

The Soul of America: For Such a Time as This
by Rev. Dr. Laurence L. White
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX

I've been traveling across the length and breadth of this great land, over the last few years, talking primarily to pastors groups seeking to awaken and arouse God's spokesmen among us, to be what God has called the to be, to preach His Word without apology, without hesitation, without reluctance. And that means that I've spent a considerable amount of time away from my family. And so I was very pleased this past January and the end of this last December, to have the opportunity to take my two sons, Adam who is 23, and Aaron who's 20, with me on a trip to Germany. As a Lutheran Christian, that's where my historic and theological roots are and I wanted the boys to see where they came from, and to get some context, I guess you could call it, a setting in which to balance what's happening in our country and in their lives.

So we flew out of Houston on Christmas Day. We landed in Berlin on December the 26th. The end of December, the beginning of January is a wonderful time to go to northern Germany, because all the sane people have left northern Germany. The sun comes up at 10:30 in the morning and then goes down at 3:30 in the afternoon, and in between it snows. Well, we got to Berlin and the boys were having a wonderful time, doing what 20-year-old men do in a great, world-class city. I was looking at churches and they were looking at other things.

But one afternoon, we rented a van and we drove out into the countryside, about 35 kilometers or so, northeast of Berlin, to a little farming community called Oranianburg. Not much there, couple of taverns, couple of gas stations, a few houses, that's about it. Nobody would ever have heard of that little town were it not for the fact that Heimlich Himmler chose Oranianburg as the site of one of his prototype concentration camps, a horrible place called Saxonhausen. It means the home of the Saxons. I took the boys there that day because I wanted them to see what had happened to this great Christian nation, this homeland of the Reformation, almost overnight.

The boys grew quiet as we walked across the vast expanse where the barracks once stood which held hundreds of thousands of prisoners during the twelve years of the Hitler Reich. We saw the bales of human hair, the piles of children's shoes. We went to the medical laboratories where gruesome experiments were conducted on living human beings without anesthetic, because they were not viewed as human because of their race and language. Finally, we walked to the back, far in the corner, to the crematorium that once stood, the oven where they burned the bodies of the dead. And out in front of it was a grotesque rod-iron statue of two emaciated inmates holding the dead body of one of their cohorts toward the gaping doors of the oven. The building itself had actually collapsed, they buried so many people underneath it, that the foundations had been undermined. But the metal supports that once held those ovens were still there.

And as we came up there, three days after Christmas, in front of the doorway to that crematorium, there was a withered Christmas wreath with a white ribbon on it. The

slogan on that ribbon said, "From the Christians of Germany: We kneel before God in bitter regret and humble repentance and we ask His forgiveness for the Jews and all the others who died in this place." As we turned to walk away out across the compound once again, my 20-year-old, Aaron, put his arm around me in the condescending way sons have with their fathers, and looked at me and he said, "Dad, you need to keep giving those speeches that you've been giving."

And I felt good, because for the first time my boys understood in the depths of their hearts what's happening in America, today. Now those boys have always been pro-life, they've never had any choice in the matter. But there in Saxonhausen, for the very first time, they saw for themselves how much is at stake in our America. And how desperately important these issues are and how much we stand to lose if we do not awaken and rouse ourselves quickly.

The Christians of Germany learned only too late that the people of God cannot disengage from the culture in which they live. We cannot withdraw to the comfortable security of our beautiful sanctuaries and sit in our padded pews while the world all around us goes to hell. For to do so is a betrayal of the Lord whose name we bear, and it is a denial of the power, the efficacy of His Word, the word that He has given us to proclaim.

In Germany, as here in the United States, one of the most clever tools in the enemy's arsenal, used to silence and intimidate Christians, to drive them out of the public square, is the lie of the separation of church and state. There was a meeting held in the German capital city of Berlin in 1934. Hitler had been chancellor for just over a year at that point. He was taking the nation through a process, which in German was called *Gleichaltung*. That means coordination. Everything was being realigned in terms of national, socialist philosophy, and that included the churches.

Protests had begun to rise from the people of God about this interference in the church, in its life. So Hitler called together the most important preachers in the land. He gathered them there in the Reich's chancellery to reassure them, to intimidate them if he could, to silence their criticism so that he could go on with his plans for the country. Hitler moved through the crowd that day, patting the preachers on the back, making them feel important, smiling and reassuring each their state subsidies would continue, their tax exemptions were secure, that the church had nothing to fear from a Nazi government.

Finally, one brash, young preacher who was there, Martin Neimöller was his name, had had enough. Today we call him "politically incorrect." He was going to tell the truth, even when that truth was not popular. He pushed his way to the front of the room until he stood eye-to-eye with the German dictator, and he said, "Heir Hitler, our concern is not for the church. Jesus Christ will take care of His church. Our concern is for the soul of our nation." Hitler, with a natural politician's instinct, saw that reaction, and he understood exactly what it meant, and he smiled as he said to himself almost reflectively, "The soul of Germany, you can leave that to me."

And they did. They kept their religion and their politics strictly separate from one another, and as the innocent were slaughtered and the nation was led to the path of destruction, they looked the other way and they minded their own business, and their country was destroyed. I would submit to you, today, that we in America find ourselves in a frighteningly similar predicament. Once again, the innocent are being slaughtered in a 26-year holocaust that makes Hitler look like a humanitarian, by comparison. Once again, the nation is being led down the path to destruction. Once again, by and large, God's people are looking the other way.

I don't have to tell anyone in this room tonight, how far down that path to destruction we've already traveled. You see the evidence in families that are fractured and marriages that are broken, in young people that lose their way and often their lives in a maze of alcohol and drugs, in a culture that can no longer distinguish between lust and love, that is willing to tolerate the violence, perversion as alternate, acceptable lifestyle while pestilence stalks the land, in public schools that have been facilitators for fornication and procurers of the abortionist's knife, in a nation that has lost the moral will to distinguish between that which is right and that which is wrong. We know all too well how far down that road to destruction we have already gone.

And that's because in large part, every time a Christian, particularly a Christian pastor, raises his voice on a matter of public policy. The immediate view in cry from the media and educational elite establishment is, "Wait a minute, we have the separation of church and state in this country! You Christians, you keep your morality to yourselves." As history repeats itself, they smile reassuringly, as they tell us, "The soul of America, you can leave that to us." And we have.

Brothers and sisters, the time has come that has long since passed when we stopped listening to and being immobilized by these lies from the father of lies. This is the genius of America. The recognition that a country like ours, a country where the people rule, must be a country where morality prevails. But that's not the kind of country that we have seen developing all around us every day. That's not the kind of county we read about when we pick up the newspapers every morning. America has forgotten who she is, and if she does not remember soon, it will be too late.

In the 1830s, the French nobleman, named Alexis de Tocqueville, came from Europe to this new land to see what it was that gave America its vitality and its strength. He toured across this country, he saw all that there was to see, and when it was done he summed it up in these impassioned words, he said, "I sought the key to greatness and the genius of America in her harbors, in her fertile fields, in her boundless forests, in her rich mines, in her vast world commerce, in her public school systems and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic congress and in her matchless constitution, but it was not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness, that I understood the secret of her genius and her power. America is great," de Tocqueville said, "because America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, then she will also cease to be great."

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is an offense to any people. There is that indissoluble connection between greatness and goodness upon which this country was built. We have severed that connection over the last few decades. We have sown the wind of immorality and we are reaping the whirlwind of destruction and death. And we, God's people in Christ, have been placed here by the Lord for such a time as this.

In the last presidential election the Christian Coalition conducted exit polls of those that participated in the election. Those polls told them that 29% of everyone who voted, identified themselves as a born-again Christian who participated regularly in the life of their church. 29%, that makes us the biggest minority block in America. That's the good news. Nearly a third! Think of the power that that number gives us. Think of the possibility that is inherent there if only we will find the faith to use it.

But the bad news is, that of that 29%, 36% voted for William Jefferson Clinton, the most pro-abortion president of these United States of America. My people perish for lack of knowledge. America will not turn from the path of destruction until the Christians of this land stop blending in and going along. We cannot allow ourselves, our churches to be used and abused by politicians, by political parties. God is not the mascot of the Republican Party. God is not a Democrat. God is not even an American, which may come as something of a shock.

But of this one thing, we can be absolutely certain, the Lord God Almighty hates the murder of innocent, unborn children. Abortion is an unholy altar that we have raised up to pagan gods of our own lust and greed. The blood of more than 35,000,000 innocent, unborn children cries out to God for justice from the ground of America. The day is coming soon when God will heed that cry. When He does, woe to us, and woe to America. America may have turned her back on God, but God, for some reason, has not yet turned His back on America.

So let us work while it is still day before the night comes when no man can work. Let us rouse the Christians of this city and of this land to be what God has called and enabled them to be, the stinging salt that stops the decay of death, the shining light that dispels the darkness of doubt and despair, the gleaming city set high upon a hill that stands as a beacon light of life and hope to this nation, and to every nation. Let us learn from the mistakes of the past. Let us stand upon the Word of God. Let us save this country that we claim to love, as we become involved with the process in this crucial moment that God has given us.

God is placing before us a challenge before it is too late, and I pray that we will find within the depths of our hearts the souls of courage, and the faith and the conviction to rise to that challenge, and make the most of that opportunity. It is within our power because God has placed it there. It is within our grasp to change this America before it is too late, to snatch our country back from the brink of destruction. With all the signs of the deadly decay all around us are unmistakably clear. Our nation's leaders wallow in decadence and deceit, while the polls tell us that we don't care, and apathy and

indifference prevails. We must care as the people of God in Christ. We must be the salt and the light and the shining city.

As Christians gathered here today, let us resolve not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Let resolve not to let evil men triumph simply because good men have done nothing. Let us stand together as the people of God, bold in the confidence of the Spirit, and declare before our nation, the soul of America, you can leave that to us!