

## Life, Liberty and The Pursuit of Happiness Psalm 33:12

### **Slide 1**

In 1776, fifty-six men signed a document hand-written by Thomas Jefferson which said, in part:

*“When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve a political bond which they have committed with another and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature’s God entitles them... 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.”*

That document was the Declaration of Independence signed in congress on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, declaring America’s freedom from the oppressive rule of England.

This document made “freedom” the battle cry of this country for over 200 years.

Psalm 33:12 tells us, *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.”* The Pledge of Allegiance declares, without apology, that America is *“one nation under God.”*

Let’s suppose sometime this week you turn on the news and hear this announcement: *“The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has just issued this statement: ‘Divine Providence (that’s God) has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.’”*

Then, the next day, you hear, *“Inquiries by our reporters reveal that almost every state legislature has now passed a law requiring all elected officials to take this oath: ‘I do profess faith in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ His only Son, and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by divine inspiration.’”*

Finally, to top it off, later that week you hear reports saying, *“Legislation was passed today in Congress to affirm that, ‘The Congress of the United States approves of and recommends the Holy Bible for use in the schools.’”*

It’s hard to imagine these things being said, or done in today’s environment, but they were.

It was John Jay, the first Chief Justice and “father” of the Supreme Court who wrote, *“It is the duty of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”*

After this, the state of Delaware, along with others, required officeholders to take an oath affirming their Christian faith before they could take office.

And, not only did Congress in 1782 approve the use of the Bible in our schools, they even paid for them with tax dollars.

In 1844, when someone sued to remove those Bibles, the Supreme Court ruled: *“Why should not the Bible, and especially the New Testament, be read and taught as a divine revelation in the schools? Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the New Testament?”*

We’ve come a long way from our roots. Former President Obama even said: *“Whatever we once were, we’re no longer a Christian nation.”*

I have to agree. We're no longer solely a Christian nation. We're a diverse nation consisting of Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Wiccans, Spiritualist, Catholics, Protestants, atheists, and many more.

But the fact is: The majority of Americans still identify themselves as Christians. Our nation was built upon Christian ideals and biblical principles, but our Christian heritage is slowly eroding.

Yet, when Thomas Jefferson, and our fore fathers, penned the words of the Declaration of Independence, they recognized certain God-given, "*inalienable*" rights, specifically: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Today, our understanding of those rights has diminished. Though, when written, they carried great political and spiritual meaning.

If we want the God of the Bible to be the God of this nation, then we must realize what our founding fathers understood; that true life, liberty and happiness can only be found in God.

So, let's consider these inalienable rights with which all men have been endowed with by their Creator. The first of which is life.

## **Slide 2**

Jesus said, in John 14:6, "*I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.*"

In other words, real, lasting life can only be experienced through Jesus Christ! In fact, Jesus even said in John 10:10, "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*"

Today's Living Bible puts it this way: "*My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.*" Apart from Jesus Christ, this life, which we are now living is really no life at all.

The founders of our nation understood this and believed it. Unless we believe in Him and commit our lives into His hands then this life has no real purpose or meaning.

For the most part, other nations came into existence by conquest for selfish and ambitious motives.

Yet, our earliest settlers were people who came looking for religious freedom. It was principally in the atmosphere of God, not gold, that America was born.

Those who first sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 were fleeing from tyranny and oppression.

This is seen in the Mayflower Compact, which proclaimed that they had come to the new world for *“the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.”*

In fact, in the early colonies, the first public building to be erected was a church and the first public exercise was the worship of Almighty God.

When sorrow came, they gathered at the church to appeal to God for help. When bountiful harvests filled their barns, they gathered at the church to bless His name.

In 1643, as more and more people arrived, they joined together for safety and to seal their union, they wrote *“The New England Confederation,”* the first constitution of the New World.

It began with these words: *“We all came into these parts with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace...”*

As time passed, and the original settlers died off, many of their descendants were more concerned with increasing their wealth and comfortable living than being faithful to God and His Word.

Many of the immigrants that arrived during this time came for other reasons and entirely different motives than those earlier settlers.

The end result was that by 1730 only about 10% of the people in the Colonies attended church. But then something amazing happened!

Beginning in 1734, a handful of preachers began to preach in the churches and in the streets and in the fields. So many people came to Christ that this era came to be known as "*The Great Awakening.*"

Tens of thousands dedicated their lives to Jesus. Benjamin Franklin wrote, "*It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.*"

Why am I telling you all this? Because this "*Great Awakening*" was a precursor to the American Revolution.

Our Founding Fathers, the authors of the Declaration of Independence, those who wrote our Constitution and the Bill of Rights, those who put their lives on the line, who fought and died that we might be free; all these men grew up and came into leadership while this "*Great Awakening*" was engulfing the land.

Listen to this prayer recorded in the personal diary of George Washington: "*Let my heart, gracious God, be so affected with Your glory and majesty that I may.... discharge those weighty duties which Thou requires of me....*"

*Again, I have called on Thee for pardon and forgiveness of sins.... for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered on the Cross for me. Thou gavest Thy Son to die for me; and hast given me assurance of my salvation.”*

The first President of these United States acknowledged that Jesus is the Christ, the Son God, the source of all life.

He knew and believed that it was only through Jesus that sin could be forgiven and eternal life inherited. *“I have come that they may have life, and...have it more abundantly.”*

The second of our inalienable rights, according to the Declaration of Independence, is liberty.

### **Slide 3**

Not only was Patrick Henry was a great statesman and speaker, he was also a great patriot during the infancy of this nation.

As such, he defended the character under which the colonies were founded. His most famous speech, though, was before the Virginia Assembly in 1775, as British troops were advancing to enforce King George’s rule in Virginia.

At the conclusion of one of his fiery speeches, Patrick Henry cried, *“Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”*

The fire of freedom was lit, and it still burns today. Take the Statue of Liberty for example.

To the Christian, the Statue of Liberty and the Cross of Jesus Christ have kindred meanings. Both symbolize the highest and noblest in freedom and liberty. Both stand as beautiful and glorious ensigns of a liberated people.

Jesus came into our world on a mission of liberty. Luke 4:18-19, *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

Paul worked hard at getting the people to understand this freedom as his letter to the Roman church illustrates.

Romans 7:6, *“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”*

The Old Testament law was a system of rules and regulations that only served to condemn us, but Colossians 2:14 tells that Jesus *“canceled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross.”*

This country was founded by people who trusted more in the liberty found in Jesus than in the liberty granted by our own Constitution.

What we often forget is that in declaring their independence from England, our forefathers made an equally strong declaration of dependence upon Almighty God.

The closing words of the Declaration solemnly states: *“With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”*

It’s important that we remember this very basic declaration of their dependence, because today the United States is rapidly forgetting the God of our fathers, the God who gave this nation its birth and its greatness; the only source of true liberty.

Finally, the third inalienable right recognized by our forefathers was the pursuit of happiness.

#### **Slide 4**

Happiness comes and goes from day to day. Situations and experiences can make us happy or sad. But in Jesus, our happiness is not dependant upon outside forces.

The word translated “blessed” in Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* actually means “happy.”

Listen how The New Century Version translates Matthew 5:3-10:  
*“Those people who know they have great spiritual needs are happy, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Those who are sad now are happy, because God will comfort them.*

*Those who are humble are happy, because the earth will belong to them. Those who want to do right more than anything else are happy, because God will fully satisfy them.*

*Those who show mercy to others are happy, because God will show mercy to them. Those who are pure in their thinking are happy, because they will be with God. Those who work to bring peace are happy, because God will call them his children.*

*Those who are treated badly for doing good are happy, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.”*

People across this country spend their lives pursuing temporary happiness. But that’s all it will ever be... a pursuit. They’ll never be satisfied. They’ll never have enough. That empty feeling will never be filled.

The pleasures and distractions of this world will never provide lasting joy or happiness. True happiness can only be found in Jesus Christ and in Him it can never be taken away.

Psychologists tell us that people need three things to make them happy:

- Something to do.
- Someone to love, and...
- Something to look forward to.

Jesus gives us all three. He gave us something to do. John 14:12, *“I tell you the truth, whoever believes in me will do the same things that I do.”*

Jesus gave us someone to love. John 14:23, *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”*

And Jesus gave us something to look forward to. John 14:2, *“When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.”*

Only in Jesus can Americans, or anybody else, find genuine, lasting happiness.

## **Slide 5**

Conclusion:

*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,”* Psalm 33:12

If you're really a patriot, if you're genuinely concerned about America, if you earnestly want God to bless her—then live a life in harmony with the will of God.

Therefore, as we celebrate the birth of our nation this weekend, pray that our country might have a new birth of freedom; not a freedom from God, which ultimately leads to slavery, but rather a freedom built upon God and His commandments.

Also, may each one of us, as individuals, reaffirm our dependence upon God. And then, as did the Founding Fathers of our country, we'll find in Him our life, our liberty, and our happiness!

Let's not forget, though, Psalm 146:5 tells us, "*Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God.*"

Before our nation can find hope in God, we must hope in Him. Each of us has that opportunity today.