

The NATION CELEBRATES

Introduction:

1. Today's message is not a history lesson, but an honoring of our Heavenly Father who has been faithful to preserve this nation
2. On the 4th of July, we celebrated our nation's 250th birthday.
3. A nation based on the ideals of liberty, responsibility, godliness, and the freedom to become what God intended us to become was a new and revolutionary idea.
4. The celebration of our nation's birthday is a celebration of freedom.
5. Freedom isn't free, but it is infinitely valuable.
6. So, what are we really celebrating today?
7. Independence from tyranny and dependence upon God.
8. On July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, our Founding Fathers signed a document declaring our independence from the tyranny of those who would enslave the minds, souls, and lives of men.
9. But what many Americans don't realize is that, with the same document, we not only declared our independence from Great Britain but also declared our dependence upon Almighty God.
10. The Declaration of Independence begins by proclaiming: *"this nation is dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal and endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights."*
11. And it ends with these words: *"With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."*
12. After our Founding Fathers unanimously approved the Declaration of Independence on July 2 and it was signed on July 4, the first public reading of the Declaration took place on July 8, and it was celebrated by a band and the ringing of bells.
13. The Liberty Bell was the very first bell they rang when they approved the Declaration of Independence to summon the people to hear the reading of America's founding document.
14. The name comes from the Scripture that is imprinted on the bell - **Lev. 25:10 - which says: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof!"**
15. Let me give you a brief history of the story of the Liberty Bell: In September of 1777, the republic was only a year old and its army, commanded by Gen. Washington, faced a crisis.
16. Washington was unable to keep the British out of the capital city of Philadelphia, having lost the Battle of Brandywine.
17. The new nation was about to fall into enemy hands
18. The British believed that if they could occupy the capital, the "colonial rebellion" could be stopped.
19. During a war, metal becomes scarce, so it was feared that the British might melt down the bells of the city's church and the State House, including the Liberty Bell.
20. So, it was decided to remove the eleven bells from the city
23. A train of 700 wagons was organized to carry the bells and other important items
24. Camouflaged by hay and manure, the Liberty Bell and other bells were transported with their guard of 200 cavalymen, arriving in Bethlehem, PA on September 24, 1777.
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27. You may be familiar with the Pilgrims who came to Plymouth Rock on the Mayflower and joined together in what is called the Mayflower Compact in 1620.
28. These are the words of 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."*
29. In 1643, just about 23 years later, as more and more people came to the shores and up in New England, the Puritans formed a confederation called The New England Confederation; this was the first written constitution of groups meeting together in 1643.
30. The New England Confederation Constitution began: *"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."*
31. George Washington's Personal Prayer Book: *"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."*
32. John Quincy Adams, who would become the 6th President, said later in 1821 about the Declaration of Independence. He said: *"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."*
33. Patrick Henry: *"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians, not on religion but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."*
34. Jefferson wrote in the front of his Bible these words: *"I am a Christian, that is to say a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus. I have little doubt that our whole country will soon be rallied to the unity of our Creator and, I hope, to the pure doctrine of Jesus also."*
35. As the Founding Fathers were debating about how the Declaration of Independence would be written, Benjamin Franklin stood up and said, *"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."*
36. At that suggestion, 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence all went to their knees and began to pray and seek the wisdom of God.
36. Out of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, 53 were professing Christians.
38. Can you imagine our Congress or the Supreme Court going on their knees in prayer?
"Almighty God, what do you want for this nation?"
39. 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."*
40. And when the framers of our government got together and said, *"How can we best organize our government?"*

41. **Isaiah 33:22. "For the Lord is our judge (Judicial), the Lord is our lawgiver (Legislative), the Lord is our king (Executive); it is he who will save us."**

The Role of the Church:

1. What about the role the Christian Church and its pastors have in America's early days?
2. Frances Bellemey, a preacher, wrote our "*Pledge of Allegiance*."
3. Before the War between the States, 90% of all of America's College Presidents were Preachers of the Gospel.
4. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, William and Mary, and Columbia were founded by Christian preachers and church affiliations with the intent to educate youth for Christ.
5. John Harvard a Pastor in Charlestown, Massachusetts and the man for whom Harvard University was 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 in the bottom as the foundation of all knowledge and learning, and see that the Lord only giveth wisdom. To let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek Christ Jesus as Lord and Master.*"
6. Even Harvard's original seal, which can be seen on the campus today, states these words, "*Truth for Christ and the Church.*"
7. America's first schoolbook was the "*New England Primer*."
8. Despite what modern politicians, contemporary media, or the revisionists say - America was founded not on the concept of freedom to worship any God but on the freedom to worship Jesus Christ.

America's Hope:

1. We need to return to the Christ who captivated the hearts of our Founding Fathers.
2. ***Prov 14:34 "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."***
3. ***Ps 33:12 "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance."***
4. We need to understand the present time.
5. The church has been sleeping, and we are unaware that the world has changed drastically over the past two decades.
6. We can't go back to the "*good old days*" when there was a national acceptance of Judeo-Christian morality.
7. In many ways, America is going down the same path as Europe.

Impacting our Culture:

1. After 9/11 and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Billy Graham's daughter, Anne Graham Lotz, said: "*For years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and his protection if we demand that He leave us alone?*"
2. He says, "***If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***" (2 Chronicles 7:14)
3. ***But 2 Chronicles 7:19 says, "But if you turn away and forsake the decrees and commands I have given you ... then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them ... I will make it a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples."***
4. Jesus never told us to retreat; He told us to go into the world and to carry the good news.

5. Jesus said, ***"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."*** (Matthew 10:16)
6. We must WAKE up; LIFT up prayers; WISE up, and we must be willing to stand up for righteousness and truth in a culture that is becoming more wicked by the day.
7. Our world is struggling in moral darkness, and Jesus has called us to be the light of the world.
8. Our culture is rotten and getting more corrupt.
9. For too long Christians have been guilty of the sin of silence.
10. Story of Martin Luther King Jr. *"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."*
11. British General Robert Ross moved his troops north toward Baltimore, and on the fateful date of 9/11 (September 11, 1814), he launched an attack on the final American stronghold, Fort McHenry, which guarded the Baltimore harbor.
12. He ordered his ships in the harbor to start shelling the Fort.
13. 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 with the British.
14. He successfully negotiated the exchange, but because the bombardment of the Fort had commenced since he had boarded the ship, he wasn't allowed to sail back toward Baltimore. The British Navy was the strongest in the world and had the most modern weapons of the time.
15. 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")
16. The ship cannons shot bombs with delayed fuses that often exploded in the sky before they reached the target ("the bombs bursting in air").
17. 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.
18. It was impossible to sleep, so early the next morning the young hymn writer, Francis Scott Key, rushed to the rail of the ship to see the damage.
19. 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.
20. He saw an amazing sight. There fluttering in the morning breeze was the huge flag--tattered from shrapnel, but still proud.
21. He was so moved he wrote down a hymn on the back of a letter he had in his pocket.
22. 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?"*
23. Francis Scott Key's question is answered in the rest of his hymn.
24. It doesn't end with a question; it ends with a powerful declaration.
25. And it is a declaration that America needs to wake up and rediscover.
26. Let's let it speak for itself: *"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!"

27. We need to wake up – this is a country worth fighting for.

Close:

1. The Liberty Bell was not meant to be hidden under the floorboards of a church.
2. A bell is meant to be rung for all to hear.
3. We are called to *"Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof!"*
4. ***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)***
5. A bell does no good if it is not rung.
6. A gospel does no good if it is not proclaimed.
7. Will you take a stand for righteousness in this present day and age?