

7-4-21- Independence Day

Sermon- The Rock of Liberty

Scripture- 2 Kings 23:1-3, CTW Ps. 30

Hymns- 757,644,698

Theme- The entire Biblical narrative was a source of information and inspiration to the Founding Fathers of our Country. In it they found both the dream of independence from the tyranny of others and the freedom to follow the word of God as He intended. So, America, how are things going?

I. Introduction: The Significance of this Day

A. Biblical Precedent The 4th of July is an annual day of celebration and remembrance like that described in Exodus 13:8-10: "On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.'⁹ This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the LORD is to be on your lips. For the LORD brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand.¹⁰ You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year."

B. It is Good for God's people to Confirm the Covenant
In today's scripture, King Josiah called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and did two things...he "read in their hearing all the words from the Book of the Covenant," then he and the people confirmed that they would abide by the guidelines contained therein. They pledged their allegiance to God.

The Founding Fathers were all about our need to be aware that God's hand of providence was actively involved in the deliverance of this fledgling experiment in freedom called America, and they were well aware of the need for us to rely upon God in all things.

For example, following Patrick Henry's famous "Give me Liberty or give me Death" speech in Virginia, British troops began seizing public supplies and the colonist's gunpowder stored in

Williamsburg. Patrick Henry, unwilling to allow this British action to go unchecked, gathered the local militia and addressed them in an impassioned speech which reminded them of

1. the pillar of fire which guided the children of Israel (Exodus 13:21-22);
2. the water gushing from the rock at Horeb (Exodus 17:6);
3. the miraculous passage of the Red Sea (Exodus 14);
4. and then, with his eyes and arms uplifted, and his whole soul burning with inspiration, declared that the same God still ruled in the heavens-that He was watching from His throne, the oppressions of the people in America, and that He was still strong to deliver and mighty to save (Psalm 24:8, Zephaniah 3:17).

C. The Design of Our Official Seal: The same day that Congress approved the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), it also appointed John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin to draft a seal to characterize the spirit of the new nation. Franklin's proposal was directly from the Exodus story:

Moses lifting up his staff and dividing the Red Sea, and Pharaoh in his chariot overwhelmed with the waters, with this motto as the banner: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God"

Jefferson likewise proposed a seal to contain:

The children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The seal as finally approved by the Committee was:

Pharaoh sitting in an open chariot, a crown on his head and a sword in his hand, passing through the divided waters of the Red Sea in pursuit of the Israelites; rays from a pillar of fire in the cloud, expressive of the divine presence and command,

beaming down on Moses, who stands on the shore and extending his hand over the sea, causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh.

II. Faith and Perseverance in Times of Adversity

A. Jesus says: "Do not let your hearts be troubled...trust in God, trust also in me!" (John 14:1).

By 1778, the Americans had suffered many military defeats. While they had won a major victory in the Battle of Saratoga in September 1777, the overall trend had not been good. Yet Declaration Signers such as Benjamin Rush of Pennsylvania were not discouraged, knowing that the war was far from over.

Rush wrote to Patrick Henry, and likening America's struggle to that of the Jews against the Egyptians, noted that we were still early in the story...even though we had taken the first step, there were still many obstacles in the wilderness that would require God's intervention if we were to ever reach the promised land:

"Sir, we have only passed the Red Sea. A dreary wilderness is still before us, and unless a Moses or a Joshua are raised up in our behalf, we must perish before we reach the Promised Land."

B. God Enables His People by Raising Up Leaders

Just as God raised up Moses, Aaron and Joshua, and Caleb in Israel, so too in America's history He raised up leaders for the purpose of securing the things that are described in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution.

These are the men, who fully acknowledged God as the author of plans to form this great country, and who placed their trust in him to lead them to declare independence and then on to victory against those who would oppress them as the Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites.

The list reads like a who's who of American History...Washington, Jefferson, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Madison, Rush, Franklin,

Henry, Hamilton, Boudinot...wait a minute, Boudinot...that is not a household name...who in the world was he?

C. Consider the story of Elias Boudinot

Boudinot was a lawyer and statesman from Elizabeth, New Jersey who was a delegate to the Continental Congress and served as President of Congress from 1782 to 1783. He was elected as a U.S. Congressman for New Jersey following the Revolutionary War. He was appointed by President George Washington as Director of the United States Mint, serving from 1795 until 1805.

On September 24, 1789, the House of Representatives voted to recommend the First Amendment of the newly drafted Constitution to the states for ratification. The next day, Congressman Boudinot proposed that the House and Senate jointly request of President Washington to proclaim a day of thanksgiving for "the many signal favors of Almighty God."

Boudinot said that he could not think of letting the session pass over without offering an opportunity to all the citizens of the United States of joining, with one voice, in returning to Almighty God their sincere thanks for the many blessings he had poured down upon them.

In his later years, Boudinot invested and speculated in land. He owned large tracts in Ohio including most of Green Township in what is now the western suburbs of Cincinnati, where there is a street bearing his surname. At his death, he willed 13,000 acres (53 km²) to the city of Philadelphia for parks and city needs.

Some notable Boudinot Quotes:

- Let us be religiously careful in our choice of all public officers...and judge of the tree by its fruits."
- "Good government generally begins in the family, and if the moral character of a people once degenerate, their political character must soon follow."

III. Therefore, Independence Day really is a celebration of the Deliverance by God of His people!

A. There is Biblical Precedent for Celebration. Boudinot saw a correlation between the account in Exodus 13 and the American experience. As with Israel, much occurred in the many years leading up to and following American Independence, but our turning point was one specific event: the approval of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

In a famous speech, Boudinot expounded on this correlation:

“The deliverance of the children of Israel from a state of bondage to an unreasonable tyrant was perpetuated by God, who reminded them to remember this day forever in Exodus 13:3...Let us then, my friends and fellow citizens, unite all our endeavors on this day to remember with reverential gratitude to our Supreme Benefactor all the wonderful things He has done for us when we were delivered from the threatening power of an invading foe. Let us keep this ordinance on this day, forever and ever.”

B. They Were Not Afraid to Spread the News With both the Declaration of Independence and later the proposed Constitution itself, there was a need to get the word out to all thirteen colonies. It was decided that churches would be the best place to reach as many people as possible, so it was ordered with each of these documents that they be read from the pulpit for three consecutive Sundays.

In Newburyport, Mass., stands the Old South Church, a Presbyterian congregation started by the great Evangelist George Whitefield in 1740. In fact Whitefield was buried in a crypt underneath the Pulpit upon his death in 1770. Six years later, for three weeks in a row, the Declaration of Independence was read from that pulpit. I had the honor of recreating one of Whitfield’s sermons from that same pulpit as part of my Doctoral work.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence were a profoundly intelligent, religious and ethically-minded group. Four of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were current or former full-time preachers, and many more were the

sons of clergymen. Other professions held by signers include lawyers, merchants, doctors and educators.

These individuals, too, were for the most part active churchgoers and many contributed significantly to their churches both with contributions as well as their service as lay leaders. The signers were members of religious denominations at a rate that was significantly higher than average for the American Colonies during the late 1700s.

In honor of that great tradition and in honor of this day when we are called to remember and cherish all that God has done for us, I will read the Preamble to the Declaration from our pulpit as well:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature **and of nature's God entitle them**, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design

to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

The ending statement is interesting as well: We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. 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.**

Signed: **JOHN HANCOCK, SAMUEL ADAMS, JOHN ADAMS, SAMUEL CHASE, RICHARD HENRY LEE, THOMAS JEFFERSON BENJAMIN HARRISON, FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE, BENJAMIN RUSH, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, JOHN WITHERSPOON**