

## **A Pastoral Prayer for September 11, 2011**

Our Father in heaven, this has been a weekend in which we've all been reminded of things we'd rather not think about so clearly. And when we prayed "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" a little while ago, we'd really prefer that this not involve loving our enemies, doing good to those who hate us, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who mistreat us (Luke 6:27-28).

When we're hurt as we were hurt ten years ago this morning, and as we continue to live under the threat of similar terror, we're a lot more comfortable reaching for our flags and our guns than we are hearing you tell us that it is the peacemakers who will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9). We confess today that we have very nearly lost the ability to distinguish between the United States of America and your Eternal Kingdom.

To tell the truth, when push comes to shove, we tend to make common cause with the criminals of 9/11 in thinking that Jesus' teaching on such matters as these is stupid. When we feel vulnerable, we're inclined to trust in our military might rather than in the foolishness of the Cross. Forgive us, Lord.

Part of us does believe that your love is stronger than all the hatred in the world, but we need help with the part of us that isn't persuaded yet. We need a more robust conviction that Jesus the Messiah, crucified, dead, buried, raised, and coming again, truly is your Final Answer to what's wrong with us and with our world.

Instead of asking ourselves, "What if Jesus returns in our generation?" we might do better to ask, "What if He doesn't?" We need a lot of help imagining what it looks like to love our neighbors as ourselves when their beliefs are so very different from our own; and we need a lot of encouragement to put such transforming, redeeming love into practice right here in our town. Please help us, Lord.

For Jesus' Sake,

Amen.