

Loving a Child Named America

Introduction

1. Today I'd like to speak about loving America. This isn't a simple thing to talk about because with the many things that are lovable about our nation there are also things that cannot be loved.
2. This becomes particularly clear in light of the powerful issue of the growing suppression of religious freedom in our nation today. Many church-going people have been shocked and angered over recent events (including members of the Unification Church, who've watched the systematic abuse, by the Federal Government, of our Leader and our Church).
3. But as those who've committed ourselves to God's Will and Way, we have obligated ourselves to a moral structure, to a Way of loving, that transcends the right or wrongdoing of any nation or people.

Let's reflect on this.

God has seen it all

1. First, we need to reflect that God was here a long time before the American Revolution; He's walked with all the nations, all the people of history. He has seen the best and the worst in them.
2. God is the parent of each person, from Adam on. The people and their nations are all God's personal family. This is not just religious jargon; it is the actual case.
3. From the time of the fall in Eden God has not had the luxury to walk away from his relationship with man in the case of evil or rebellion on our part. This is because:
 - a) God feels responsibility for us as our original Parent whatever we have done.
 - b) God is committed to the fruition of His eternal image and character within each of us (the fallen nature of man is temporary) and loves that potential beyond our fallen activity.
 - c) The investment of God's Heart and Love in each of us is eternal, and cannot be withdrawn.

In the Bible, numerous stories illustrate these things.

- 1) The story of Jonah. The book of Jonah reveals the universality and compassion of God's grace. Jonah is asked by God to take God's Word to Ninevah, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, the worst enemy of the chosen people. Jonah tries to escape from the mission (you can tell the story briefly). The account of God's sending Jonah to Ninevah was written, according to many Bible historian, to demonstrate to the people of Israel God's equal compassion on their enemy, the very same enemy they had cursed.

(God speaks to Jonah) – “And should not I pity Ninevah, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left...?” (Jonah 4:11)

- 2) The prodigal son. (You can tell the story briefly.) Reflection: notice the difference between the feeling of the father toward his returned son and the feeling of the righteous son who had served his father faithfully. It is obvious that the faithful son never did understand his father's heart for his stumbling brother. In relating this parable, Jesus helps us understand God's Heart for every man. In the reaction of the faithful brother (representing the church of that time) we are made to see the gap between God's parental heart and the self-righteousness of the religious leaders of that day.
- 3) Paul's conversion (Acts 9). (You may want to use this story instead of the prodigal son.) The blinded Paul is sent by God to the house of Ananias, who is at first horrified at the thought of taking in this enemy. But God sees His son, Paul, in a completely different light, and with a different vision.

WHAT GOOD IS OUR RELIGIOUS CONVICTION AND FAITH, IF IT CANNOT ENABLE US TO SEE EACH OTHER, OR OUR NATION, THROUGH THE EYE OF THE PARENT – GOD?

Loving a child named America

1. America is rightly called a child in this sermon. It is a very young nation on the face of our globe.

2. But more than young in chronological age, our country is a child in spirit, in heart. There is the beauty of our idealism, and spectacular energy as a people.
3. Sadly, though, this nation also has the problems that go with childhood. In the case of our country, they are serious.
 - materialism (like a child in the toy store before Christmas)
 - a selfish form of individualism (a seven-year-old is usually caught up with ME-ism, quite natural at that age; the problem comes when he's thirty and the ME-ism has changed from a child's immaturity into a philosophy of life)
 - moral chaos – a confusion between sex and real loving
 - etc., etc., etc. (Don't get carried away here with too much bad news.)
4. Any person of faith can see: our country needs God. BUT let us take it a step further: this child named America is in need of its Parent. And God, the Parent, is in need of those who will represent His Word and Heart in our country today more than at any time before. This parental attitude and heart, and love for this nation, is the challenge that Christianity is faced with.
 - In our service to God, we can't make the mistake of the faithful son in the story of the prodigal son, the mistake of failing to understand the heart of the father for the lost son (no matter what he had done), and the smug assumption of his own righteousness while despising his brother's failures.
 - Especially today, in the face of rising religious suppression, we are challenged to understand God's love for this country, to go beyond the temptation to despise, and to mobilize that love of God in every aspect of our Christian service.

The cornerstone of our faith was set 1950 years ago, when a young teacher, a victim of religious suppression himself, hung on a cross, and uttered these words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." That statement has done more to disperse evil than any self-righteous farewell speech could have done. (In fact, the devil would have loved that!)

(You can give a brief testimony to Father's attitude toward America here, from his talk in the May 19th conference. You may want to give the testimony to Father instead of the point

about the cross above. IN BOTH CASES, JESUS AND FATHER, THERE IS TREMENDOUS PARENTAL HEART AND FORGIVENESS.

Conclusion

One more point:

MAKE NO MISTAKE, THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR A QUIET MARTYRDOM.

If we truly love this nation and, much more, the world, then we must stand up and speak out for an end to the violation of our religious freedom.

To put it figuratively: if we don't, we will see the day when this child called America will lock its Heavenly Father in the basement. It is guaranteed. AND THE PRICE FOR SUCH AN ACTION WILL BE TOO GREAT FOR ANY CHILD TO PAY.