

Pastor's Ponderings

If God can bless America, can he protect you?

The raised public awareness of the existence of God, and even perhaps the need for Him, has been quite dramatic since the terrorist attacks, war in Afghanistan and anthrax attacks.

"God Bless America" is taken as a patriotic salute and encouragement to those who grieve lost family, to emergency workers, to soldiers, to fellow citizens and to government leaders. Perhaps the old war adage, "there are no atheists in foxholes," has some application to our present situation.

When surprising attacks come in such drastic ways with unknown final consequences, many people look for a higher, all-knowing and all-powerful Being for comfort, guidance and protection. This public reference, or perhaps even appeal, to the Almighty is not bad, but I do not believe it goes far enough.

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In many personal conversations and in many news media reports of the general public in the United States, at times I sense an ambivalence in people's lives. Perhaps many of us are reconsidering life styles and priorities; that is good. But deeper underneath there may be a lingering fear or dread of danger, a blankness of direction.

People are ambivalent not only about traveling, but sometimes even about their own daily activities. Some might diagnose this ambivalence as part of the "grieving process," and so it may be. But I would add, if God is thought (even in the general public) to be able to bless America, what about your

own personal life?

Jesus Christ taught that He did not come to be a public hero, but a personal Savior. Not a Hercules for the masses, but a shepherd for each soul. Jesus said His kingdom does not come from careful observations so that a person can see and say "here it

is," but His kingdom is within the person (Luke 18:20-21).

He told Pilate that indeed earthly authority can only exist under God's hand (John 19:11), but Jesus' own ministry was not to establish such an earthly authority (John 18:36-37). Rather, Jesus came to restore each soul's peace with God (as the Christmas angels announced to the Shepherds) and to relieve, deliver and give rest to every person who would receive Him (Matthew 11:28-30).

To say, declare and pray "God Bless America" is not wrong, it just does not go far enough.

God has revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ to be a God infinitely concerned about each of our own fears, sins, anxieties, dangers, and daily responsibilities. If I need to fly on an airplane, He is with me. If I need strength to care for my children, He strengthens me. If I fear enemies or grieve a death, He shows me that He has overcome all in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

God is more than a rallying point for a nation.

God lives inside those who receive Jesus Christ, and in so doing, we are strengthened to carry out family, work and civic responsibilities and duties.

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