

## Tenth Anniversary of 9/11 – A Day of Humiliation and Prayer

Today is the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Today we remember the attack on our country, the attack on our institutions, the attack on our liberties and freedoms, the attack on our very way of life by those who reject and hate what we do and what we have and what we stand for. Today we remember the roughly three thousand people who tragically lost their lives in the Twin Towers in New York City, at the Pentagon, in a field in Pennsylvania and all Americans who have suffered and mourned and continue to struggle with the events of 9/11. Today is a day of humility before our God; that we would bow down in repentance before our God, that we would bend a knee to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Today, like every day for us baptized Christians, is a day of supplication and prayer before our God, trusting and confidently believing that He hears our prayers and answers them according to His good will and gracious pleasure. This is why the paraments on the altar today are purple, like during the season of Lent when the color purple typically adorns the altar, today is a time of penitence, supplication, fasting and prayer. And yes, whether you agree with Governor Perry or not, fasting and prayer, whether by a politician or a pastor is a good thing.

When you consider the events of 9/11, you might be thinking to yourselves, where was God that day? Why didn't He take care of those men, women and children who perished? Or after looking back over these past ten year and considering where we are at currently, maybe you wonder what will become of this country or what does the future hold for this country; are our better days behind us?

But first, consider Noah from the Old Testament. God told Noah that He would grant the world 120 years in which to repent of her sins, turn away from evil and make Him their God. This warning Noah diligently proclaimed to the people, saying: God is angry and in 120 years will drown the entire world with a great flood. Surely the people who heard Noah must have considered him a fool. The more he proclaimed and went on, the more they said: Do you not see that God gives us food and drink? They thought to themselves: He richly and daily provides all that we need, why worry, we have nothing to fear. They thought to themselves: If God wanted to destroy us He would not give us peace, security, and every good thing. So the people let Noah cry out and preach, while they laughed; until the great flood destroyed every living creature that was not in the ark.

Consider also the Old Testament cities: Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot told His son-in-law: The Lord will destroy this place. But they also laughed and asked Lot if he was mad and demented. They thought to themselves: Why should the Lord be angry with us when He gave us time and opportunity to eat, drink, build, and marry? They thought Lot to be a fool; until the two cities were destroyed with fire and brimstone falling down from heaven.

It will be the same way on the Last Day, when Jesus will come again to judge the quick and the dead; and that day could be today. The people in the world are going about their business of eating and drinking, marrying, planting and building, worrying about their daily lives, looking forward to the next opportunity for thrill and entertainment. Under those conditions we Christians and the whole world should be frightened, we should know that the end is at hand; even now, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, God's judgment is near. The world mocks us and ridicules us for thinking this way, they go about their business as if nothing is wrong, as if everything is okay; but it is not. We need to be like Noah, trusting in God and His holy word. We need to be like Lot, fearing God's wrath and displeasure. We need to repent of our sinful nature. We need to turn from our wicked ways. We need to remove ourselves from that which causes us to not love God above all things.

Instead of asking the question, Where is God? or Why does He allow these things to happen? Maybe our question should be, Why doesn't God destroy us right now? We deserve it. Why doesn't God put an end to it all and just start over? It would be easier. Why doesn't He do to us what He did to the people at the time of Noah and Lot? After all, didn't we say at the beginning of the service that we deserved temporal and eternal punishment? We deserve punishment during our earthly life and even forever we deserve pain and suffering and the gnashing of teeth because of our sins and iniquities. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We do not deserve His good favor, as He has shown to us and this country for so many years.

When there are terrorist attacks; when there are wars and rumors of war; when there is economic and social turmoil; when there is physical and earthly destruction caused by floods and drought and fire and hurricane and tornado; when there are events that make us feel helpless and alone; it is then, like we do today, that we must humble ourselves before God and pray. It is times like these that we must repent and believe on the Lord our God. It is times like these that we must not only fear God, but also love and trust in God above all things. As Jesus said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." And again, "Watch, for you know not the hour your Lord is coming...Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

And how do we watch and pray? How do we act when the world seems to be falling apart and there seems to be no hope? The answer, we pray. We gather here in the presence of God and trust not in our own human understanding but upon the love of God in Christ Jesus. We trust that Jesus alone will break and hinder every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world and our own sinful nature. We hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. We cling to our Baptism, which offers the forgiveness of sins, makes us children of the heavenly Father and heirs of heaven. We cling to the forgiveness of sins and pray that our heavenly Father would not look at our sins, nor reject us or our prayers because of them. We cling to the Lord's

Supper, because in our eating and drinking of Jesus' body and blood our cup runs over, goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And as we humble ourselves in repentance, as we gather here in this church and hear God speak to us and feed us and wash us, we remember the promises of Jesus, "Lo, I am with you always until the end of the age." When things are falling apart, we do not respond with revolt and disorder and chaos, as the world does, we remember what kind of God we have. We have a God of compassion and mercy. We have a God of grace and peace. We have a God of forgiveness and love. And in our baptism, having been joined to Him as one, we live and act like Him. We are like Noah and his family, eight souls in all, who after they came out of the ark and saw the rainbow, prepared an altar and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise to the God of life and salvation.

We have a God, who endured humility and suffering and shame and death, that we would be restored to a loving and perfect relationship with Him. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven to take our sin and suffering and shame upon Himself, to remove from us what we truly deserved, so that we could have what He wanted us to have, a place in His heavenly kingdom. That is why we can cry out to Jesus, "Have mercy upon us, be my Helper" and He responds in the affirmative, delivering us, freeing us; giving us hope and assurance when there does not appear to be any.

A day of humiliation and prayer has one purpose, that we realize we are not in control, that we deserve nothing that we have, and that we have a heavenly Father who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love toward us. He is forgiving and loving, remembering our sins no more. In ✠Jesus name. Amen.