

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

30 June 2024

Let Freedom Ring

Text: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." *Lev. 25:10*

Some areas of this country ring bells at high noon on July 4th to celebrate the nation's founding. This celebration serves to remind us of the sacrifices, character, ideas, ideals, and faith that have gone into the making of our national history.

The sound of bells calls us back to the meaningful day of July 4, 1776 when our nation was born. Those of us in the Judeo-Christian tradition look back further to such events in biblical history as that indicated in our text when the Lord spoke through Moses and said, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."

A time to remember.

The price of what we enjoy.

Freedom is not free.

Someone has to pay the price for it.

Someone has to sacrifice to have it.

It costs to have our liberty.

Days of hardship and grave uncertainty accompanied the efforts of those colonial leaders who led us to attain our freedom as a sovereign nation.

The principal person who provided our liberty.

In *Leviticus 25:2* reference is made to keeping "a Sabbath unto the Lord."

The word "Sabbath" means rest.

Perhaps the word is used here as a reminder that God the Creator rested at the completion of his creation.

The emphasis, however, does not belong on the idea of rest; rather, the context indicates that the emphasis belongs on the one who did the creating, Elohim, the mighty God, the Sovereign of the universe.

The same God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, led the tribes through the wilderness, and helped them conquer Canaan. The land of promise.

The sabbatical year mentioned in *Leviticus 25* was commanded in the Law of Moses as a reminder to the Israelites of how they came to receive their liberty from bondage.

Our founding fathers also carved a nation out of a wilderness, a national wilderness, a political wilderness, and a spiritual wilderness.

From such a wilderness they fled to our shores to find freedom and under God, to build here a country dedicated to freedom and justice for all.

Our God did all of this for us just as he did for his people long ago.

A time to return.

To first principles: work, sacrifice, discipline, patriotic devotion, love of justice and freedom, honesty, high purpose, and respect for the rights of others.

These were the first and basic principles in the foundation of our nation.

To free enterprise.

Individual initiative, private industry, the freedom to choose and work for a way of life, these are the fundamentals of life in a free society.

All are primary factors in a government of free people, and they are diminishing factors in the way of life we know in our age.

A time to recognize.

The evils of our materialistic, power-crazed, technological age.

Millions have never known what it means to go to bed at night without feeling hunger, yet our nation spends money on things of little importance.

If Edison thought we needed to take time out scientifically to catch up with ourselves spiritually, what would he think if he were living today?

The ills of our status-minded society.

We spend money we do not have to buy status symbols we do not need to keep up with people we do not know and whom we probably would not like if we did know them.

The dangerous trends of our time.

For years the trend has been to withdraw religion from our public schools and government institutions.

In the past, American tradition has kept government closely allied with religion.

Our presidents use the Bible in taking the oath of office.

Congress opens its sessions with prayer; our pledge to the flag includes the phrase "one nation under God"; our coins are inscribed with "In God We Trust"; and the first sentence of the Declaration of Independence uses the word "God", recognizing him as our Creator, while the last sentence uses the phrase "With a firm reliance on divine providence."

The Bill of Rights of the constitution begins with the First Amendment, in which we read, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting free exercise thereof."

Serious students of history know this had to do with one specific contextual matter, a "state church."

The framers of the Constitution never dreamed that this nation would someday forget God.

One may ask what special insight has come to people of this age to enable them to interpret as unconstitutional these time-honored traditions.

One may counter by saying that there was never before a court test made.

Again, one may ask, "Why?"

Thomas Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, an attack on religion that embodied the spirit of German rationalism and French atheism.

Paine was an ardent leader in the Revolution.

By the end of the Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution in 1778, religion had reached a low ebb in the new nation: fewer than 10 percent of the people had any church relationship.

So why was the subject of religion left in obscurity until 1963 when someone had to tell us what was meant by "establishment of religion"?

The answer: Because those living close to the day of its origin knew what it meant.

Their sole purpose was to preserve and protect the people's freedom so that they could be sure they would not be harassed by a state church that could interfere with their consciences.

The exercise of religion itself was a fundamental principle in government and private life, but it also was to be a free, voluntary act.

It should forever be that way.

A time to review.

Our allegiance to God and country.

It is significant that in many churches the American and Christian flags have been displayed together, they are not in opposition to each other but complement each other.

Our faith in God.

Our faith in God is the cause of freedom and the meaning of our text for today.

We should be proclaiming liberty throughout all the land and that liberty is found in and through God and God alone.

Let the bells in the land ring, all the choirs sing, and all the preachers, teachers, editors, states people, and citizens proclaim liberty in our land.

Let freedom ring so that the matchless words of Abraham Lincoln may come true: "That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people,

and for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

The Bible states that God gives to a nation the leadership it deserves.

Let us so live that we deserve good righteous leadership so that God will provide it for us.

And let us so live that others might see and know that freedom begins with the Living God of the Bible.

The greatest freedom of all is the freedom of knowing that you are living in the midst of His will for your life.

That you are pleasing Him in how you live and use your God given resources.

That you are participating with God to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

That all you are and all that you do is to glorify the Lord God Almighty and that in so doing one will live a productive life now and forever more.