Hook - Getting to know one another

* *How is everyone doing this week? Add other questions to get to know one another, especially ones related to the topic in the sermon.*
* What is an issue you have a difficult time understanding how people feel differently than you?
* What was your experience of the 2024 election season, and the discourse around it?
  + Were there any moments where the divisiveness of the discussion stuck with you?
* Are there any relationships in your life where politics has been a strain on your connection?

Book - Scripture

* *Read the scripture passages and discuss to understand* ***what the text is saying****:*
* Read Romans 14: 1-4, 17-18. Also, read Romans 13:8-10.
* What is the context for this passage? What divisions in the body of believers is Paul speaking to and about?
* What does the text say about the inclinations of people towards those who they disagree with?
  + What pitfalls to relationship does Paul mention?
  + How does Paul instruct Christians to treat others in the face of disagreement?
* Consider revisiting some readings from our study of Ephesians this fall:
  + Ephesians 4: 1-6
    - How does the call to unity from Paul in Ephesians work together with his writing about Love in Romans?
  + Ephesians 6: 10-12
    - How does Paul’s description of our enemy as not flesh and blood, but spiritual powers, relate to the reality of political polarization in our world today?

Look - Connections to our world today

* *This section focuses on implications about* ***what this text means*** *about what’s wrong in the world, about trusting God, about who God is, etc.*
* What is encouraging about the call for our allegiance to be first and foremost to Christ, and for our ethic to be love of our neighbor?
  + How does this differ from the common view in our society?
* What are some ways you have seen people living out this call in our polarized world?
  + What are some challenges to living these ideals out in our world today?
* If you were talking with someone who was feeling frustrated with politics and the world today, and you wanted to explain what Jesus had for them, what would you tell them?

Took - Personal Application

* *This application focuses on* ***how God is calling us to respond****. This could be personally, as a family, small group, or church. It could be something to believe, to meditate on, to say or do this week.*
* How do you feel Hillcrest does as a community that fosters a healthy approach to disagreement, conflict, and politics?
  + Are there any steps you wish our church were taking to spread the qualities of intentional relationships in the midst of today’s polarization?
* Where is a place you feel the weight of polarization in our world today? (This could be in your workplace, your family, or a single relationship). How could you love your neighbor in this place this week?
  + Through action?  
    Through listening?
  + Through prayer?

Time of Prayer