

Newsletter Reflections for July

The first thing that came to mind as I began writing this was that it doesn't seem possible that 2019 is about halfway over—actually when July arrives—IT IS HALFWAY OVER. When I write this, it is mid-June—but still, close enough. With thoughts of July come thoughts of summertime heat and vacations, trips to the mountains or the beach, picnics and swimming pools. And this year, there are already conversations and discussions looking ahead to 2020 and the election year that will bring. Of course, thought of July also bring thoughts of July 4th, that day of fireworks and celebrations known as Independence Day. Each year we commemorate that on July 4th 1776 some men gathered in Philadelphia adopted a document which declared that thirteen colonies which had been established in this new land no longer recognized England's authority to rule over them. These men belonged to what was known as the Continental Congress. They had been sent as representatives from the individual colonies to determine a course of action in response to what they deemed as arbitrary and "unlawful" actions on the part of the King and the British Parliament because they had no representatives or voice there. Two days before this date that we celebrate they signed this document which holds such a special place in our history they had voted that the colonies were no longer subject to the monarch. They voted they that colonies were now united, free and independent states, but it was not declared publicly until July 4th. The declaration did not make the statement fact, but it did set forth the purpose, the justification and cause for their rebellion against the British royal government. The document was written by Thomas Jefferson, and although we celebrate the day annually, lately we don't seem to lift up the values which formed the core of the document. We focus on the name: Declaration of Independence, on the concept of freedom which the colonies strived to gain, but somehow we have forgotten that they were not seeking so much individual freedom as a freedom to govern by representation where ALL were seen as having rights. The opening of the document known as the preamble states it this way: All men are created equal; all are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights. I remember memorizing this when in elementary school. This statement is a statement about values that are an intrinsic part of the birthright of this country; part of the foundations upon which this nation was built. This is something to truly celebrate. Of course there were years of warfare before a nation was actually founded. The Declaration of Independence stated clearly that they were rebelling to form a different form of government—it recognized that for people to live together there needed to be some government—not unlimited, unrestricted freedoms. The rights which were listed were called "inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The document continues that governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed to secure these purposes. This group of men then with much debate drafted the first form of government for these 13 colonies which became the original states of the United States of America under the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. It took them until 1781 for all thirteen to agree to them, but the "union" created was not very unified since the main focus was for each "state" to preserve its individual "rights" and only unite enough to deal with the war, with foreign nations and with Native American relations. In 1787 the weakness of this were addressed and in 1789 this nation adopted the Constitution which forms our current government. At the beginning of this much longer document is another piece of our history

which I was required to memorize. It goes like this: “We the People of the United States. In Order to form a more perfect Union, **establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare**, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. So what was on the minds of those men who risked so much was not FREEDOM in capital letters to be free to do whatever they wanted...it was freedom from injustice; it was freedom to live peacefully (domestic tranquility); they wanted to provide for the general welfare. The “Union” they established was not perfect, humanity is quite frankly incapable of creating perfection although in our pride we often fail to admit that. But the government established under that Constitution had values which the laws created have striven to achieve. As we come to celebrate another 4th of July, let us try to focus on the values which the gifts our freedoms should allow us to enjoy and to share with others ensuring that we respect that our Creator did indeed create all men (and women, young and old) equal as we are all made in God’s image. Recognizing that, all should have those inherent and inalienable rights to justice, safety and the pursuit of happiness.

Shalom,

Pastor Libby