

Jeremiah Wright was Right: God is NOT Blessing America

Colleagues,

Those two words hurled at the president of the United States in the “sacred” halls of the US Congress last week were a shot heard round the world.

But how are the talking heads seeing it? Mostly as a matter of etiquette. “You just don’t DO that to a US president from the floor of the US Capitol.” “Oh, yes, you can. That’s the way things are now.” Reprimand or not reprimand? Shallow, shallow, shallow. In Crossings lingo it’s a D-1, a first-level symptom that cries for deeper diagnosis. Don’t grab for a bandaid when you see that spot on your skin.

A friend of the accused explained it thus: “There was no filter between his brain and his mouth.” Funny. But not so funny when you think twice. The source of that symptom—only two words, only six letters!!!!—was his brain. The mindset generated the epithet. In terms of last Sunday’s Gospel for the day, that means the malady is theological. Mindsets in people’s heads are theological stuff. Peter’s mindset about Messiahs is “au contraire” the mindset God has about this Messiah named Jesus. [That was the D-2 diagnosis for Peter and the D-3 was Jesus’ word: “Satan’s gotcha” and you’re a goner.]

Mindsets and heart-sets are synonyms in Biblical vocabulary. “Out of the heart proceeds...” all that laundry list of the stuff that destroys. Antidote: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right mindset into my head.” And how are such hearts and mindsets created? Thought you’d never ask. Back to last Sunday’s Gospel for the answer. It takes the sort of

Messiah that God actually sent in order for that to happen.

Good News at the base for Peter is the Crucified Messiah who takes Peter's Satanic mindset with him into his Messianic death. Result: Peter's mindset will be put to death, but it won't be the end of Peter—as it otherwise will be if he keeps clinging to that mindset. What are the specs of Jesus' [and God's] mindset? Bob Bertram in teaching us this very text called it "Winning by Losing." Clearly au contraire to what everybody knows is the "right" mindset, the only sensible one: Winning by winning, by NOT losing. Not so, says Jesus here. If you refuse to be a loser, lose your life, you still lose. Where the Christ-mindset operates, you willingly lose your life [even actively give it away] and (what??!!!) you win, you "save it." And the primal place where that mindset went to work was in this Messiah himself.

Next level of Good News is for Peter is to hang his heart/mind on this Messiah and mime his mindset. And then (final level)—go back to his daily routines and "just do it." Bob's classic conclusion: Life is not "win/lose" Nor is it "win/win." It's always "lose/lose." But there are two different ways to lose. One is "lose, period!" The other is "lose, comma," and the sentence is not yet finished.

Back to those two words in Congress that night.

My grimmest—God-forbid!—thought has been: It's the shot across the bow for Civil War II in the USA. It came from South Carolina. That's where the volley came from that triggered America's Civil War of the 19th century. And in recent days (nights actually) when I can't get back to sleep at 3 a.m. more grisly grizzlies growl in my head. No necessary connections one with the other. Blips on my cerebral screen.

1. You have to be completely blind not to see that God is not

blessing America. Congress gridlocked. Trillion dollar wars not succeeding, which means failing. Healthcare reform stonewalled by capitalism. Capitalism itself in meltdown with only different bandaids [aka "regulations"] applied to assure us "recovery is now here."

2. Recovery is a medical term. You have to identify the disease inside that generates the symptoms. The medics call this etiology: how did this get started? You recover from a disease, not its symptoms. Symptom therapy has a bad track record.
3. Capitalism itself is the disease, not the cure, for this economy's meltdown. Even secular analysts (at least on NPR) are now saying that. As did Berthold Brecht in his "Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny" where Mahagonny is Manhattan. So I got up and checked this quick at Wikipedia. "Mahagonny as a city was intended to be a parable of capitalism stripped of its veneer of bourgeois respectability, as it 'arose to meet the needs and desires of the people, and it was these same needs and desires that brought about its destruction.' Ultimately, this was also intended as a commentary on the state of Weimar Germany; underneath that facade of prosperity and happiness, lay corruption and savagery. Under Brecht's view of capitalism, it is created to provide people the goods and services they need, but it does so at the expense of reducing everything to a mere commodity. Furthermore, since obtaining wealth in capitalism is a cutthroat enterprise, the powerful are no better than a gang of bandits, and the law in turn is run by such thugs."
4. Healthcare in the USA is a commodity. It's bought and sold. Reform won't happen by tinkering with the commodity system. When human health is a commodity, it will finally implode – and the humans with them. Our brand is so

entwined with capitalism that the latter's implosion will take it all away.

5. Like the cost of our current wars, healthcare reform is trillion-dollar talk. How much is a trillion? [When I was a grade school kid Dad had me on the tractor out in the field all summer long. Mathematically fascinated, I'd do calculations in my head. "If the corn rows I'm cultivating here are 38 inches apart, and the hills of corn in the row are also 38 inches apart, and there are three stalks in every hill, and every stalk will produce at least one ear of corn, how many ears will there be to pick in this 53 acre field in October?" The field, by the way, was a trapezoid. And then "If there are 20 rows of kernels on each ear of corn, and 40 kernels in each row on the ear?"] Now back to 2009. A trillion dollars? A single dollar bill is a smidgen over 6 inches long. So for two of them end-to-end, figure one foot. 10560 of them in a mile. OK, just figure 10K to make it easy. A trillion dollars laid end to end mak 100 million miles. That's from the earth to the sun and then 7 million miles beyond.
6. Capitalism is an -ism. Isms are alternate gospels. Nazism was. Stalinism was. Humanism too. Isms regularly come on as ways of salvation, guarantees of security. Fancy term: soteriology. The cornerstone of capitalism's soteriology is: Trust money; it can save you. Trust that more money is more salvation, more "security." In the NT the word for money is Mammon. Jesus himself says it's an either / or. You can serve God OR Mammon, but not both at the same time. And if you choose Mammon, that's "lose, period."
7. Is this Apocalypse Now? If not, what else?
8. An ancient ZIGGY cartoon. He's in a boat hardly bigger than himself. Raging sea, near total darkness. He cries: Why me? A thunderbolt answer appe ars in the stormy skies Why not?

9. Luther's translation of the Red Sea epic: "The LORD looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and sent terror in their midst. He knocked the wheels off their chariots and plunged them into chaos."
10. The wheels are coming off our chariots everywhere. Not just our military chariots. Not just in Asia.
11. The militants who pose the greatest threat to US survival are not in Afghanistan or Pakistan, but here in the USA, our fellow citizens who right now are shooting verbal volleys across our ship of state. Right out in the open. With no regret. Their number is legion. Many have guns. The number of guns too is legion. A powerful lobby (actually a third political party?) in the USA has them already outfitted. What catastrophe will ensue when the next volley is not two words, but one bullet?
12. Americans are no more immune to propaganda—falsehood presented as truth—than the Germans were in the 1930s. Also no more protected from following pied pipers into oblivion. And doing so with gusto—and guns too. Every nation, ours too, replicates the fallen world. Sometimes prayer brings these fully-awake nightmares to closure. Sometimes not. Even the prayers don't always stay on track.
13. God, preserve us here at the brink. Not because of our self-ascribed virtue (phony as you know it is), but because of your "kindness and forbearance and patience," as Paul proclaims (Rom. 2:4ff) even to those whom you had patently stopped blessing in his day. Three times Paul says "God gave them up" to their self-chosen self-destruction. He continues with words that are not more cheering, but still true—straight talk from the diagnosis doctor— "Do you not know that God's kindness (till now) is meant to lead you to repentance? [=the pointer toward real recovery] But by your hard and impenitent heart you are

storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will render to everyone according to his works." Move us, dear Lord, to genuine recovery. INJ.

Enough of my mental meanderings in pre-dawn darkness.

In conclusion. Pasted below is an item from America's first Republican president. It's been mentioned before in ThTh postings. Here's the full text. Not known as a church-goer, Lincoln was yet an uncanny theologian. Doubtless the best theologian-president America has ever had. And unabashedly so in the public arena. And the Senate was not far behind.

Even now, Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day

Washington, D.C. March 30, 1863[Senator James Harlan of Iowa, whose daughter later married President Lincoln's son Robert, introduced this Resolution in the Senate on March 2, 1863. The Resolution asked President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of prayer and fasting. The Resolution was adopted on March 3, and signed by Lincoln on March 30, one month before the fast day was observed.]

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on

that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

*By the President: Abraham Lincoln
William H. Seward, Secretary of State.*