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**‘Happy Sestercentennial, America, Freedom is Yours!
 (If You Can Keep It.)’**

Pastor Gene Giguere, July 5, 2026

Introduction

1) Well, yesterday marked America’s 250th birthday! So, ‘Happy Semiquincentennial, America’ (i.e., ‘happy two and a half centuries’)! Or, if you prefer, ‘Happy Sestercentennial, America’ (i.e., ‘happy quarter millennium’)!

We are a free nation (YAY!) – perhaps, even still, the freest on earth. And anyone who looks honestly at our now 250-year history will see that the freedoms we enjoy in this great country have come directly from the hand of God.

2) On anniversaries like the Fourth of July, it’s only right for us to consider our history – and, mark it down, American history begins with the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

¹ I’ve been fascinated recently reading Eusebius, who is known as “the Father of Church History.” He lived in the 3rd and 4th centuries (A.D. 260-265 to 339-340). And he sought to tell the history of the Christian Church from it’s beginning to his own day. But the problem with taking on such a vast undertaking is *where to begin!* Well, for Eusebius the answer was simplicity itself. If one is to understand Christianity and Christians, one must first know the One from Whom we derive our name: Jesus. And while a biographer might begin with Jesus’ birth – I mean, that’s what Mathew, Mark and Luke did, right? – Eusebius was keenly aware that Jesus’ story did *not* begin with His birth. For Jesus was the eternal Son of the Father – very man and very God. And so, He begins his history of the Church like this:

“No language is sufficient to express the origin and the worth, the being and the nature of Christ ... Who beside the Father could clearly understand the Light which was before the world, the intellectual and essential Wisdom which existed before the ages, the living Word which was in the beginning with the Father and which was God, the first and only begotten of God which was before every creature and creation visible and invisible, the

This used to be well known.² America’s founding and our current freedoms were only made possible because of the influence of the Christian faith.³ This nation was planted by devout Christians in order to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by freely living out their faith. *Period.*

Thus, America’s founders consistently drew upon biblical principles to mold a form of government which honored the freedom of the individual as the Bible defined it. Not a freedom to engage in unrestrained lawlessness, but a freedom to live in peace with our God and our fellow man. They honored God’s moral law as defined in Scripture, and they used the Bible to set the ground for our nation to flourish for centuries to come. And it has!

As Rob Pacienza, of the *Institute for Faith and Culture*, writes, during the earliest stage of our nation’s formation—the colonial period—this Christian influence was abundantly evident. Most of the colonies gave explicitly Christian rationales for their way of life. For instance, a 1610 Virginia legal code urged the citizenry toward “reverence to God” for “the glory of God.” Early colonial laws and constitutions are filled with this kind of sacred language, recognizing that it was God alone who bestows legitimacy on a nation.

Then, when our nation entered the Revolutionary War Era, citizens considered the conflict with England, their parent country, through the lens of their Christian faith. They used Scripture to evaluate whether or not a potential war with England would be righteous.⁴ This careful consideration resulted in the magnificent *Declaration of Independence*, which made the case that the war was indeed justified.

commander-in-chief of the rational and immortal armies of heaven ... the Creator, with the Father, of all things ... the true and only-begotten Son of God, the Lord and God and King of all created things ... as it is said in regard to him in the mystical passages of Scripture which speak of his divinity: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made ...” (Eusebius Pamphilus, *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged*, translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, August 22, 2017, § 1.2.2 - § 1.2.3).

² See ‘*The Great Deletion: Christianity Vanishes from American History*,’ PNW Staff, June 24, 2026; <https://acrookedpath.com/the-great-deletion-christianity-vanishes-from-american-history/>

³ Information for this point from Pacienza, Rob, ‘Christianity and America’s Founding,’ Institute for Faith and Culture, July 3, 2023; <https://institutefc.org/christianity-and-americas-founding/>.

⁴ They delicately balanced the ideas of “just cause” and personal freedom with the Bible’s warnings to “be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1).

Predictably, the document is chock full of Christian language: God is the Creator who has given the rights of freedom to men; He is the Supreme Judge of the world, and the Protector of nations.

“In Congress, July 4, 1776 ... The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America ... 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.”⁵

And so, we went to war and defeated one of the world’s most powerful armies with a rag-tag group of amateur soldiers. It was nothing short of a miracle – and the world knew it. But after that stunning and improbable victory, the Revolutionary Era gave way to the Constitutional Era. We’d won our place as an independent nation; now we had to figure out how to structure and govern it.

Four Biblical Ideas that Forged a Nation

- 1) Unsurprisingly, the founders looked to the Bible to shape their government. Yet, they were careful to preserve the individual freedom of religious conviction. They were careful not to reject Christianity the nations’ framework faith, but they were also careful not to mandate it as the official national religion. After all, Christianity, at its essence, is all about freedom.

True freedom, though, is only found in Christ. Paul summed it up this way: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).⁶

- 2) Well, in creating a new *Constitution* for the United States of America, the founders created a political structure firmly rooted in their understanding of

⁵ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

⁶ At the onset of His ministry, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18). Jesus promised that if only we’d abide in His word, that we would “know the truth, and the truth” would set us free (John 8:32). And that “everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin,” but that “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:34–36). “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15) But he warns, in another place, “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). Or, as Peter put it: “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16).

God's will for human government. Dr. Pacienza⁷ identifies four specific principles that shaped the founder's thinking:

One: the Founders believed that *humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)*. They saw people, therefore, as reasonable beings who can discuss and debate social and political issues. This view also informed the conscience of the early opponents to slavery.

Two: they believed *human beings are inherently sinful (Romans 3:23)*.⁸ This convinced them of the need for laws, and law enforcement, and a system of checks and balances.

Third: they believed that *God is the source of moral standards and that all legislation should be in agreement with moral law (Acts 5:29; Galatians 5:19–24)*. They understood that exercising 'freedom' outside the boundaries of biblically-defined moral law, would actually lead to *slavery*, not freedom.

And fourth: they believed that *religious liberty is a God-given right and must be protected (Leviticus 25:10; Joshua 24:15)*. They understood that the gospel is freely given and freely received, and so they were careful to avoid governmental religious coercion. As Dr. Pacienza put it: "God, alone, is Lord of the conscience—not the state."

"I Will Make of You a Great Nation"

- 1) And so, yesterday we marked 250 years of our nation's journey – a journey that's been unique among the nations of the earth. Our wonderful experiment of freedom began with the proposition of **Psalm 22:28** – that "kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations."

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⁸ Alexander Hamilton or James Madison, *The Federalist Papers No. 51*: "But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed51.asp

As Paul preached to the Greeks on the Areopagus,

“[It is God that] made from one man [Adam] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ [*why did He do this?*] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us ...” (**Acts 17:26-27**).

The story of America is one of providing people the freedom to “seek God,” to “feel their way toward Him,” and perhaps even “find Him.”

- 2) But the framers understood true freedom can never exist apart from a commitment to biblically-defined morality.

✠ John Adams, our second President, wrote: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. *It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*”

✠ Whether apocryphal or not, the story’s told that a woman approached Benjamin Franklin as he was leaving Independence Hall in Philadelphia in 1787 at the end of the Constitutional Convention and asked, “Well, Doctor Franklin, what do we have, a republic or a monarchy?”

Franklin is said to have replied, “A republic, madame, *if you can keep it.*”

You see, the framers of the *Constitution* well-understood **Proverbs 14:34** – that “righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Or, as Paul put it, “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (**Galatians 5:13**).

- 3) Well, because of our biblical roots, America has been a beacon of hope to the world and has shown herself to be a great friend to our fellow humans in need (**Proverbs 17:17, John 15:13**). The Pilgrims (1620) and the Puritans (1630) who first landed in Massachusetts envisioned a society where the dignity of the individual could flourish – an idea deeply rooted in the truth that every human being is made in the image of God (**Genesis 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9**). They

believed they were coming to the new land as representatives of Jesus Christ and that they would be a ‘city on a hill,’ seen by all.⁹

Well, America did become that ‘city on a hill,’ albeit imperfectly. We have propelled the Gospel into the world like no other nation ever has. We have championed religious freedom, human rights, and self-governance, setting an example that has inspired liberty movements across the globe (**Galatians 5:1, 1 Peter 2:16**).

Our true greatness is seen in our relentless pursuit of God-given freedom, serving up proof that a nation governed by the people and under God can endure and prosper (**Psalms 33:12, 144:15; Proverbs 14:34**).¹⁰

America: The World’s Best Friend

- 1) America has been very generous and America has seen the Lord’s blessing!
Throughout our history, we have poured out our resources to help others – not

⁹ These ideas flowed from a profound sense of stewardship, and sacrifice, and the commands to love one’s neighbor which are all found in the pages of Holy Scripture. The Pilgrims, who sailed on the *Mayflower* in 1620, wanted a complete separation from the Church of England. They settled in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Puritans, a much larger group which was led by John Winthrop, wanted to stay in the Church of England and ‘purify’ it from the inside. They arrived some 10 years later in 1630 and settled in Boston, eventually founding the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Both the Pilgrims and the Puritans understood with Peter that they were coming to the new land as representatives of Jesus Christ – “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once [we] were not a people, but now you are God’s people ...” (1 Peter 2:9-10). They believed Jesus when He said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Luke 12:48a). In Matthew, Jesus told His followers, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14). And it was those very words that Governor John Winthrop preached to the passengers onboard the *Arbella* in 1630 as they headed to the new land. It defined their mission, he said: “For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us” (Winthrop, John, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 1630, written and preached aboard the *Arbella*). Winthrop’s sermon laid the ideological foundation for American exceptionalism, explicitly referencing Matthew 5:14. These settlers envisioned a society where the dignity of the individual – and idea rooted in the truth that every human being is made in the image of God – could flourish (Genesis 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9).

¹⁰ And this link between American liberty and Christian faith has not gone unnoticed! In the 1830s, a brilliant French philosopher named Alexis de Tocqueville traveled across America searching for the secret of our nation’s vitality. But he didn’t find it in our vast territory, nor our laws, or nor our industry alone. He found it in our *spiritual* roots. He wrote: “Upon my arrival in the United States the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things.” He realized that unlike the shattered and bloody revolutions of Europe, America had achieved something entirely different because her liberty was bound to her faith. He noted: “In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching in opposite directions. But in America I found they were intimately united and that they reigned in common over the same country.” Quotations from De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, Volume I, Part II, Chapter IX: ‘Principal Causes Which Tend to Maintain the Democratic Republic in The United States.’

only our money, but also our goods and even the lives of our service members to defend the oppressed, to defeat tyranny, and provide humanitarian aid to the ends of the earth. “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause,” God urged His people in **Isaiah 1:17**. America has done that.

And even today, many in Congress who continue to approve such measures *are oblivious to ‘why’ their doing it!* They are doing it because generosity and respect for all people created in God’s image was woven into the very fabric of our nation from its birth – and, though it goes largely unnamed or unattributed these days, it is none the less still there!

“Give justice to the weak ... maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. ⁴Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked,” God said – and America, over and over again, has done just that (**Psalm 82:3-4**).

From rebuilding war-torn continents to being the world’s largest provider of global disaster relief, America has modeled the biblical mandate of **Galatians 6:9-10**:

“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up ... [A]s we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone ...”

As a nation we’ve done that time and time again.

- 2) When the dark clouds of totalitarianism and fascism threatened to crush global freedom during World War II, America sent her sons and daughters into harm’s way – and they shed their blood on foreign soil to liberate our friends from oppression.

You see, Jesus taught us that the greatest love a person can have is to “lay down his life for his friends” (**John 15:13**). Jesus Himself became our grand example of this! John wrote: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” – that’s the other **3:16, 1 John 3:16**.

And so, off we went to the European and pacific theaters to help our friends fight against tyranny.

And, when the dust settled and the Lord gave us the victory, America, *my country*, did something unprecedented in the annals of military history. We did something that victors just don't do! Instead of plundering their lands, we instituted the *Economic Recovery Act of 1948*—we know it as the 'Marshall Plan.' We poured billions of dollars into rebuilding Europe, *including the infrastructure of our former enemies*.¹¹

You know, **Romans 12:20** says, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.” And so, by consciously or unconsciously following the biblical morality that is cemented into the foundation of our nation, we helped to transform our broken adversaries into thriving democracies.

Not for nothin', but Japan is ruled by a government of three branches today: an executive branch, a legislative branch and a judicial branch. Sound familiar? They're not ruled by the totalitarian dictates of an emperor. They have an emperor, but he has *zero* political power.¹²

And that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of America's biblically-informed tradition of freedom and *extreme* generosity!

- It's estimated that PEPFAR (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) has saved more than 25 million lives globally from the devastation of HIV/AIDS since Georg Bush instituted it in 2003.¹³
- Through our major global aid networks, the United States remains the single largest national donor of emergency relief on the planet.¹⁴
- We have just recently (I mean, June 2026!) committed massive multi-billion-dollar aid packages through distribution channels like UNICEF and the World Food Program to deliver food, medicine, clean water, and

¹¹ United States Office of the Historian; <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>

¹² Under Japan's constitution, the emperor acts as a ceremonial figurehead and symbol of the state, holding no political or governing power.

¹³ <https://www.state.gov/pepfar/>

¹⁴ Organization of American Historians, 'The Origins of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance'; https://www.oah.org/tah/february-4/the-origins-of-u-s-foreign-disaster-assistance/?_cf_chl_f_tk=ZQu1WubrgtoeZ7D8zdBTCbTFpNOobhVG7_3iPa0.OQ-1783001198-1.0.1.1-ECRCazMKEb3UaTCNHZ51edImZsiVaBy82JyZliEB_3Y

shelter directly to more than 40 crisis-torn countries around the world including Sudan, Syria, Gaza, and Haiti.¹⁵

Why do we continue to do this? *Because of our foundations in the Gospel* – that’s who we are, whether people know it or not.

Psalm 82:3-4 tells us to “give justice to the weak” and to “rescue the weak and the needy” – America not only *tries* to do that, we *do it* more than any other nation in the world.

You say, ‘Yeah, but America has so much!’ I say, ‘Maybe that’s *why* America has so much!’ **Proverbs 11:25** says, “Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered,” doesn’t it? **Psalm 41:1** adds, “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble, the Lord delivers him.”

The truth is, even as our nation navigates its own fiscal challenges and strives for better stewardship of what we have (**1 Corinthians 4:2**), American taxpayers continue to fund safety nets for millions of God’s suffering image-bearers around the world. Whenever a crisis strikes, it is American generosity that is always the first to answer the call!¹⁶

American Believers Loving Their Neighbors

- 1) And what is true of American generosity is true of American Christians on steroids!

I know we have a big problem with immigration today, but Americans don’t hate *immigrants*; we hate *lawlessness*. In times of real-world catastrophe, it’s been American Christians, more than any other segment of our society, who’ve risen to the challenge of meeting the crisis. Following the destruction and fallout of the Vietnam War in 1975, millions of displaced families fled extreme

¹⁵ The United States Embassy in Botswana; <https://bw.usembassy.gov/u-s-announces-more-than-1-billion-in-assistance-to-unicef-and-world-food-program/>

¹⁶ Why? Because God told us to in Deuteronomy 15:11: “There will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor ...’”

oppression.¹⁷ They'd been taught to view the West with suspicion, but they were met with an unexpected flood of Christian charity.

One missionary, Evelyn Mangham, heard the biblical call to welcome the stranger (**Matthew 25:35; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19**) and she began cold-calling local churches across the United States.¹⁸ She used Scripture to challenge Christian Americans to open their homes.¹⁹

Through faith-based organizations like *World Relief* and the mobilization of *Church World Service*, American Christians have stepped up to fill the gaps where governments fell short.

James wrote: “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (**James 2:15-17**).

Or as John put it, “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (**1 John 3:18**).

Followers of Jesus *believe these things*. Over the years, these Christian ministries have resettled hundreds of thousands of refugees from Southeast Asia and across the globe, providing them with housing, job placement, and a community of love.

Why? Because **Leviticus 25:35** says, “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself . . . you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. ³⁶ Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. ³⁷ You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.”

So, countless refugees arrived on these shores—people who had lost absolutely everything. And many of them would later recount sitting in astonishment as

¹⁷ See ‘Fall of Saigon’ on Wikipedia; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Saigon.

¹⁸ ‘Evelyn Mangham—A Hero of the Faith,’ *The Alliance*, The Christian and Missionary Alliance, October 24, 2021; <https://cmalliance.org/evelyn-mangham-a-hero-of-the-faith/>

“It’s not the loss that overwhelms us,” her son Thomas wrote in a tribute on Facebook. “It’s the thought that we had the honor of knowing, seeing, and experiencing what it’s like to live with a Hebrews 11 hero of the faith.”

¹⁹ Scriptures like Romans 12:13, which instructs believers to “seek to show hospitality.”

local church members, who owed them nothing, spent their own time and money to help them rebuild their lives.

What is the impulse behind this radical kindness? The relentless impulse of American Christians to be a friend to the world comes directly from our Lord Jesus Christ who taught us to ‘love our neighbor as ourselves’ (**Mark 12:31**, cf., **Leviticus 19:18 & Romans 13:9-10**).

Furthermore, our unique prosperity has been built upon a fascinating and uniquely-biblical work ethic (**Colossians 3:23; Proverbs 10:4**). How unique? Well, **Ephesians 4:28** urges believers to “labor, doing honest work with his own hands, *so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*”

You see, the men and woman that planted this country believed Jesus when He said, ‘When you see a man in trouble, don’t just walk around him, but help him. Be a good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25-37**).

Freedom is Messy

- 1) Now, when we look closely at this 250-year freedom experiment, we must have to admit something that most everyone knows: *freedom is incredibly messy.*

Tyranny is clean. A dictatorship is orderly. In an authoritarian regime, there is no public dissent, no chaotic debates, and no public clashing of opinions, because an iron fist suppresses the human will. But freedom is not like that. Freedom allows for fallen human beings to give full expression to their opinions, no matter how nutty those opinions may be! And, mark it down, EVERYONE with an opinion is a fallen human being (**Romans 3:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20**).

Because we have liberty, we have public disagreements, political gridlock, cultural battles, and loud, dissenting voices. **James 4:1** asks, “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” I’d say that’s right.

Now, I can only speak for myself, but sometimes, as a believer, I look at the noise, the division, and all of the messiness of our free society, and I’m tempted

to scream! I want everyone to agree. But I want everyone to agree WITH ME!
But that's not the way freedom works!

Messiness is a natural byproduct of a system that respects the right of everyone to speak. God created us with the capacity for choice and holds us culpable for the choices we make: "Choose this day whom you will serve," Joshua told the children of Israel (**Joshua 24:15**).

In **Galatians 5:13**, Paul reminded us that freedom comes with grave responsibility! "You were called to freedom, brothers," he said. "Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." The very fact that we can misuse liberty to pursue sinful things, things of the flesh, indicates just how fragile a free society can be.

Christians should take the duties of freedom seriously! Unbelievers, very often, do not. "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor," Peter writes (**1 Peter 2:16-17**). And when we do, we glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of our generation.²⁰

The Miracle of Our Preservation

- 1) Church, as we look at where America stands today, we have to realize that our very survival through this messy landscape of freedom is in and of itself a testimony to the living God.

Yesterday, our nation reached a monumental manifestation of the faithfulness of God – our 250th birthday as a nation. Two and a half centuries of American independence! When our founders penned the *Declaration of Independence*, the secular world laughed. History laughed. Everything we knew of human experience thought it impossible. No constitutional republic built upon the

²⁰ It is precisely within this messiness that God is ultimately glorified. Think about it: if we're forced to do the right thing, how does that bring glory to the Creator? But if, from the midst of a free, but messy landscape, millions of citizens rise up and say, "Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords," that brings immense glory to God (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11)! And that's what many in our country have done and still do. When ordinary Americans, surrounded by all the distractions and competing voices of a free market of ideas, willingly lift our hands in prayer (Philippians 4:6), and humble ourselves (1 Peter 5:6), and serve one another and the poor (Galatians 6:9-10), God's grace shines just a little brighter in the eyes of others (Matthew 5:16, 2 Corinthians 9:12-13). True virtue can only exist with the freedom to choose otherwise (Deuteronomy 30:19).

principles of individual liberty and self-governance had ever survived without collapsing into the hands of a dictator, or burning down in revolution and anarchy. However you want to measure it, America should *not* be here today.

✠ We survived the brutal crucible of the Civil War that threatened to tear our house apart. It defies logic! Jesus Himself said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand” (**Matthew 12:25**). And yet, He’s allowed America to survive and even flourish.

✠ We’ve survived two devastating World Wars, global economic depressions, foreign attacks on our own soil, and bitter cultural division. And yet, *we stand* today at this Semiquincentennial landmark.

2) But Church, this milestone is *not* a tribute to American political brilliance! Nor is it a monument to our military might or financial genius alone. No! That we are here celebrating today is due only to the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, for whatever reason, is not done with us yet. For, as **Job** said in **12:23**, “HE makes nations great, and HE destroys them; HE enlarges nations, and leads them away.”²¹

David understood this when he wrote: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (**Psalms 20:7**).²² A secular historian might try to credit our national preservation to luck, or to some brilliant political strategy, but believers know better. As Daniel reminded

²¹ In Genesis 12:2, God promised Abraham, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” Notice the “I”s there! From this we understand that it is God who makes nations and sets the times of their prosperity. Daniel 2:21: “He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings.” It is God who blesses, or who holds back blessing. He again told Abraham in Genesis 22:18 that in “your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” From this we understand that true greatness is never measured by a nation’s wealth or military power, but by its obedience to the One who established it. And so, in concert with verses like Philippians 2:4 – “let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” – America has consistently answered the call to be a blessing to the world, serving as a dedicated friend to nations in distress. God’s Word laid the foundation for this national spirit of generosity with the principle of Proverbs 3:27: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.” “Is not this the fast that I choose,” God asked through Isaiah. “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself ...” (Isaiah 58:6-7) And the promise is, if we will, “Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am’ (Isaiah 58:8-9).

²² As David said, just before cutting off the head of the Philistine Goliath, “the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s, and [today] he will give you into our hand” (1 Samuel 17:47).

Nebuchadnezzar, “Know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will” (**Daniel 4:17**).

Left to our own human devices, our own selfish ambitions and sinful proclivities, we would have crumbled from within long ago.²³ God alone is the cause of our continuance, and to Him belongs all the praise, the honor, and the glory! And so, “to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (**1 Timothy 1:17**).

A Sober Warning

- 1) But, Church, please hear this: both history and Scripture teach us that national blessings are not guaranteed forever. Old King David said to young King Solomon – king to king, leader-of-the-nation to leader-of-the-nation,

“Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever” (**1 Chronicles 28:9**).

We need to acknowledge a sobering, biblical truth: freedom is a fragile gift, and national greatness can vanish in an instant if its people continue to provoke the Source of their liberty! God said through Jeremiah, “My people have committed two evils: (1) they have forsaken me, the Fountain of Living Waters, and (2) [have] hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (**Jeremiah 2:13**).

The Pilgrims and Puritans who planted this great land tried to honor the Lord in all that they did. But, as we read of ancient Israel, “all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel” (**Judges 2:10**).

- 2) So, we are a free people today, and that is because of the Lord’s mercy. But, as the Apostle Paul warned in **Galatians 5:1**, while it is “for freedom [that] Christ

²³ Again, as King David said, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side ... when people rose up against us, they would have swallowed us up alive”! (Psalm 124:1-3a) Because, “unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Psalm 127:1b).

has set us free,” we need to “stand firm” in the freedom we have and “not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Paul, of course, is speaking about *spiritual* freedom, but the principle applies to the freedom God has given us in American civic life as well.

It’s as simple as this: when a nation forgets her God, the very moral foundation it needs to sustain genuine freedom erodes quickly. We forget, like the generation of the Judges, “the work that [the Lord] has done” for us (**Judges 2:10b**). And because they [Israel] ‘forgot,’ they “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord ... and they abandoned the Lord ... And they provoked the Lord to anger” (**Judges 2:11-12**). David warned that “the wicked will go down to the grave. This is the fate of all the nations who ignore God” (**Psalms 9:17**, NLT).

3) Moses delivered a stark warning to the nation in **Deuteronomy 8**, one that I believe speaks directly to America today.

✠ He warned them about developing a national arrogance when they became wealthy, and ate their fill, and built beautiful houses.

✠ He warned them of beginning to say in their hearts, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth” (**Deuteronomy 8:17**).

✠ He warned: “You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth ... ¹⁹ And if you forget the Lord your God ... I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰ Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God” (**Deuteronomy 8:18-20**).

Mark it down: when we distance ourselves from God, we trade absolute truths for moral confusion – and I am afraid that that’s where our nation is today morally. And that’s a problem, because **Jeremiah 17:5** says, “Thus says the Lord: Cursed [not ‘blessed’] is the man [and, by extension, *the nation*] who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”

4) Everyone one of our founders understood what few understand today: true liberty cannot survive in a spiritual vacuum. And our nation has drawn further from the Lord with each successive generation. As I have often said, America’s

greatest problem is not a military problem, nor a financial problem, nor even a political problem; America's greatest problem is a spiritual problem.

We need *healing*. And so, as America celebrates her 250th birthday, there's a big 'IF' that our people need to consider if we're to continue on:

“**IF** [maybe we will, maybe we won't] my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 **Chronicles 7:14**).

Church, if we want to preserve the precious liberties we enjoy in this great country, we have to look beyond our military strength, and our financial prosperity, and even our founding documents to the ultimate Source of our freedom. Despite every opinion to the contrary,

“The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength ...

¹⁸ [But] behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love ...”
(**Psalm 33:16, 18**).

The Wine, The Bread and The Water

- 1) Let me close by saying something to those of us who know Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Those who do, know that the greatest charter of liberty ever written was not signed in ink, but in the blood of Jesus Christ. **Colossians 1:20** says that He has made peace for us with the Father “by the blood of his cross.”

And so, what's the greatest way that we can celebrate the greatest of all freedoms – the freedom we have in Christ? Let me suggest two ways: the two divine ordinances our Lord left with us.

- 2) The first is baptism.

Stepping into the waters of baptism as a follower of Jesus is the ultimate, personal Declaration of Independence from the tyranny of sin and from eternal death.

In baptism we declare that we have died and been buried with Christ and have risen to the newness of life in Jesus (**Romans 6:4**, in principle). Paul says, we've "been buried with him in baptism," yet "raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead" (**Colossians 2:12**, in principle).²⁴

When we step into waters of baptism, we publicly proclaim this new freedom we have in Jesus. We declare that Jesus is Lord and that we are a new creation in every way (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). We declare that God has made us citizens of a heavenly kingdom (**Philippians 3:20**), thoroughly emancipated by the undeserved grace of God. For, as Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (**John 8:36**).

Baptism after salvation is commanded by our Lord (**Matthew 28:19**, cf., **Acts 2:38, 22:16**). It is not an empty ritual; it is a declaration of true freedom – a freedom that comes, counterintuitively, through surrender. It is the believer's personal declaration that they belong to Jesus and they are not for sale. That no earthly superpower, no human government, and no spiritual enemy can shackle again the one who has been set free by the Savior. It's not 'Free at last'; it's "free indeed!" (**John 8:36**)

Now, how much does God love you? Well, I'll tell you! If you have been saved, but have not been baptized biblically, you will have the wonderful opportunity to do so on **August 2nd**. On that day, we'll all have Church on the beach at Spring Lake in Burrillville. And after the worship service, we'll be baptizing any brother or sister who desires to proclaim his or her new life in Christ.

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, but you have never publicly declared your faith in Him through baptism, I am inviting you—I am urging you—to speak to me about adding your name to the list. Imagine the scene: You, surrounded by your Church family, before all the angels of Heaven, stepping into the water to let the world see your true emancipation. When you are lowered into the water, you're indicating that the chains of your old past without Jesus are dead and gone.

²⁴ For "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages [The Ω Ages] he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

When you come out of the water, you're indicating the newness of life you now have in Jesus (**Romans 6:4**) – a freedom that no political system, no matter how great, could ever give you – only King Jesus can do that! (**Revelation 1:5-6**)

“Peace I leave with you,” Jesus said, “my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. [So] let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (**John 14:27**).

If I'm speaking to you, come and see me after Church – there's also a sign-up sheet in the foyer.

- 3) And the second great way a follower of Jesus can celebrate the greatest of all freedoms is by participating regularly in His Table. The Lord's Table is the believer's ongoing memorial to the spiritual freedom Jesus won for us on the cross (**1 Corinthians 11:25**). Each time we partake, we heed our Lord's command to “Do this in remembrance of Me” (**1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19**).

And so, this morning, as we mark 250 years of God's great faithfulness, let's prepare ourselves to do just that.

Amen?