and I put my key in, click, click, red light, click, click, red light, click, click, red light, being evangelically ticked off.

Because when you travel 30 floors with bags and you got to go all the way down to tell them this key does not work. So I went and I told the proprietor, this key does not work. He looked at me and he said, that key doesn't go to this hotel.

I was using my Marriott key in a Hilton lock and that key won't work. Unfortunately, far too much of the church is using earthly keys in a lock that won't work. And one of the primary keys today is that of politics.

It has its place. We must be politically engaged, but it is not the kingdom. He says, I will give you the keys to the kingdom of God.

I will give you authorization to overrule. Watch this now as he closes. He says, I will give you the keys to the kingdom.

And how will you know if the keys are working? He says, because whatever you bind on earth would have been bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Binding and loosing means permitting or forbidding.

I'm going to give you authorization of authority. I am going to give you the authorization to decide or not decide what heaven will or will not do. In fact, Ephesians 3.10 says that God works through the church before he deals with the powers that be.

That if he cannot work through the church, you will not see his hand as powerfully and as directly as you would have seen it if the church was available for him to express himself through. You know the answer to America or any other culture? It's the church. But it's not the church as individual stones.

It's the church as a rock. The word kingdom is from the Greek word basilia and it refers to the manifestation, the visible demonstration of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life. There is no issue outside of the kingdom.

And our job as the church of Jesus Christ is as the voice of God in history based on the work of the Holy Spirit and attachment to the word authorized by the commission of Jesus Christ is to serve notice on the culture that there is a heavenly say-so about this matter and that the individual stones have come together across racial and cultural and political lines to declare what God has said about marriage, about life, what God has said about race, about class, about economics, what God has said about justice and injustice, what God has said comprehensively. And when the church does that, you'll see sparks flying. Yes, there will be boos from the crowd because they won't like some of the calls of the officiating crew, but we're not there for them.

We're there for another king in another kingdom. And that's why I'm so grateful for so many relationships God has given us in this room because one of the greatest things that you and media can do is not only be an education for Christians and education for the church, but to be the mobilization of the churches under your influence and in your scope. The greatest thing that NRB can do is use its strength and the individual's expressions of it to call together the church in a given area for a comprehensive impact in that area.

That's why we're doing so much with stations now related to the National Church Adopt-a-School initiative where stations are calling together all the pastors and we are providing the training so they can adopt every public school in their community because church, school, and family equals community and it never runs out of ministry. And if every school gets adopted, the whole church is doing one thing, but it's impacting the whole of the community so that people can see in that community the kingdom of God has arrived here. It is time for individual stones to become a rock so that binding and loosing becomes visible.

That when the church speaks, the culture must listen. When the church speaks, it cannot be ignored. When the officiating crew throws the flag, it shuts down the movement of the game because we bear authority.

The players are more powerful than the officials. They're younger, they're stronger, they're faster. The officials are older and slower and fatter.

But the officials have the whistle and they have the flag. The player can knock you down, but the ref can put you out because he has kingdom authority backing him up. We may not be as big as the world, we may not have as much as the world, but what we do have is a yellow flag in our pocket and if we get the guts to throw it representing the kingdom of God because our commissioner is going to stand by our decisions, we can shake this mama up.

This is not a day for cute Christianity. This is not a day for polite Christianity. I'm not talking about mean spiritedness, but this is not a day for regular.

It's time for some super unleaded. This is not a day for ordinary sermons and ordinary churches singing ordinary songs to ordinary people when we are watching our nation fall apart, when we're watching unbiblical worldviews being promoted, when we're watching sex education being taught in elementary schools to kindergartens, when we're watching the redefinition of the family, when we're watching economics go crazy due to illegitimate indebtedness. This is not a time for polite speeches to polite people.

This is the time for the ecclesia to legislate from heaven to history to serve notice on this world. The kingdom of God has arrived. A man one day in closing was taking his bride to their honeymoon.

They were on their way to their honeymoon and they were driving. It was a foggy day. In front of him was a truck and he needed to get by it.

So he pulled out, but the fog blocked the view of an oncoming van and they hit each other head on. His car rolled over into a ditch. He was knocked unconscious.

When he came to, he looked beside him and saw his bride gushing with blood. She had hit the windshield and she was gushing with blood. He himself was injured, but not to her degree, but he knew if he didn't get her help in a few moments, she was going to bleed to death.

But he's out on this, on this road and there was no help in sight except he noticed on a little hill just above him, a sign that said office of Dr. Bill Jones. He thought how fortunate could this be that there's a doctor's office nearby. He picked up his new bride and stumbled up the hill and knocked on the door of the office of Dr. Bill Jones.

An old gentleman came to the door and said, may I help you? He said, save her. She's bleeding to death. Save her.

She's dying. The old gentleman looked at him and said, I'm so sorry, son. I don't practice anymore.

The young man looked at the older gentleman and said, Mr, you have two choices. You can either save my wife or you can take down your sign, but don't have a sign out there telling me who you are. And when I bring this bleeding bride of mine, you can't practice anymore.

Don't, don't tell me you're one thing, but when I show up with life hanging by the balance, you don't practice anymore. It's time for the church of Jesus Christ to do one of two things, to practice being kingdom people, living kingdom lives, perpetuating a kingdom mentality through the influence of the church or take down the sign. Don't don't call yourself Christian and not practice.

Don't say you're a church and don't practice because then the culture is bleeding and they don't believe you anymore. It's time for men and women and NRB to level your influence and leverage your influence. So people will either practice or take down their signs because we're living in a day when the culture is bleeding to death.

Thank you for all you do. And God bless you. You've been listening to the From the Pulpit and Classic Sermons series.

This week you heard Tony Evans with his message from this year's Sunday service of the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville. Tune in next week to hear William Blackburn talk about God's plan for the family on From the Pulpit and Classic Sermons.

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