

Florida Pastor Describes President Trump's Florida Rally as 'Demonic'

It's fair to say Pastor Joel Tooley of First Church of the Nazarene in Melbourne, Florida, didn't support President Donald Trump during the 2016 election, and he's not much of a fan of his policies.

So why would someone who has opposed the president every step of the way, and continues to oppose him and his policies subject himself to what was the equivalent of a pep rally in Florida last weekend? Further still, why would he take his 11-year-old child along?

"I talked my 11-year-old daughter into coming with me," he wrote in a very lengthy Facebook post, in which he assured his readers on several occasions he doesn't support the president. "After all, how many times do you get to see the President of the United States in person—let alone in your hometown? I was eager for her to have this experience. It has to be a pretty cool thing, as a kid to see Air Force One, the president and the First Lady."

Tooley wrote about the exhilaration of seeing Air Force One pull up and of the electric atmosphere. But he was troubled by the way Trump supporters were reacting, particularly to the Lee Greenwood song "God Bless the USA" and First Lady Melania Trump's recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

He wrote:

I posted my play-by-play feedback of "God Bless the USA!" (he referred to it as "America's Worship Song") in an earlier post ... it was almost church-like. People sang along, raising their hands and were emotionally moved by this

anthem. It was intriguing to watch.

People were being ushered into a deeply religious experience ... and it made me completely uncomfortable.

I love my country; I honor those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom and I respect our history and what we stand for, but what I experienced in that moment sent shivers down my spine. I felt like people were here to worship an ideology along with the man who was leading it. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't the song per se—it was this inexplicable movement that was happening in the room. It was a religious zeal.

You might liken it to the experience fans would have after their favorite team won the Super Bowl—faces painted, banners flying, confetti in the air and celebrating.

But this—this was deeper.

He also wrote:

The First Lady approached the platform and in her rich accent, began to recite the Lord's prayer.

I can't explain it, but I felt sick. This wasn't a prayer beseeching the presence of Almighty God; it felt theatrical and manipulative.

People across the room were reciting it as if it were a pep squad cheer. At the close of the prayer, the room erupted in cheering. It was so uncomfortable. I observed that Mr. Trump did not recite the prayer until the very last line, "be the glory forever and ever, amen!" As he raised his hands in the air, evoking a cheer from the crowd, "USA! USA! USA!"

Tooley later described holding a walker for a woman who stood up on it to hold up an anti-Trump sign, saying he didn't know what she was doing until after she had done it. Then, he described the violent confrontations between protesters and

supporters in the crowd, calling the rage of the president's supporters 'demonic.'

He said the experience left his daughter traumatized.

But was the assessment of the event an honest one? He describes himself as someone who doesn't support the president—and his personal Facebook feed is certainly testament to that fact—and as an immigration and refugee activist.

Here's what he wrote about another prayer that was given before the event started:

A pastor got up to pray and repeatedly prayed throughout his prayer, "Thank you for making this the greatest nation on earth ... in Jesus' name."

Uh-uh. No. No way, José.

Pastor, this is not the greatest nation on earth. The greatest nation on earth does not exist. Are we a great nation? Definitely. But there are many other great nations as well. Pastor, you have your eyes on a different kind of "greatness" and certainly a different kind of kingdom. Shame on you for praying those words in Jesus' name!

Tooley also posted a couple of different Facebook Live videos while he waited for the event to begin. In one, he panned the room as it was beginning to fill up and noted that he and his daughter were "probably in the minority." In the other, he seemed to be mocking those who were singing along to "God Bless the USA."

Some of those who also attended the event and read his commentary certainly had a different view, with some suggesting that his story may have been made up. One wrote:

Pastor Joel Tooley's remarks don't represent what I experienced. Melania Trump's prayer was brave, affecting and

uplifting. The cheering afterward was an affirmation of her character and an exaltation. Quite a contrast to some of the remarks of our former first lady. There is similarly NOTHING wrong with a joyful singing of “God Bless the USA.” And yes it is a “deeply religious” experience—to truly acknowledge that our Nation would have never been and will not even continue to exist without Divine Providence. God Bless the USA, and God Bless the Trump family.

[Click here to read the entire commentary.](#) Fair warning: like most Facebook content, there is no filter for profanity in the comments. {eoa}