

The Church's Great Opportunity

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This sermon is based on Dr. Michael Brown's new book, Saving a Sick America, Harper Collins, 2017. All quotations are from that book.

The Church's Great Opportunity

- **1 John 2:9**
The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
- Could it be that our beloved country is beyond hope?
- Could it be that the only thing we have to look forward to is divine judgment?
- We would do well to have a sense of urgency in our prayers and our efforts.
- But there is another side to the story — one that sees the darkness as an opportunity for the light to shine.

Light Shines Out of Darkness

- **John 9:2-5**
Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Application — Jesus made it clear that the man's blindness was not the result of personal sin, and that his condition should be seen as an opportunity for God to be glorified.

This is the perspective of light, which views every negative and destructive and hopeless situation as an opportunity through which the Lord can be glorified, regardless of the situation. In contrast, the perspective of darkness only sees the problem.

However — this does not mean that blindness or sickness or premature death is necessarily a gift from God. Jesus never once said that. Rather, blindness and sickness and death are platforms through which God could be glorified, regardless of the origin of those conditions.

This is God's Order

- In the midst of darkness, God said: "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3)
- *First evening, then morning* (Genesis 1:5)
- In the midst of gross darkness God says, "Arise and shine!" (Isaiah 60:1-3)
- "The night is far gone" (Romans 13:12)
- "The true light is already shining" (1 John 2:8)
- LIGHT always seeks to be redemptive and restorative

- LIGHT sees hope where darkness sees despair
- LIGHT sees potential where darkness sees pitfalls

What is the perspective of light when it comes to America?

We've had dark days before

Before the First Great Awakening

- Rev. Samuel Blair, who became chaplain of the Congress of Pennsylvania, stated, "Religion lay as it were dying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in this part of the visible church . . ."

After the Revolutionary War

- It is reported that in the early 1800's, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall wrote to Bishop Madison of Virginia, "The church is too far gone ever to be redeemed."

Before the 1857-8 Prayer Revival

- The churches at that time were becoming worldly and internalized, and immorality, violent crime, spiritualism, corruption, and atheism were on the rise (J. Edwin Orr).

Sometimes the pollsters are wrong.

They didn't see the Counterculture Revolution Coming in the 1960'S

- In fact, if the experts were to be believed, the rising generation of adults-to-be appeared to fit in quite nicely with their elders' values and expectations. That was certainly the thrust of a late-1961 survey of American youth by pollsters George Gallup and Evan Hill . . . Their research indicated that American teenagers were happy with their world, if not downright complacent. (Larry Eskridge, *God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America*)
- What exactly did the polls reveal? According to Gallup and Hill, "The typical American youth shows few symptoms of frustration and is most unlikely to rebel or involve himself in crusades of any kind."
- **Time Magazine Cover — April 8, 1966 — "God is Dead"**
- **Time Magazine Cover — June 21, 1971 — "The Jesus Revolution"**
- **And What About the 2016 Elections?** Whether or not you voted for President Trump, who saw this coming three years ago? Who would have imagined it?

Our attitude as believers

- We should operate from the perspective of faith, not fear
- We are called to be God's light in this dark and dying place
- We are to shine like torches

- We are to turn stumbling blocks into stepping-stones
- We are to redeem hopeless situations for the glory of God

Story of two shoe salesmen

- American shoe company sent thousands of boxes of shoes to huge warehouse in Africa
- First salesman said, “Get me out of here, no one here wears shoes.”
- Second salesman said, “Send thousands more boxes of shoes, nobody here has any shoes.”

Application — *Everyone needs what we have to offer!*

The words of G.K. Chesterton

- “At least five times, the Faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs. In each of these five cases, it was the dog that died.”

God is moving worldwide

- “The *Washington Post* noted in 2015 that, “Over the past 100 years, Christians grew from less than 10 percent of Africa’s population to its nearly 500 million today. One out of four Christians in the world presently is an Africa[n], and the Pew Research Center estimates that will grow to 40 percent by 2030.”
- The article also stated that, “Asia is also experiencing growth as world Christianity’s center has moved not only South, but also East. In the last century, Christianity grew at twice the rate of population in that continent. Asia’s Christian population of 350 million is projected to grow to 460 million by 2025.”

Why not here in America again?

- Show me the chapter and verse that says we will NOT have another awakening in our country.
- It’s not there!
- IT’S TIME
- For God’s people to get desperate in prayer
- IT’S TIME
- To cast off shame and fear and compromise and give ourselves afresh for the gospel
- IT’S TIME
- It’s time for another great awakening!

Discussion Questions

1. Do you get discouraged when you think about the spiritual state of America, thinking that only divine judgment is in store for us?
2. Discuss the fact that Jesus did not say that sickness is a gift from God; but that it can be a potential platform through which God could be glorified.
3. What is the difference between seeing with the perspective of light vs. the perspective of darkness?
4. How do you see your participation in the perspective of light when it comes to America?