

Sermon: The Greatness of America
Text: II Chronicles 7
Date: June 29, 2008 AM
Place: Jesup First UMC

They asked a group of fourth graders: “What is the greatest thing about the United States of America?” One boy said: “Pizza, because it’s only grown one other place in the whole world ... Italy.” Another kid said: “The greatest thing about the United States is that we are free to go to Church without being arrested.” So they asked little Johnny, age 5, “Johnny, what is the best thing about living in America?” And Johnny said: “What’s America?”

How would you answer that question this morning? What is the greatest thing about living in the United States of America? I dare say that if we went around the room this morning, you and I could spend the rest of our time talking about how blessed we are to live in the United States and how blessed we are as a nation. Now, there are some people in our country who don’t seem to like the United States very much, but almost everybody I know will stop and acknowledge that this is a special nation, a blessed nation.

But where did those blessings come from? Well, the Bible tells us that Israel was a blessed nation. At one point, God looked down upon Israel and said: “Hey, you’re living in homes you didn’t built and you’re drinking from cisterns you didn’t dig. Look how blessed you are.” Psalm 33 says: “Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh.” Even our founding fathers knew that their blessings had come from Almighty God.

When the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, the first thing they did was to erect a cross and have a worship service to give thanks to God. When they wrote the Declaration of Independence, they said: "All men are created equal and they endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And 232 years later, by God's grace, we are "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

And so we come this morning for two reasons.

First, we come to give thanks to God. On the day that the Temple was dedicated, the people of Israel gathered in Jerusalem, and the Bible says: "They knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying He is good; His love endures forever."

And so, we acknowledge today that our freedoms come from God, our prosperity comes from God, and our protection comes from God.

We come to give thanks to God.

And secondly, we come to acknowledge our failures before God. No nation is a perfect nation. As we read through the pages of the Old Testament, we discover time after time, how Israel sinned against God and rebelled against Him. And every time, Israel moved away from God, God chastised them. So that II Chronicles 7 says: "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour your land, or send a plague among my people."

You see, we acknowledge our faults and failures, not necessarily to the world, but to God. I believe God has very specific ways of chastising a nation. When Israel sinned, God sent the Assyrians and the Babylonians. When Israel sinned, God sent a drought or a flood. God does not turn His head when a nation is in open rebellion against Him.

Let us acknowledge our faults and failures as a nation before God.

Now, listen to what God says: “Then it shall be, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, then will I hear from heaven, will forgive their sins and heal their land.”

If we are going to continue to receive God’s blessing as a nation, then we must do four things. First, humble ourselves. Every once in a while we need to get our noses out of the air as a nation and acknowledge we’re not as great as we think we are. Second, pray, not just when there’s a national tragedy or a natural disaster, but always. Third, seek God, seek His direction and guidance and seek to live according to His will. And fourth, repent.

Now, what is going to happen to US when we do those things? First, God will hear us.

Second, God will honor our repentance.

Third, God will heal our nation.

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States. Upon returning to France, he wrote: “I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile

fields, and boundless forests – and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning – and it was not there. I looked for it in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret to her genius and power. America is great because America is good; and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

O God, help us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.