

Teaching for 9-17-08

God's Call to our Nation

Mountains are falling around us. The great mountains we have built of financial securities are crumbling around us, and we are desperately trying to shore them up by our own means. The news continues to challenge us as Lehman Brothers Holdings, Inc., the fourth-largest U.S. investment bank, succumbed to the sub prime mortgage crisis it helped create in the biggest bankruptcy filing in history.

“The tectonic plates beneath the world financial system are shifting, and there is going to be a new financial world order that will be born of this,” said Peter Kenny, managing director at Knight Capital Group Inc., the Jersey City, New Jersey-based brokerage that handles about \$1 trillion worth of stock transactions a quarter. “It’s an ugly and painful process.” (From Bloomberg.com, 9-15-08)

There is a passage in the Word of God that speaks to us concerning these very issues. Psalm 46 is clear about where we are to turn in these critical days.

God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah

For years our nation has worshipped the spirit of Mammon, that idea that causes us to put material possessions, financial security, and our desire to have more above our devotion and worship of the One True God. Jesus made it very clear in Luke 16:13 when He states: *No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* But now look at verses 14 and 15. *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

Even the church has been seduced by this spirit of Mammon and has derided, by her actions, the teaching of Jesus about material possessions. Our lifestyles and our actions have betrayed our hearts and now the mountains we have built through our own greed are starting to crumble. In the words of Psalm 46, the mountains are being carried into the midst of the sea. The waters (speaking of peoples) are roaring and troubled. The mountains of our material and financial security are shaking. It is indeed a troubling time.

And into such times the God of love and grace speaks. And what is He saying to us in these days? *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear.* In today’s troubling times, God is calling us to come to Him as our refuge and strength. He is not far off watching all this on His flat screen HD television. He is right here, very present, inviting us to come to Himself. He is waiting for us to put aside all our frenetic turmoil of trying to make things work ourselves, and inviting us to come to Him. It is in Him that we will find the place of peace and the “No Fear Zone.”

In the midst of the tumbling mountains and roaring waters, God tells us that there is a place of rest and gladness. It is the place in the midst of the city where His “river” is flowing. When God is in the midst of the city there is gladness, peace, and security (Ps. 46: 4-5). We are called to stop our frantic manipulations, our hectic pursuits, and be still until we realize that He is God—to realize that He is in the midst of all the turmoil and chaos that is boiling around us. The events of today are a call from the Lord to return to Him. We can be so caught up in trying to fix things in these days that we do not hear Him calling to us through the storm.

This is a critical time in our nation. We are reaping the harvest of many years of sowing into a mentality that has caused us to serve Mammon rather than God. In this hour, we need strong voices who will call our nation back to Him. Those who will raise their voices to expose what is really happening—to speak the clear Word of God: *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.* In the words of the prophet in Hosea 6:1-3, *Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us, that we may live in his presence. Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.*

Once again, our faithful Lord is calling us as a people and as a nation to return to Him. Are we listening? Will we treat this present day crisis as just another “challenge” that we can work our way out of only to go back to business as usual? It is a question that each of us must ask. How much have I given into the spirit of Mammon? How much of my life and energy is spent in pursuit of material gain and security—leaving God my leftover time and devotion? Do I truly believe that, in the midst of these troubled times, if we corporately returned to God in repentance that He will be our refuge and strength? Do I really believe that if we return to a single-minded devotion to Him and acknowledge Him in every area of our lives, that He will indeed come to us? Do I believe? Or will we return to the same routines that got us here in the first place? It is a call to our nation.

Our Father God, we confess to you that our hearts have given in to the seduction of the spirit of Mammon. Even in very subtle ways in our lives, we have thought that more or better would make us happy. Forgive us for not heeding the words of Jesus that we cannot serve you and Mammon. We ask that you would strengthen us by Your Spirit to return to you, to be still and know that you are God. Help us to know that you are our strength and shield, and you are a very present help in these days. Help us who know you to be messengers of Your good news and your invitation to return. We pray in Jesus Name. Amen