

July 5 Worship
Independence Sunday
Reader- Wayne Stacy

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”* Luke 4:18

Opening Scripture- Psalm 145:8-15(page 544-545)

Opening Chorus- 511- Lead Me Lord(1st verse)

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: Freedom is coming!

People: We can hear it in the voices of the oppressed.

Leader: Hope is coming!

People: We can see it in the eyes of all those who despair.

Leader: God is here!

People: We count on God’s presence with us, to guide, heal and uplift our spirits. Amen.

Hymn of Praise- 609- My Country 'Tis Of Thee

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- Lord God Almighty, you have made all the peoples of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace: Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Zechariah 9:9-12(page 824)

Special Music- “*Glorify Thy Name*”- Chris Kenney

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 11:16-19(page 844-845)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 612- America The Beautiful

New Testament Scripture- Romans 7:15-25(page 982)

Message

“Lives, Fortunes, And Sacred Honor”

Yesterday, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of one of, if not the most, important documents in human history, the Declaration of Independence. Usually I read or have someone read, this document on this Sunday. Today, I am not going to read it but I would urge each of you to find it and read it from beginning to end and then read it again so you get the message that it contains. There are many misunderstood beliefs about the intentions of the founders of our nation and we must understand that they were simply people, just like us, and they had their faults as well as their strengths. We have to realize that the time in history and the realities of life in 1776 are far different than now and the mindset is somewhat different.

When we read this document, we need to understand the complexities of the times and that this declaration was not written simply as a statement of how things were just then. The Declaration of Independence is more than a statement, it is a blueprint, a promise of who and what we could be given time and dedication. The writers wanted future generations to know that this nation was not complete, that it would require hard work and faith in order to work. It has been said and it is true that this Declaration is a living document and was not a final word.

While not every signer of the Declaration was a Christian, it can be said that all of them had faith in a power greater than themselves that needed to be listened to and obeyed. 1776 was during what is called the; “Age of Enlightenment,” a period in history when people were questioning everything. One thing that they all agreed on is that this new nation **MUST** allow freedom of religion to be one of the greatest parts of our existence. They understood that we would disagree with each other over many things but they wanted to insure our right to express ourselves as we see fit. Many of the signers, who were not proclaimed Christians, were insistent Deists.

They believed that God existed in ways that people saw differently and that was their right.

There was only one member of the clergy who signed the document; John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister from New Jersey. One bit of information; 11 of the signers were Congregationalist and all of them, except one, were from New England. The fact is, it did not matter to them, and it should not matter to us, how they worshiped, the fact is that they recognized that there were certain very distinct principles that are contained in the Holy Scriptures that we call Judeo/Christian values. These are contained in the holy writings of the Old Testament; the Jewish Holy books, and the New Testament that contain the Christian scriptures. These values can be found in almost all documents of faith in religions around the world.

The idea that we are or should be a Christian nation is not what the founders had in mind. They wanted us to be a nation that honored and respected God in whatever way we worshiped. The idea of a state sponsored church was abhorrent to them and would have been seen as a travesty of their intent. They did recognize that there was a higher power, God, and wanted to make sure that whatever this nation was to become, we would not ignore that fact. The Declaration of Independence, contains four distinct references to a divine being, each serving a rhetorical and moral purpose in justifying independence from Britain. The specific mentions are: “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”– This phrase appears in the opening paragraph, framing the colonies’ right to independence as grounded in natural and divine law. “Endowed by their Creator”– In the second paragraph, it asserts that all people are granted unalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. “Supreme Judge of the world”– Congress appeals to this figure to witness the rectitude of their intentions, emphasizing moral accountability. “Divine Providence”– The closing of the document invokes reliance on divine guidance and protection. The framers of this document have made it abundantly clear that all people had the right to worship as they pleased.

There is one phrase in this document that deserve particular attention. It is the last sentence of the document and says this; “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.” This a a very significant sentence since it shows that each and every one of those who signed this document knew very well what the consequences of their participation in this act would be if the revolution failed and Great Britain was victorious. Almost every one of them had already taken part in actions that would be considered treasonous by English standards of law and treason resulted in a death sentence.

It was not only the signers who needed to worry. When the first shot was fired on the Lexington Green every member of the Minutemen, every member of the several

committees, every soldier in the Continental Army throughout the colonies was guilty of treason according to English law. Treason against the King of England was not something that could be forgiven. If the attempt at liberty and separation from England failed there is no doubt that all participants would suffer the same fate. Not only was death the penalty, everything that they owned would be confiscated by law, their wives and children would be left penniless and homeless. When they pledged their lives and fortunes, they were putting all they had on the line.

The last part of what they stood to lose was probably the most important to many if not most of them. They pledged their sacred honor. In the time of the Revolution, a person's honor was deemed a priority. When someone gave their word it was as good as any written contract. If a person did something that cast a doubt on their honor it was catastrophic to one's good name. The Holy Bible refers to honor about 335 times in both the Old and New Testaments. A person's honor is and should always be something we think about. Honoring God, our parents, civil authority, other people all are very important parts of the Judeo-Christian ethic that the founders relied on when drafting the Declaration.

On this 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we should give thanks to God for inspiring those who offered all they had so that we might receive the blessings of a new nation. Perhaps it is not perfect but they gave us a blueprint on how to strive for perfection and a clue as to who we need to thank for it. Praise Be to God. God bless our nation. Amen.

Prayers of the People- O Almighty God, who can bring good out of evil, and who can make even the wrath of humanity turn to your praise: we pray that you will so order and dispose the affairs of the nations that we may be brought through strife to lasting peace; and that the nations of the world may be united in a new fellowship for the promotion of your glory, and the good of humankind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us, good Lord, to follow the example of your Son in fearlessly holding to those things which are true, despite the divisions both in human society and in the understandings of others. But give us the strength also, Lord, to recognize our liability to error, and to venerate your presence in the hopes and lives of others. So let us, at the last, be drawn into the Kingdom of true righteousness, where all are drawn together in acknowledgment of your will. In Jesus Holy Name we pray. Amen.

Thanksgiving Prayer- Dear Lord, Thank You for the renewal of our spirits through Holy Communion. In receiving You, we are made new. Wash away our sins, heal our wounds, and refresh our souls. Let this sacred encounter cleanse us from within

and restore our zeal for holiness. May we rise from Your table with a new heart and a new purpose, ready to serve You with joy. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 607- The Star Spangled Banner

Benediction- Go in peace. The Spirit sends us forth to serve. Thanks be to God.