

Remnant Life Church

July 2, 2017

Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land

Psalm 33:12

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.

- Tuesday; celebrate 241st anniversary of the birth of our nation
- But the truth is we celebrate not only our independence from tyranny but also, our dependence on God
 - Now that second part has been all but eliminated from our thinking today
 - It is most certainly not taught in our schools
 - But the most treasured historical document of our nation's history clearly states this
 - It opens with these words – "...dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal and endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights."
 - It ends with these - "And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."
 - Divine Providence is God; reliance means dependence
 - Our nation's founding document declared independence from Great Britain; but with equal passion, dependence upon God.
- The title of this sermon is Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land
 - Those words have great significance as they are etched on the Liberty Bell
 - Why on a bell?
 - The 2nd Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, approved the declaration on July 2nd
 - The first signatures were affixed on July 4th
 - The first public reading on July 8
 - That reading was celebrated by a band and the ringing of the city's bells
 - The very first bell rung, so the story is told, was the one hanging in the belfry of the Pennsylvania State House (renamed Independence Hall) most likely by Andrew McNair, the doorkeeper (custodian) of the sitting congress
 - It was given the name Liberty Bell by an abolitionist group in the 1830's
 - Because of the words inscribed - "*Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof!*"
 - This is not a quote from one of the early founding fathers but from **Lev. 25:10**
 - A brief history of the bell
 - Commissioned in 1752 to be made by the London firm of Lester and Post
 - First ringing the rim cracked
 - John Pass and John Stowe melted it down and recast it
 - Its first ringing the sound was like "2 coal carts banging together"

- Recast a 2nd time
 - Famous crack occurred sometime in the early 1840's
- The signing of the declaration did not end the war nor guarantee freedom
- In Sept 1777 the British are about to occupy Philadelphia because Washington lost the Battle of Brandywine
 - British believed that to occupy the seat of independence would lead to the winning of the war
 - Metal was scarce and it was thought the British would melt the bells of the city to make cannons
 - The 11 bells of the city, including the one in the state house, were taken down and moved to a village founded by William Allen one of the wealthiest men in the colonies 50 miles north of the city (Allentown)
 - 700 wagons were sent out with the bells and other important artifacts covered in hay and manure under the guard of 200 cavalrymen on Sept 24, 1777
 - Upon their arrival they were hidden under the floorboards of the Zion German Reformed Church until 9 months later, when the British evacuated Philadelphia, the bells were returned and hung again
 - That church is still very active today
 - Liberty Bell museum in their basement
- The political and cultural climate of our country today denies the importance of God in that time in spite even of the passage we read on the bell
 - Talk show host, noted for his stance against God, with call-in listener discussing the early role of Christianity in our nations' founding...
 - "Why do Christians think they had anything special to do with the founding of this country... Anybody who reads history books knows that Christianity was no more involved in America's founding than any other religion."
 - If this guy really did know our history he would know that nothing was further from the truth
- In 1504 Christopher Columbus wrote in his journal the reason for setting out to discover a new land: "I was led of the Holy Spirit to carry the message of the Gospel to undiscovered lands."
- In 1620 the Pilgrims drafted the Mayflower Compact. "In the name of God, amen. Having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, covenant and combine ourselves together."
- In 1643, 23 years later, the Puritans formed a group and wrote The New England Confederation; this was the first written constitution and a forerunner for those men in 1776. The New England Confederation Constitution begins with these words "Whereas we all came into these parts with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace."
 - One purpose of the new land was the freedom of worship

- Church of England began in 1534 by Henry VIII because Pope Clement VII of the Catholic Church in Rome would not grant him an annulment from his wife Catherine of Aragon and so that he could marry Anne Bolyn
 - The Puritans, knowing the corrupt state of the Church of England left for the new land America for the purpose of showing how a nation could prosper if it's citizens lived under the laws of God and not the state or a king.
- What about the colonies themselves?
 - The Delaware Charter, the first state to ratify the constitution, defines the purpose of their Colony, "To further propagate the Holy Gospel."
 - The Virginia Charter assures the right for people to live in "Christian peace" and instructs the people to: "Propagate the Christian religion to such people who yet live in ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God."
 - The Rhode Island Compact: "We submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords."
 - George Washington's in his personal prayer book wrote: "Oh, eternal and everlasting God, direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb and purge my heart by the Holy Spirit. Daily, frame me more and more in the likeness of thy son, Jesus Christ, that living in thy fear, and dying in thy favor, I may in thy appointed time obtain the resurrection of the justified unto eternal life. Bless, O Lord, the whole race of mankind and let the world be filled with the knowledge of thy son, Jesus Christ."
 - John Quincy Adams (6th President)
 - Father was John Adams – 1st VP; 2nd Pres
 - Coauthor of the DoI with Jefferson, Franklin, Robert Livingston and Roger Sherman
 - Writing in 1821 about the Declaration of Independence, "From the time of the Declaration of Independence, the American people were bound by the laws of God and the laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which they all acknowledge as the root of their conduct. We all came together to obey the word of God."
 - Was an early leader of the American Bible Society founded in 1816
 - Elias Boudinot – first president of the ABS (former President of the Continental Congress)
 - John Jay – first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court – president of ABS
 - Patrick Henry: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not but religionists but by Christians, not on religion but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."
 - Benjamin Franklin: after a rather long debate on the writing of the DoI "Gentlemen, if it is true that not one single petal from any flower falls to the ground without escaping God's attention, will the distress of this nation go unheeded? Let us therefore determine to seek His face."
 - They stopped debating and began to pray and seek the wisdom of God.
 - Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence -- 53 of them were professing Christians
 - In 1782, the United States Congress voted this resolution: "The Congress of the United States recommends and approves the Holy Bible for use in all schools."

- What is the genesis of the three branches of our government?
 - Executive, Legislative, and Judicial
 - **Isaiah 33:22** - *"For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us."*
 - For the Lord is our Judge [judicial]
 - ...our Lawgiver [legislative]
 - ...our King [that's executive]
 - The founding fathers turned to the Scripture for guidance
- What about the role of the church and its pastors in America's early days.
 - A preacher named Frances Bellemy wrote our "Pledge of Allegiance."
 - Another preacher, Samuel Smith wrote the Hymn "My Country 'Tis of Thee."
- Pastor John Leland wrote the introduction of the first Amendment to the Constitution.
- Prior to the Civil War (this weekend is the 154 anniversary), 90% of all of America's College Presidents were preachers of the Gospel.
- John Harvard a Pastor in Charlestown, Massachusetts and the man for whom Harvard University is named stated that the purpose of the University was, "That every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main ends of his life and studies: to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life and therefore to lay Christ as the foundation of all knowledge and learning, and see that the Lord only gives wisdom. To let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek Christ Jesus as Lord and Master."
 - As a matter of fact, if you can locate Harvard's original seal, the motto states, "Truth for Christ and the Church."
 - Today it has been changed to the Latin *Veritas* which simply means "Truth"
- Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, William and Mary and Columbia were all founded by pastors and church affiliations with the expressed intent to educate young men for Christ and the preaching of God's Word.
- American's first schoolbook was the "New England Primer."
 - Lord's Prayer on its cover.
 - It taught the alphabet in theological verse. A. In Adam's fall we sinned all. B. It's Heaven to find, the Bible's mind. C. Christ crucified for sinners died...

What is America's hope?

- **Psalm 33:12** *"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance."*
- 1. We must wake up to the different world we live in
 - a. Rip Van Winkle – (Washington Irving – 1819) - pre- revolutionary war time; lazy and unhappy at home; drinks moonshine in the Catskill mountains; sleeps for 20 years; wakes up after the revolutionary war; wanders into town declaring himself a loyal subject of the king; the people react in an angry way
 - i. A political commentary on the state of the young nation
 - b. The church seems to have fallen asleep and the world changed
 - c. This is not to move away from the eternal truth of God's Word

- i. Rather the way we see the people who live around us
 - ii. Showing God's love is more important today for the church than ever before
 - d. Jesus' words to the church in Sardis said this very thing (to the 7 churches in Asia Minor)
 - i. **Rev. 3:2-3** - *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*
 - e. We too as a nation must return to what we have received and heard
2. We must make a stand for righteousness and truth
- a. Separation of church and state has been the primary weapon of our society today to silence the voice of the Christian and the church
 - b. We are not second classed citizens that must keep our mouths shut!
 - c. We must speak out for the Kingdom of God; His Word commands us to
 - i. **Matt 5:13-14** – *the salt of the earth...the light of the world*
 - ii. **Psalm 107:2** – *Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story*
 - iii. **Isa 58:1** - *Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.*
 - d. The Bible is filled with examples of Godly men who would not simply stand by quietly in the face of sin...
 - i. Moses petitioned Pharaoh at least 10 times to release God's people
 - ii. The prophet Nathan confronted King David about his sin with Bathsheba
 - iii. Elijah faced off with wicked King Ahab and the prophets of Baal
 - iv. Isaiah preached against the moral decay of the nation
 - v. Daniel pronounced judgement against King Nebuchadnezzar for idol worship
 - vi. John the Baptist exposed the sin of Herod's adultery
 - e. We must be willing to take a stand!
 - i. The killing of unborn babies is wrong!
 - ii. Redefining the God-ordained institution of marriage between a man and woman to include homosexual unions is wrong!
 - iii. The courts attempting to take away our religious heritage is wrong!
 - f. Do you have the courage to stand for what is right when everyone else is saying you are wrong?

September 11 is an important date in our history.

On September 11, a foreign enemy attacked America. There was smoke and fire that obscured the horrible loss of life from the explosions. But I'm not talking about September 11, 2001, this was September 11, 1814. The British sea forces started bombarding Ft. McHenry in Baltimore, America's largest seaport at the time. It is the War of 1812, and most Americans don't realize how close we came to surrendering our new-found independence that had been won only thirty

years earlier. Three weeks prior, British General Robert Ross had made a tactical error. Instead of attacking Baltimore immediately, he first attacked Washington D.C. which had at the time only 8,000 residents of which half that number were slaves. There was little resistance, and the British captured Washington easily. President James Madison had fled earlier in the day, but Dolly Madison, his wife, had remained at the White House setting her huge table with forty places for what she had hoped would be a victory banquet. When she saw the British soldiers approaching the White House grounds she quickly took a painting of George Washington down from the wall, cutting it from its frame, and an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. The enemy soldiers entered the White House and found the table set for a banquet with food in the kitchen. General Ross and his officers sat down and enjoyed a sumptuous meal, courtesy of the First Lady. Then, they set fire to the White House and other public buildings. Dolly Madison watched from a nearby hillside as our nation's capital burned.

However, the very next day, an unusual weather phenomenon occurred. Although violent storms seldom make landfall around Washington, a violent hurricane roared ashore and two hours of torrential rain and winds extinguished the fires, meaning the White House wasn't completely destroyed. Tornadoes spawned by the hurricane killed more British soldiers than the battle of Washington itself! The weather was so bad that General Ross decided to leave Washington rather than occupy it. As he was leaving he asked an American lady along the way: "Great God, Madam! Is this the kind of storm to which you are accustomed in this infernal country?" The lady answered, "No, Sir, this is a special interposition of Almighty God to drive our enemies from our city."

You won't read this in the history books, but that storm probably turned the tide and made the difference between defeat and victory in the War of 1812. Had Washington burned to the ground and the British troops not been decimated by the storm, we might all today be loyal subjects of the Queen! But God intervened!

General Ross then moved what was left of his troops north toward Baltimore. On the fateful date of 9/11, (September 11, 1814) he launched the attack on the final American stronghold of Fort McHenry that guarded the Baltimore harbor. He sent orders for the ships in the harbor to start shelling the Fort. On the following day however, September 12, General Ross was fatally wounded by an American teenage sniper as he set out to lead his troops. Ross was carried to a ship for medical attention and died there.

Meanwhile, a lawyer from Baltimore who was also a published hymn writer rowed out under a flag of truce to one of the British ships to discuss a prisoner exchange. He successfully negotiated the exchange, but because the bombardment of the Fort had commenced since he had boarded, he could not leave the ship as a fierce attack on Fort McHenry was underway. The British Navy was the strongest in the world and had the most modern weapons of the time. They fired over 1,500 shots at Fort McHenry including the new Congreve Rockets that left red trails of sparks as they streaked through the sky. ("the rockets' red glare") The ship cannons shot bombs with delayed fuses that often exploded in the sky before they reached the target ("the bombs bursting in air"). The commander of Ft. McHenry was Major George Armistead. He realized the importance of this battle for the future of the young nation and so to inspire his troops, he ordered a huge battle flag to fly over the fort. It was 40 feet long and 32 feet wide with fifteen stars and fifteen stripes to represent the 15 young states - each red and white stripe was two feet tall.

The young lawyer and hymn writer was forced to watch the terrible bombardment from the British ship in the harbor. As the sunset and night fell, he caught glimpses of the huge flag but

throughout the night it was often obscured by the smoke of the bombing. As the onslaught continued he wondered if there would be a flag, a fort, or even a nation by the next morning. Because of the constant bombing, it was impossible to sleep, so early the next morning the young man by the name of Francis Scott Key, rushed to the rail of the ship to see the damage. The early eastern sun lit the fort and as the gentle breeze blew the smoke away, there was silence, because the British had expended all their ammunition. He saw an amazing sight. There fluttering in the morning breeze was the huge flag--tattered from shrapnel, but still flying proud. He was so moved he wrote down a hymn on the back of a letter he had in his pocket. Of course that hymn later became our national anthem.

Listen to his words again: "O! Say can you see by the dawn's early light; What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming. Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. Oh say does that star-spangled banner yet wave O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" That hymn was sung and played for years after the War of 1812, but it wasn't until 1932 that it became our official national anthem. All of us who love America also love the flag and the national anthem, but notice the first stanza ends with a question. DOES the star-spangled banner yet wave over our land? Well it does now, but for how much longer?

Francis Scott Key actually answers his own question in the rest of his hymn. The biggest problem with our national anthem, however, is that we stop singing after the first stanza and most people don't even know that there are 3 more verses. You should read all of them, but the last one is the best. It doesn't end with a question; it ends with a powerful declaration. And it is a declaration that America needs to wake up and rediscover.

"O! Thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand; Between their loved home and the war's desolation! Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n rescued land; Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must, when our cause is just, And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust.' And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

- The Liberty bell could not remain hidden under floorboards; it needed to be in a place where it could be heard
- Just as it is engraved on the side of the bell we too are called to "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof!"
- Jesus said in his first sermon following his temptation in the wilderness: "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" [Luke 4: 18-19](#)
- A bell does no good if it is not rung and a Gospel does no good if it is not proclaimed.
- Pray for our nation and stand for what is right – you just might start a revolution