

## July 7, 2019 - Psalm 33:12 - "A Blessed Nation?"

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Read together: **Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.**

On Thursday, we celebrated 243 years as a nation. The Declaration of Independence was ratified by the Continental Congress and the founding fathers declared independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776.

It seems that fewer and fewer Americans are even interested in our nation and its birth. People look at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July as a day off, a time for picnics, grilling, fireworks and parades. Even with all the flag-waving that goes on, in a recent poll, just barely half of the Americans surveyed knew the significance of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

The Word of God on this Independence Weekend focuses on the nation we proudly call "*the land of the free and the home of the brave.*" The psalmist tells us that a nation where the LORD is God is blessed. Let's see if we can determine whether we are "**A Blessed Nation?**" The psalmist offers 2 choices:

**A) With God there are abundant blessings.**

**B) Without God there's an absence of blessings.**

(A)

**Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.**

Every person worships some god. The psalmist however, tells us which God brings blessings – the LORD. The LORD (all caps) was a name well-known to these OT listeners. He's a unique, one-of-a-kind God who identifies himself as the God of free and faithful love. The God who made them and saved them. Only the Savior-God, the LORD (all caps), brings blessings.

The God we worship is same the LORD - the loving, forgiving and saving God. Over and over again he assures us, "**I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.**" "**I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.**" We have a God who personally loves each of us. In fact, his love is so wide and long and high and deep that he sent his only Son on a sacrifice for sinners' mission.

This God of free and faithful love that we follow, is also just. He doesn't let the guilty off the hook, or go unpunished. He can't.

In the OT he had done some marvelous things for the Israelites – delivered them from Egyptian captivity, guided them over 40 years in the wilderness, provided for and protected them until he finally brought them to the Promised Land of Canaan.

And yet, in spite of all that, the people rebelled against him and followed other gods. Even God's patience has a limit: "**I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins. I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision, you will bear the scorn of nations.**" Sure enough, God punished them as a nation. The northern tribes of Israel were captured and removed by the Assyrians, never to return. The southern tribe of Judah was captured and removed by the Babylonians. Only a tiny remnant returned.

History teaches us valuable lessons when it comes to following or not following the LORD. When we follow there are abundant blessings.

How about us? Are we a blessed nation? Think of the blessings we've experienced as a nation from the Lord over the past 243 years. Our freedoms are some of those abundant and amazing blessings given to us as Americans by God.

Perhaps the greatest, but sadly, the one most often abused and taken for granted is our freedom to worship. Every one of us has always had the freedom to worship. No one told us what church we had to attend (unless it was our mom and dad). And, we've never had soldiers at our church doors to keep us from gathering.

Do we treasure our freedom to profess and praise Jesus in worship by exercising it? In many parts of the world Christians can't worship as they choose. Do we make the most of this privilege to gather

with each other each week? It's a blessing God has given to us as Americans. Are we using it?

Another freedom is our freedom of speech. I don't have to be afraid of being arrested for what I say here today. We're free to talk about our faith and share it with others. Do we take advantage of this? It's a blessing God has given to us as Americans. Are we using it?

We also experience material blessings in this nation under God. Our poor are considered rich by the standards of most countries. God has blessed us - look at the cars parked on the street we drive, the clothes we wear and the food we eat. It's truly amazing!

Back to our question, "**A Blessed Nation?**" If you said, "**Answer A**" you are correct! As you think about the history of our nation, you can see the plenty of blessings we've received with the Lord as our God.

(B)

However, there is another possibility: "**Answer B**" **Without God there's an absence of blessings.** The children of Israel would be a poster child for that. And, we can also see that happening to us as a nation. We see other gods growing stronger and stronger in our nation and society. We're going to look at 2 of them and see what happens when we follow these gods and worship at their altar.

One of the gods stares right back at us each time we look into a mirror. We've made ourselves into a god just like Eve tried to do.

When people, you and I, become a god, then what the Lord teaches in the Bible is tossed aside. Our Lord's clear command to gladly hear his Word and gather with other Christians to encourage each other means nothing.

When his Word is absent because I'm absent from weekly worship, or in my daily devotional life ... what I think and what I feel and what I like and what I want become more important than what he says.

Take God's name as another example. His name is heard plenty these days, but it's more often in useless swearing than prayer, and calling down curses, than offering up praises. God's command, "**Don't misuse my name,**" is forgotten.

Another popular god today would be the things God has given to us. To love a gift more than the giver of the gift doesn't make sense, does it? But we do that when we turn around and make things and stuff our god. Our nation has bought the idea that things and stuff will give meaning to their existence and make them happy. And we are too.

What's the result of replacing the Lord with others gods? The crumbling of the home and family, not to mention the values of our society. Following other gods brings heartache, sadness, dishonesty and confusion. Those are certainly not blessings.

What can we, as Christians, do? Don't be a couch potato and sit and complain. Get involved!

- Pray for our nation and communities and our elected leaders.
- Be an informed voter so you can make good choices. Vote for candidates that stand for Christian values.
- Take care of your home and property. Don't bury your head in the sand. Keep your eyes open in your neighborhood.
- Volunteer to serve in your own community. We have members who have served and who are serving on committees.

Passing laws isn't going to make this a Christian nation. But your Christian faith and values do make an impression on others, along with the blessings that God brings on our nation through you. History shows that.

**"A Blessed Nation?"** Yes we are! Join me in reading again our lesson from Psalm 33:12: **"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance."**