

TEXT: Psalm 33:1-12

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.
4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.
5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.
10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. to all...:
12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance (Psalm 33:1-12, KJV).

Introduction:

This week we celebrate our nation's 226th birthday. Such an occasion is always a time to reflect and evaluate recent events and court rulings that have been a cause for concern and despair:

- Immorality in the hallways of the White House
- Greed and theft on the part of CEOs of America's great corporations
- Circuit court ruling on the pledge of allegiance to the flag

My concern was tempered when I saw the good people of this community gather to sing gospel songs and raise money for sending the youth of this community on a missions trip. All across

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

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this nation this morning there are millions of good, decent, and upright Americans who are gathered just as we are to worship the Lord.

"In God we trust" is still inscribed on our coins. Every session of Congress is still opened with prayer. Our President is sworn into office with his hand on a Bible while repeating the phrase, "So help me God."

This nation has been singularly blessed of God because of its reliance on Him! Yes we have some problems, but all in all this is a good nation under God. The wretched, the poor, and the tired still line up at our borders to escape tyranny.

70% of all Christian missionaries are sent from this country to the ends of the earth. 80% of all finances for world evangelization is given by the good people of this nation!

In celebration of our 226th birthday I would like to read the Declaration of Independence to you this morning and take the topic for today's sermon from its words:

[Click here to read the Declaration of Independence: http://jrcm.faithweb.com/religion/i_decl.html]

Sing: "**America the Beautiful,**" # 493

Unalienable Rights endowed by the Creator include:

- Life
- Liberty
- The pursuit of happiness

While these are *unalienable rights* in the social and secular context they are *Divine provisions* in the spiritual context.

I. God's Divine Provision of Life

a. Jesus said,

10 ...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10, KJV).

b. As Jesus stood in front of the tomb of Lazarus where death had claimed another victim and cast its pale of sorrow over a bereaved family he declared:

25 ... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26, KJV).

c. The sentence of death hung over the world for more than 4000 years:

- **The day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.**
- The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
- All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
- The wages of sin is death.

d. As the sun arose on that resurrection morning 2000 years ago Jesus came forth from the tomb to offer life to all those who stood under a sentence of death.

e. That life is categorized in two ways not envisioned by the framers of our Constitution:

- Life eternal
- Life more abundant

f. Life is more than an unalienable right—it is God's precious gift!

II. God's Divine Provision of Liberty

a. The list of grievances set forth in the Declaration of Independence is long and heavy.

b. No man can be at peace while enslaved by another.

c. Ralph Waldo Emerson captured the spirit of the longing for liberty of our forefathers in his famous

"Concord Hymn"

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their dead redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Sung at the completion
of the Battle Monument
July 4, 1837

d. Worse still than being a slave to man is being a slave to sin

e. John Bunyon graphically described this heavy load in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

f. Paul described the life of sin as slavery:

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods (Galatians 4:8, KJV).

g. He also describes our liberty from this slavery:

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ(Galatians 4:6-7, KJV).

Thank God for His precious gift of Liberty through Jesus Christ!

Sing: "I Remember When My Burdens Rolled Away," #452

III. God's Divine Provision for Our Happiness

a. The farmers who stood so valiantly at Concord Bridge in Massachusetts probably thought of happiness as the privilege of farming a piece of land, owning a few animals, and raising a family free from King George's interference.

b. What does it take to make you happy?

- For my grandson Samuel: being outside—a lean and a grunt
- For my boys and me: a fly rod and a sunny day
- For my wife Myrna: a dollar's worth of change and a yard sale! :~)

c. Paul writes,

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6, KJV).

d. The concern of the framers of the Declaration of Independence was not so much with happiness itself as with the freedom to pursue that happiness according to one's own desires.

e. One man's labor is another man's leisure.

f. True happiness must have its ultimate outcome in a right relationship with God.

g. Temporal pleasure is exactly that. It is not true happiness!

h. See what God said about Jonah's temporal happiness:

6 So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Johah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant (Jonah 4:6, NASB).

i. Paul sums it up in Romans 14:22,

22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves (Romans 14:22, NASB).

Sing: "When We All Get to Heaven" # 150

Conclusion:

We concur with our forefathers that we have certain unalienable rights in this life and we thank God for the protection of these liberties in our nation. But most of all we thank God for His Divine Provision for our Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness.

The writer of the Proverbs declares,

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but [that which is] in the midst of fools is made known.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin [is] a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:33-34, KJV).

Will you join with me in singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," # 494?

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This is the outline of the sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 30 July 2002. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity—Peter Meiderlin 1626.

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