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### July 4, 2018: In Christ There Is Neither Democrat nor Republican

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Title: In Christ There Is Neither Democrat nor Republican

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7/4/2018--We wake up this Fourth of July in very grave danger to our democracy. If you don't believe me, read *How Democracies Die*, by Steven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt, which describes the process by which many other democracies have failed. Among the danger signs are demonizing your opponents, changing the rules, pushing every advantage. The soft touch of mutual toleration and forbearance disappear. America is well on its way. Whose fault is this? Why does that matter now? The question is, how do we stop the momentum? Maybe we don't. History does not have a lot of examples of countries that proceeded down this path and stopped short. But my friend and mentor, Robert Taylor reminded me the other day of Paul's saying that brought inclusion to the early church communities. In Christ there is neither Jew nor gentile, male nor female, slave nor free. Whether you believe or not, it should be obvious what is meant. Not that Jesus is neutral, but that your divisions are not his. Humanity is one. When I heard this, I thought, one thing is still missing. Right now, this kind of thinking would lead each side to think, god forgives him and loves him despite his sin--or in secular terms, I am right but he is human also. But that misses Paul's point. Robert once illustrated Paul's point for me. You are not Hitler, he said. However, here is Hitler and here is you--holding his thumb and forefinger slightly apart. But there is God--pointing far across the room. Or, as Jesus himself said, Why do you call me good? Only God is good. So, the point of neither D nor R is that none of us is justified. No one is good. America will not be healed until each of us says, how did I contribute to the catastrophe? Where is that voice in America? And, by the way, that question cannot be answered, I did not fight hard enough for justice--meaning against my enemies. No, the question is, how did I help lead America to mutual hatred? How did I fill my heart with hatred and provoke others to the same? How did I fail to listen to those people I disagree with? How did I take their concerns flippantly? Then there might be hope.