

If President Trump Had Been a Christian

by Robert D. Smith (just after the 2020 election)

"Most people are willing to take the Sermon on the Mount as a flag to sail under, but few will use it as a rudder by which to steer."

—[Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.](#)

What would the last four years have been like if those of our leaders who call themselves Christians actually followed Jesus? That's the meaning of "Christian" after all: "Christ follower." The test of faith authenticity Jesus proposed is "by their fruits you shall know them." Do they (or do I) steer by the Sermon on the Mount or just hoist it as a flag? It's the most comprehensive but concise statement of what those fruits should be. Christians take its principles as commandments, not just suggestions, and, though they're often hard to obey, call them to mind often in daily living, especially in human interactions. Obeying them doesn't make one a Christian. Faith and commitment do that. But it's their necessary result.

Most are well known, even to non-believers, who may practice some of them in order to be good people: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Go the extra mile." "Don't make a show of doing good." "Don't worry about tomorrow...Each day has enough trouble of its own." "Don't judge, or you'll be judged." Then the harder ones—and less obeyed: "Turn the other cheek." "Don't be angry with others." "Don't lust." "Don't divorce." And perhaps the hardest ones: "Love your enemies." "Do good to those who hate you." "Forgive."

Most who voted for candidate Trump, as I did, supported his policy promises, and have been pleased to see their results—almost across the board: economy, immigration, foreign policy, etc. So we voted for him again, though many of us—very many—disliked his behavior and thought it damaged the conservative cause. It became clearer and clearer that he doesn't even hoist the Sermon's flag, much less steer by it.

The 2020 alternative was unacceptable to most 2016 Trump voters, but not to all, nor to most first-time voters. How many made their decisions not on policy or principle, but on his angry tweets, personal attacks, and similar behavior by his supporters? How many votes were created or changed by the words of ex-staff, disillusioned conservatives, and alienated media?

The press was strongly biased against candidate Ronald Reagan and for Jimmy Carter's reelection. But President Reagan, [a real Christian](#)*, [steering by the Sermon](#), disarmed them and won over many. Even congressional Democrats softened and worked with him. His relationship with Democrat House Speaker, Tip O'Neill, was surprisingly warm and productive. Most of his cabinet and staff stayed with him and were consistent, permanent supporters. He even seemed to personally influence Mikhail Gorbachov. Most important, the people admired him, first Californians, then all of America. In reelection he lost only one state, Minnesota, his opponent's home state.

Would Trump's term and reelection have been different had he behaved like Reagan? Most human experience says, "Of course," as do Christian and Jewish faith. Remember Proverbs 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Would his accomplishments be more permanent and his legacy more positive? Jesus tells us at the end of the Sermon.

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

There's still time for Donald Trump to grasp the rudder, for his life, here and hereafter, and, just possibly, for his political career.

* [More on Reagan's Christianity](#)

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