

18th April 2022

Elections

**“An election is coming. Universal peace is declared,
and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry.”**

George Elliot, Felix Holt (1866)

An election is coming – the local government elections on 5th May. I’m not sure whether “universal peace” will be declared before or after this election. And I’m not going to speculate who the “foxes” or “poultry” might be, and what might happen to either in the future – though I’d be interested to hear people’s take on the George Elliot quote above. But I *am* going to say that the forthcoming election is very important.

It’s not that *this* election is any more important than any other. It’s that *all* elections are important – though given the shenanigans of the current Westminster Government, even the local elections might be taking on an additional importance this time around.

The freedom in a democracy to cast our vote is a precious right. It’s worrying, therefore that the turnout for voting in the UK is so low. The percentage turnout for the 2017 Scottish local elections was only 46.9% of those registered to vote, even though that’s up 7.2% on the 2012 figure. Fewer than half of the population vote for representatives on their local council. The “why?” of that will be for others to speculate – the poultry mistrusting the foxes, perhaps? But it’s a sad indictment on us all that we have such a poor engagement with the political process.

In the Bible’s book of Ecclesiastes, after the poetic “There is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven”, the writer says this:

*Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before;
and God will call the past to account.*

Are we reluctant to vote because it seems like more of the same, the way it’s already been, so what’s the point? But then, if God holds us to account, as the writer of Ecclesiastes suggests, shouldn’t we play our part by holding our representatives to account in the electoral processes?

Don’t be apathetic or cynical, and assume it has to be as it’s always been. Let’s call people to account. Our participation in the democratic process might be a sign that we’re *also* about God’s business.

A prayer for today

Thank you, God, for my freedoms. Help me to use them wisely and well. Amen

An original reflection by @ Tom Gordon

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