

GLOBAL LIFE CAMPAIGN™

How Should We Respond to God During a National Crisis?

Thomas W. Jacobson, Executive Director, Global Life Campaign (30 March 2020)

In the midst of this global pandemic, are we really responding to God in important ways that we should, with the types of responses that He is looking for, that would touch His humble heart, that would show remorse, and to which He longs to respond with His mercy, grace and power?

We are extremely grateful for the government leaders, medical professionals and hospitals, clergy and Christian leaders, business leaders, security personnel, grocery store workers and countless others who are responding in right and appropriate ways to prevent the transmission or to contain the deadly Coronavirus. Their wise, rapid, and coordinated leadership across all sectors of society is saving thousands, perhaps millions, of human lives in our nation and in nations worldwide who are implementing similar measures. Many people are rightly focused on God as the Source of our comfort and peace. But what else is He looking for in us?

During this national and global crisis, we are sending this special edition of the GLC Series to everyone on the GLC email lists, and are temporarily changing the schedule to do so.

U.S. President Donald J. Trump, on 14 March 2020, issued a "[Proclamation on the National Day of Prayer for all Americans Affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic and for our National Response Efforts](#)." He was right to call our nation to prayer, "asking God for added wisdom, comfort, and strength," and to pray "for all people who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and to pray for God's healing hand to be placed on the people of our Nation"; and to pray for all the "medical professionals and public health officials working tirelessly to protect us from the coronavirus and treat patients who are infected." He quoted important Scriptures for us to hold onto through this storm. He affirmed we are "one Nation under God . . . we will rise to this challenge and emerge stronger and more united than ever before."

We are grateful to have good leadership in the midst of this unprecedented global pandemic which has brought the world to an unprecedented stand still. But something is missing in our response to God. The last words quoted above from the proclamation seem to say we have the ability and power in and by ourselves to "rise to this challenge and emerge stronger and more united than ever before." That is exactly what our government is attempting with the unprecedented \$2 trillion-dollar rescue scheme (which may cost [\\$6.2 trillion](#)), but that is not money we have; it is \$2 to \$6.2 trillion dollars in additional debt that will be thrust upon our children and future generations to pay back. This action went exceedingly beyond the Constitutional authority we granted to our government (read story of then Rep. Davy Crockett, posted on GLC website). By this action, our nation declared that we trust in ourselves, not in God. That's pride, not humility.

I was pondering, “How did leaders in my nation rightly respond to God in past generations when they faced major crises that could have destroyed the nation, and that cost many thousands of human lives? And how did their responses differ from ours?”

At least 10 times during the War for Independence, between 1775 and 1782, the Continental Congress and General George Washington called the American Colonies to “a Day of public Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer.”[1] From my limited studies of that war, the Americans should never have won a single battle. Yet God heard their humble, earnest prayers and cries for help, and they witnessed His interventions (too much to mention here). Our clergy and president have called us to prayer, but not to humiliation and fasting.

On 30 March 1863 (157 years ago from today), President Abraham Lincoln wrote “A Proclamation” that I framed and put on the wall in front of my desk. During the Civil War, which nearly destroyed the United States, Lincoln called for “a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer” at least three times. I’m going to quote almost every word of his 1863 proclamation, which was issued in the middle of the war after about 250,000 Americans had been killed. Then I’ll make some observations.

“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 number, 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 in 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.”[2]

Observations:

- It was the Senate, representing the states and people of the nation, that brought the request for such a proclamation to the President.
- Both the Senate and President understood “the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God” over all nations, including the United States.
- They understood that God, based on “His divine law,” punishes and chastises “nations . . . in this world” for their national sins, and that the Civil War was a judgment of God for the national sin of slavery and its numerous related sins.
- They understood that God brings “punishments and chastisements” to break the destructive forces of sin and evil, and reform and restore the nation.
- They understood that it was the responsibility of the leaders and people of every nation “to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow”; and if they did, then they would have “assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon”; and then they would live out “the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the LORD.”
- They understood that prayer was not enough, that repentance must be genuine, and that they must also fast and publicly humble themselves before Almighty God if they wanted to see Him intervene marvelously on their behalf.

The Civil War continued for two more years, with total military deaths reaching 498,000. But after the war was over, and the judgment was finished, then God remembered and honored these days of national “humiliation, fasting and prayer.” He blessed the nation and the world with countless inventions and the industrial revolution, perhaps rescuing economies that had depended upon a slave labor force, and He blessed our nation with incomparably greater abundance and prosperity.

No human mind can fully imagine, and no words can adequately describe, how gracious our Heavenly Father is eager to be toward us if we will truly and genuinely humble ourselves before “the offended Power.” But our national sins stand as a massive mountain between us and Him, between us and those blessings and restoration. As a nation, we have rejected the Creator’s

existence and our accountability to Him; rejected the sanctity of human life created by Him; rejected the institution of marriage and family designed by Him for our good; are blinded by innumerable idolatries (whoever or whatever we love, fear, value or cherish more than God; whatever is first that is not God Himself); are guilty of immorality of every imaginable type; and the innocent blood of 61.3 million babies cries out to God day and night, leaving a curse on our nation until their blood is atoned for and the bloodshed stops. In fact, a reasonable person might conclude that as a nation we are at the end of the downward spiral of a culture that rejects God and then is rejected by Him, as described in Romans 1:18-32. As a nation, we cannot be in right relationship with Almighty God until we humbly confess and turn from our sins. If we will do so, then the Ruler of nations, Jesus Christ, by His atonement, can remove mountains for us. But one way or another, the innocent blood of every child must be atoned for, either by His blood, or the blood of others. Let us join together in humbling ourselves before the Living God.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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“Hear now what the LORD is saying . . . ‘Listen . . . because the LORD has a case against His people . . . He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness (loyalty), and to walk humbly (circumspectly) with your God?’” (Micah 6:1, 2, 8).

Sources:

1. The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office). The proclamations were for these days: 20 July 1775; 7 March 1776; 17 May 1776; 6 March 1777; 22 April 1778; 6 May 1779; 22 February 1780; March 1780; 3 May 1781; 25 April 1782).
2. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, compiled by James D. Richardson, (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1910), Vol. 5, pp. 3365-3366.