

**“Drowning In Freedom”**  
**Pentecost 6, Proper 9C – July 4, 2010**  
2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30;  
Galatians 6:1-16; Luke 10:1-1 16-20

**Introduction:**

Today is July 4<sup>th</sup> – Independence Day; the day we celebrate that historic moment in 1776 when we declared our independence from Great Britain and began the world’s greatest experiment in constitutional democracy. On that day 234 years ago a gathering of American leaders published a Declaration of Independence. Part of the text reads as follows:

***The Declaration of Independence of the  
Thirteen Colonies In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776***

*The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands 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.*

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*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 of 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.*

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*Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, 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.*

*Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain [George III] is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. ...*

*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.*

After a long and bloody war, the promise of the Declaration was made real. We gained our freedom from Great Britain and became an independent nation.

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American freedom soon became the envy of the world. American citizens were free to worship God in the manner consistent with their consciences and not as the government required. Americans were free to speak their minds, even if criticizing their government. Americans were free to own weapons, move wherever they could afford, work in any career in which they had interest and expertise, and own their personal property, including the land they lived on.

These American rights might sound lame to you now 2.5 centuries later, but in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century these were radical freedoms for ordinary citizens, and they became the envy of the world.

Part of the philosophical base for these American rights was a world-view that included a God who desired people to enjoy certain rights and designed life with them in mind. These rights didn't come from government, they came from God. The role of government was to stay out of individual person's lives as much as possible, except where necessary to work for the common good, that all might enjoy these freedoms – freedoms designed by God Himself. It was understood that

**God Is The Giver Of Rights, Not Government.**

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It is not an accident that wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached and received over generations, it has provided the worldview and motivation for people to seek increased freedom for their lives. This has been true for the development of nations in Europe, for Africans to break free from colonial rulers, in Communist China, in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and in the English Colony of America. Last week's Gospel lesson from Galatians 5:1 is an example of the kind of word from God that has fueled people's desire to be free: *"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

God does not desire his creation to live in bondage, either to personal or corporate sin, nor to despotic governments, or to Godless philosophies or enslaving economic systems. Today's Psalm speaks to this ability of God to lift us out of the yoke of slavery: :1 – *"I will exalt you, O Lord, because you have lifted me up and have not let my enemies triumph over me."*

Sometimes, God requires we be humbled before setting us free so that we come to realize the reality of God. This is what happened to Naaman, the Army commander from Syria whom Elisha instructed to wash seven times in the waters of the Jordan River. God

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doesn't set us free so we can forget there is God. God sets us free so we can worship God without restriction.

We are losing freedoms today in America precisely because we are drifting away from God. From today's Gospel lesson, verse 7, we read: "*Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow*".

Today, there will be great celebrating all over America as we eat, drink, act merrily, and shoot off fireworks; but how many of us will be remembering God's role in our freedom? There will be much discussion about our current national woes, and who is to blame for what. But, how many discussions will take place about how consistently God is left out of the national consciousness and discussions seeking answers to our woes? Instead of actively worshipping Almighty God, we are succumbing to the godless voices of statism, secularism, freedom from religion, political correctness in place of truth, and a quasi religious tolerance that means 'we honor any religion but Christianity'.

America is now repeating the apostasy committed by Israel when it became so tolerant of the gods of the many religions of the land that it stopped worshipping YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God who delivered them from the bondage of Egypt.

Despite repeated warnings from successive prophets to return to God and God would heal the land and restore the nation's prosperity, the people mocked God. They mocked God by hanging onto a form of religion but denied the God behind their religion. They continued going to the Temple and making sacrifice to God, but their hearts were not committed to God as evidenced by the unjust and evil lifestyles that became the common practice of the land. God continued to warn the people to repent, to return to God before calamity befell the nation – all to no avail.

Increasingly, I fear, we have become Israel and the words of the prophets are being spoken to us. It is no longer history we are reading about. It is history we are living. We are in grave danger of reaping a harvest from the seed of godlessness we have planted, fertilized, and watered. The past two years should awaken us to the reality that our economic system is not built on bedrock. **It Rests on Shifting Sand And Can Quickly Collapse**, if God's blessings are removed.

To many in the world, America is still what it was founded to be; and millions still desire to come here – to live in freedom, to worship God and provide a good life for their families. They believe in what we say we stand for

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more than many who are born here. Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of Great Britain stressed this theme in his speech to the US Congress in 2003. He said: "*Ours are not western values. They are the universal values of the human spirit and anywhere, anytime, ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is the same. Freedom not tyranny. Democracy not dictatorship.*"

He then went on to identify these values specifically with the US: "*Don't ever apologise for your values*", said Tony Blair. "*Tell the world why you're proud of America . . . What you can bequeath to this anxious world is the light of liberty.*" Paul wrote the Galatians, "*let us not grow weary of doing what is right.*"

America was founded to be a place where the individual was free to live out his/her life as God directed, without undo government interference. Now, many have been seduced to expect government to be their God – to take care of us from cradle to grave; to absolve us of all personal accountability; only we forget 'there is no free lunch; someone always has to pay for it.' We are now drowning in a false freedom. We want the promises of freedom without the personal responsibility. That is not God's way.

God's way requires participation in what makes freedom possible. For example, God requires a tithe from everyone, rich or poor alike. The amounts people bring for the offering are different but all tithers participate at the same 10% level. There is equity in that. In America now, about 50 % of people who work don't pay any taxes, yet receive benefits from the Government that others pay for. We have now created an unjust system built on the lie that government provides benefits. The reality is fellow citizens pay for those benefits. We no longer follow God's way. Is it too late for us, here in the land of the free and the home of the brave? No, it is never too late with God, but

**We Do Need A Revival Of The Spirit**, and it is up to the Church of Jesus Christ to be the workers in the field. It is going to require us to be willing to go into the land, like the 70 Jesus sent out, and boldly proclaim with words and actions, *"The Kingdom of God has come near you."* Then, hopefully, like those disciples when they returned to Jesus, we too can proclaim, *"Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us."*

*"My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; ... " Have a blessed 4<sup>th</sup>!*