

Psalm 83:1-3
Luther Seminary Chapel
May 8, 2006
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Psalm 83:1-3 (NIV)

O God, do not keep silent;
be not quiet, O God, be not still.
See how your enemies are astir,
how your foes rear their heads.
With cunning they conspire against your people;
they plot against those you cherish.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace and peace to you from our God of life, hope, and faith – Creator, Christ, and Spirit. Amen.

There is something astir in our world today. The best phrase I have to describe it is “cultural pimping:” the intentional recruitment by individuals and systems within our culture to involve our young people in sexual behaviors that are unhealthy for their lives and futures – and all the while, someone is making money.

We do not have to look far to see how this “cultural pimping” rears its head;

- Pornographic websites use names which are one letter different from popular children’s websites, so if a child accidentally types in the wrong name, he or she ends up viewing pornography.
- Men wanting to sexually abuse girls seek them out through Myspace.com, finding out where they live, what their interests are, how they look, etc.
- A local high school girl was allegedly being blackmailed into performing sex acts for a boy and his friends for nearly a year. Parents and others described the situation as “disturbing, unbelievable, and shocking. Cordelia Anderson, a local sexual violence expert, quoted in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on March 22, 2006, blames this kind of predatory behavior on “a culture that glamorizes pimps and pornography through songs and video games.”
- Pages of ads in the back of City Pages, making sex into a commodity, rather than the beautiful gift of God it was intended to be.
- Two million children worldwide; 300,000 in this country alone experience the violence against their bodies, minds, and souls of being entrapped in prostitution.
- Both young men and women get involved in compulsive sexual behaviors online, disrupting their marriages and other relationships. Just this past week, I learned that Christians are often more vulnerable to online sexual compulsive behaviors because of the secrecy of the Internet and the silence in congregations.

Each of you could probably add your own stories or concerns to this list. Yet much of the time, we are so overwhelmed and numbed by it all, we don’t know what to do. We carry on with our usual routine. This psalmist, however, invites us to cry out: O God! Do not be silent! O God! Why does this happen? O God! What can be done? O God, be not quiet, be not still!

In the midst of our cries, in the midst of the cries of the children who are suffering, we know that God hears all of our cries, that God is with us - and we expect God to speak and act.

We believe the promise of Isaiah 58:9a: “Then you shall call and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.”

We cry out to God, and what comes back to us is a call, a call to action, with God in the lead. We read from Isaiah 58:9b – 12:

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Nehemiah heard such a call.

When he learned that the people of Jerusalem were in great trouble and shame because the wall was broken down, he wept and mourned for days, fasting and praying before God. He left his usual routine of cupbearer to the king, and went to Jerusalem, where he set about organizing an effort to rebuild the wall.

There are modern Nehemiahs: Those who have seen the reality of the pimping of our children, who have cried out to God for the injustice of it, who have set about organizing an effort to cherish all of God’s children.

One example is Valley of Peace Lutheran Church in Golden Valley. This church is a “Cherish Our Children Initiative” congregation in the Minneapolis Area Synod. They have specific adults praying daily for specific children – all 140 children from birth to age 22. They have educational opportunities for members of the congregation to learn more about internet safety and how to be aware of pimping recruitment. They have adopted the grade school across the street and are involving members of the congregation as volunteers in the school. They are training people to be mentors for at-risk children and youth in the Kinship program. They are raising up the foundation of the next generation and restoring the streets to live in.

O God, do not be silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still.

You call us to speak and to act, for the sake of all you cherish.

See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads.

Stir up in us the same love for children and young people that Nehemiah had for the people of Jerusalem. Help us to put our heads together and organize renewal, not stick our heads in the sand.

With cunning they conspire against your people, they plot against those you cherish.

We know your love for us is stronger than evil; we boldly ask for courage, strength, and perseverance to lovingly create intentional structures of prayer, relationships, and communities that cherish our children as you cherish us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.