

Freedom and Civility

by Mike Tucker *

The United States of America turned 240 years old on July 4, 2016. That's a long time for a nation to remain free. But, when you look at our history in the context of world history America is just a child among the nations. Egypt, China, Japan, England, and Greece all make America's history seem short. Consider what a brief time we've really been here as a nation: When Thomas Jefferson died Abraham Lincoln was a young man of 17. When Lincoln was assassinated, Woodrow Wilson was a boy of 8. By the time Wilson died Ronald Reagan was a boy of 12.

There you have it. The lives of four men can take you all the way back to the beginning of our country, 232 years ago.

We are so young, and yet we stand tall among these nations because of the principles on which we were established: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

It is good for us to celebrate freedom and liberty. So many churches and ministers today loathe patriotism in the pulpit. Some pastors even curse this great nation of ours. They can do so since this nation protects their right to free speech. So they use that freedom to cast off both civility and gratitude and curse America. I am not one of those pastors. I celebrate with you the freedoms which God has blessed this great nations of ours.

Let me temper our celebrations with a caution: With freedom comes great responsibility. We are not free to live excessive lives. We are not set at liberty to pursue selfish ends. Our independence should not make us infidels. As Paul so eloquently puts it: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature."

What is true for the church is true for the nation: Liberty demands civility. Freedom requires righteous behavior. On Independence weekend we celebrate both freedom and civility.

With Love,
Mike

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