

From the Pastor...

Let me suggest that the *word* for today
(Whatever day it is)

Is **freedom**.

That seemed appropriate to me in July.
There's a most important national holiday this month
That celebrates that very thing – **freedom!**
What a concept! And what a breadth of meaning!
The holiday, in simple essence,
Remembers the *independence* gained by a new nation –
The right, privilege and ability to be self-determinant.
There were rumblings about being liberated from taxation
By another nation at that time.
And that surely had gotten out of hand.
But, while a factor, there was **much more** than that.
There was, more importantly,
The pursuit of the nation's *own* lofty ideals.
It was not just about freedom *from* England.
It was more about freedom *to...* give flesh to liberty
In a society that was determined to respect human rights;
To open doors to unrestrained possibilities;
To offer unexplored horizons of opportunity
That are God-given in each one's created purpose.

For well over two and one quarter centuries
That seemingly simple word has been examined and explored,
Sometimes even debated anew.
We've discovered and experienced much of what it means,
And occasionally fallen short and abusive of some of it too.
We've had to learn and re-examine that it is sometimes costly,
And never just guaranteed.
It is, instead, the **opportunities** that are the given.
The shortcomings and abuses usually occur
When freedom is taken for granted;
When it is denied to others;
When it is regarded as the exclusive right of a few;
And when it becomes a hammer for (of all things) oppression.
There are, strangely, always such risks
That attend something so pure and holy in human hands.

We can be awed every year by the enormous achievements
That have come from this noble human experiment
Known as the United States of America.
And we can be unashamedly thankful
For the privileges and the gifts it has afforded us.

But we must also be ever watchful about its maintenance
And dedicated to its preservation.
One of its peculiar ironies is that it sets us *free*
To question it; to extend it; to chasten and correct it;
And to treat it with the kind of humility that privilege requires.
In the world community,
As well as in the smallest circles of our own society,
One of the greatest threats to the concept itself
Is a haughty disregard for other ideas.
It behooves us to remember that
Freedom received is also necessarily freedom given.

As in all things, our most treasured resource is in our prayers.
Celebrating our nation urges us, indeed it requires us,
To ask for God's continued blessing for us as a people.
It begins with gratitude for his abundant and bountiful gifts,
And it ends with trust in his mercy and will
To guide us in directions where his Spirit leads.



This is the God of *freedom*; the
author of *liberty*;
The very definition of *peace*
itself.
We need continually to ask him
to use us,
To enable us, to support us
In being a beacon to the world of
those *Godly* gifts.

Peace and Freedom for
Independence Day.

Pastor E