

- We have forgotten You and ignored Your word.
- We have not rightly honored, served, and obeyed You.
- So few are daily feeding on Your word, worshipping wholeheartedly, praying without ceasing, and living for Christ.
- You have called us to live holy lives, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and tell others about Jesus, but we have lived like the world, loved ourselves, and remained silent about our Savior.
- You have commanded us to impress Your Word upon our children, yet we have been too busy with temporary things.
- Instead of permeating our culture with vital Biblical truth, instead of filling our homes, churches, schools, businesses, and halls of government with eternal truth, we have allowed them to be infected by spiritual darkness.
- Instead of changing the world, the world has changed us.
- Instead of continuing in the living faith of our forefathers, their love and devotion to their children, and their commitment to future generations, we have become the “me generation.”
- Consumed by our own lives and material possessions, we have lost sight of all that is important: God and family, our neighbors, our fellow countrymen, and the people in other countries for whom Jesus shed His holy precious blood.
- Now our nation is under judgment; natural disasters have come upon us, we face war on two fronts, evil nations hate us, and international terrorists live among us.
- Economic collapse is crippling our nation, millions are out of work, political corruption is on the rise, and our prisons are full.
- Our children are enslaved by sex, drugs, and alcohol. Abortion, sexual immorality, and mercy killing are protected rights.

Dear Almighty God, we desperately need Your help as a nation to see our sins, be truly sorry, and receive Your healing:

- So cause Your word of truth to be boldly proclaimed!
- Raise up godly leaders to know and do Your will!
- Move Christians to shine the light of Christ!
- Transform families to put You first!
- And once again richly bless the USA! In Jesus’ name! *Amen!*

This and other sermons are available on Bethlehem’s website: www.blc7500.com

Please share them with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers!

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Rd., Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230

Let Us Pray for the USA!

Based on 2 Chronicles 7:11-22 NIV

6th Sunday after Pentecost, 5th after Trinity – 2010

July 4 → 9:00 † July 5 → 7:00



Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, nearly 3,000 years ago, *when Solomon had finished building the temple*, the Lord appeared to him and said: ¹² “I...have chosen this place for myself...” In a similar way, 234 years ago, *God placed His hand of blessing on the USA!* Then, *sometimes*, we have honored the Almighty God! But other times – *like before the Civil War and in recent decades* – we have not!

Therefore, let us take to heart these words of Abraham Lincoln: “We’ve grown in numbers and wealth and power as no other nation has grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. We’ve vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our own 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..., 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 redemption and forgiveness.”¹

OT Israel and the USA have something in common: When they honored the Lord, *they were blessed*; when they dishonored the Lord, *they struggled!* So today, *through His Word*, God is telling us how to yet again receive His blessings!

1. **How to Restore God’s Blessing** – The Lord said: ¹³ “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ **if my people, who**

¹ *America, Return to God*, second edition, edited by Thomas Wang, page 45.

are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Let’s break that down:

- a. **“my people”** – Repentant believers; those who ✦ admit their sin, ✦ are sorry, and ✦ trust in the Lord!
- b. **“called by my name”** – The word “Christian” identifies us as *followers of the Christ!*
- c. **“humble themselves”** – Pride says: *“I can do it!”* Humility says: *“I am mortal, so I trust in God who is almighty!”* In 2 Chronicles 12:7 the Lord said: *“Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance.”* (NIV)
- d. **“pray and seek my face”** – To pray is to actually ask God for help and believe He will answer!
- e. **“turn from their wicked ways”** – Though many pray *AND continue in their sins*, those who are serious about receiving God’s help *are also turning from wickedness to righteousness!*
- f. **“then will I hear from heaven”** – “The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.” (Proverbs 15:29 NIV)
- g. **“and [I] will forgive their sin and will heal their land”** – Our land, *the USA*, is polluted with much sin; for example:
→ allowing widespread political corruption, → banning the Bible from public schools, → legalizing abortion and assisted suicide, → promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (self-identification as woman, man, neither or both) lifestyles, → promoting sex without marriage, → legalizing same sex marriage, and so much more! **Our sins are so great, BUT the sin-cancelling work of Jesus Christ is even greater!**

Billy Graham said: **“If God does not judge America, He may have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.”** (America, 34)

We are not yet the same as Sodom and Gomorrah *but we are certainly moving in that direction*; nevertheless, **God wants to forgive our sins and heal our land!** Though many in our

nation are blinded to the truth, God has made us to be salt – *so we can preserve our nation from destruction*, and light – *so we can shine the truth of God’s Word to others!* Therefore, let us – *as God’s people in Christ* – ✦ humble ourselves, ✦ call our nation to repent, and ✦ call upon the Almighty God to forgive our sin and heal our land!

2. **The Way of Continued Blessing** – These words, *spoken by the Lord to Solomon*, have some application for our nation today: ¹⁷ *“...if you [Solomon]... do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, ¹⁸ I will establish your royal throne...”* In other words, *I will continue to bless the nation of Israel.* Now, *regarding the USA*, I believe that God wants to bless us; however, right now, *He loves us too much to bless us:*
 - a. If God blesses us when we are wicked, *we will surely continue in our wickedness and be lost forever!*
 - b. Therefore, God is letting us struggle, *even causing us to suffer*, so that we will ultimately ✦ humble ourselves, ✦ repent, and ✦ receive His blessings – *both upon our nation and upon our eternal souls!*
3. **The Way of Destruction** – At the end of today’s OT reading, we find a strong warning – *for Israel then and for the USA today:* ¹⁹ *“But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you..., ²⁰ then I will uproot Israel [also the USA] from my land, which I have given them... ²¹ [Then] ...all who pass by will be appalled and say, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land...?’ ²² People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers... --that is why he brought all this disaster on them.”* To see our nation come to an end may seem impossible, *but we deserve it and God can do it!* Therefore, **let us be active in** ✦ speaking the truth with boldness, ✦ praying for our elected officials, and ✦ voting for God-fearing candidates, so that God may forgive our sins and heal our land!

Conclusion: Heavenly Father, we come to You on our nation’s 234th birthday aware of our sins and seeking Your forgiveness: