

a sermon for July 4th:
JESUS CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF TRUE LIBERTY!

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I. A PRAYER FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

“O eternal GOD, through Whose mighty power our fathers won their liberties of old Grant, we beseech Thee, that we and all the people of this land [America] may have grace to maintain these liberties in righteousness and peace through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. AMEN.”¹

II. A HYMN – MY COUNTRY ‘TIS OF THEE!

The fourth Stanza of the once well known and formerly beloved hymn - “America – My Country ‘Tis of Thee!” – offers us these thoughts on The Source and nature of true liberty:

Our fathers' GOD, to Thee,
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing;
long may our land be bright
with freedom's holy light;
protect us by Thy might, great GOD, our King.²

III. A PROPOSITION

True liberty is not that which is devised by men, but that which is decreed by GOD! For JESUS is The CHRIST and The Author of True and Lasting Liberty!

IV. A SCRIPTURE TEXT ON LIBERTY

LUKE 4:16-21

16 And [JESUS CHRIST] ...came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on The Sabbath Day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto Him The Book of the prophet... [ISAIAH]. And when He had opened The Book, He found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of The Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach The Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of The Lord.

20 And He closed The Book, and He gave it again to the Minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.

21 And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.³

¹ 1, BCP, [American] Independence Day, The Collect, page 279.

² 2, Hymn: America (My Country ‘Tis of Thee), Stanza 4.

³ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:16-21.

V. INTRODUCTION

Ladies and gentlemen, what is true liberty, and from whence does it flow to men? If men desire liberty, does that not suggest that they are in bondage? And if in bondage, how so? And who might then be able to liberate them? The old patriotic American hymn “My Country ‘Tis of Thee,” is a relic of a time not long ago when our people and thus our nation were profoundly - though not by any means perfectly - Christian. The fourth stanza of that hymn declares that it is The Almighty Who bestows liberty to men because He alone is The Author of liberty!

Therefore, if we as a nation no longer resort to The Throne Up Above from whence that true liberty comes, is it any wonder that our people no longer have a land that is “bright with freedom’s holy light?”⁴ Therefore, if we as a people no longer acknowledge The LORD as our King over our lives both earthly and eternal, is it any mystery that Thou, O GOD, no longer “protect[s] us by Thy might?”⁵

If GOD is The Author of true liberty, and we have turned from Him, what is it that we loose? It is none other than the lasting earthly and eternal liberties which The Messiah JESUS CHRIST has secured and offers to all men! It is none other than “freedom’s holy light” of which The Lord declares as His Great Gifts to mankind in the passage from LUKE 4 which we have just read! Now what The Lord was reading from in the synagogue was ISAIAH 61:1-2, which was prophesied by Isaiah many hundreds of years before The Advent of CHRIST, and which only He could in truly completely fulfill: “The Spirit of The Lord GOD is upon me; because The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of The LORD...!”⁶

And in truth, the Jewish leaders and people knew that therefore, when JESUS read this Scripture and declared “...This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears!” that He was revealing Himself as The Promised One, The Deliverer of Israel, The Messiah Himself!⁷ For they were astounded by His words and said among themselves, “...Is not this Joseph’s son?” How then can He proclaim that He is The Saviour?⁸ And as we as a nation in our own time and place have greatly done, so these people also rejected Him in haughty rebellion, refusing to confess that JESUS CHRIST is Lord! And like our nation is doing today, these men of Israel who were without excuse by the grace of GOD’s blessings and Revelation to them, were filled with wrath against The very Son of GOD!

Therefore it behooves us to consider what we as a people stand to loose when we turn from the face of GOD, lest our nation also fall unto the same utter desolation and destruction that came upon ancient Israel! Let us therefore consider together the great treasure house of riches stored for us in this Scripture passage.

⁴ 2, Hymn: America (My Country ‘Tis of Thee), Stanza 4. lines 3 and 4.

⁵ 2, Hymn: America (My Country ‘Tis of Thee), Stanza 4, line 5.

⁶ 3, KJV, ISAIAH 61:1-2.

⁷ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:21.

⁸ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:22.

VI. LUKE 4:16 – CHRIST KEPT THE LAW OF GOD

Verse 16 reads, “And [JESUS CHRIST] ...came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on The Sabbath Day, and stood up for to read.”⁹ Here is GOD Incarnate, taking care as He begins His earthly ministry to keep His Law, which He decreed to Moses as in EXODUS 20:8, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”¹⁰ Here is The Living Word among men, respecting both the forms and traditions of His people’s form of worship, coming to the synagogue and sharing fellowship with faithful men and women who themselves came to worship His Father in Heaven. HEBREWS 10:25a commands, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...”¹¹

And Here is The Messiah, fully GOD and yet fully man but without sin, showing respect also for the Minister and elders of the synagogue, for after He finished reading, “...He closed The Book, and He gave it again to the Minister, and sat down...”¹² As He decreed in EXODUS 20:12, “Honour thy father and thy mother...”¹³ For “it was the [Jewish] custom in the synagogue for a man to stand while he was reading The Scriptures, but then to sit while explaining the portion he had read.”¹⁴ So we see that CHRIST kept The Law!

VII. LUKE 4:17 - CHRIST KNEW THE SCRIPTURES

Verse 17 records, “And there was delivered unto Him The Book of the prophet... [ISAIAH]. And when He had opened The Book, He found the place where it was written,”¹⁵ Our Lord knew exactly what Scripture passage He desired to read, and exactly where to find it. He knew the full messianic promise contained in these versus in ISAIAH, and He was prepared to use it for His purposes according to His design for the salvation of men, the nature of which we shall soon see!

For He Himself declares to men the precious nature of His Special Revelation of Holy Scripture, as in PSALM 119:105: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”¹⁶ And again in II TIMOTHY 3:15-17, “...The Holy Scriptures, Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”¹⁷ But should it surprise us that The Saviour should know Holy Writ so well, seeing as it was He Who inspired through His servants

⁹ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:16.

¹⁰ 3, KJV, EXODUS 20:8.

¹¹ 3, KJV, HEBREWS 10:25a.

¹² 3, KJV, LUKE 4:20.

¹³ 3, KJV, EXODUS 20:12.

¹⁴ 4, Walvoord and Zuck, LUKE 4:16-30, paragraph 1, page 214.

¹⁵ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:17.

¹⁶ 3, KJV, PSALM 119:105.

¹⁷ 3, KJV, II TIMOTHY 3:15-17.

by The HOLY SPIRIT to cause it to be known to men? So we see that CHRIST knew The Scriptures!

VIII. LUKE 4:18-20 – CHRIST ALONE BRINGS TRUE AND LASTING LIBERTY

Verse 18 tells us what CHRIST read from ISAIAH 61:1-2, “The Spirit of The Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach The Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of The Lord. And He closed The Book, and He gave it again to the Minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.”¹⁸

Now here something remarkable happened that day when CHRIST read in the synagogue – He stopped in the middle of verse 2, not reading that second portion, “...and the day of vengeance of our GOD...!”¹⁹ Walvoord and Zuck note here what The Lord was proclaiming that day, “JESUS was claiming to be The Messiah Who could bring The Kingdom of GOD Which had been promised for so long – but His First Advent was not His time for judgement,” but of mercy.²⁰

We who have the privilege of living under The Grace of the completed work of The Cross of CHRIST know that The Messiah’s Advent is in Two Comings and not One. The Lord read only that first part of ISAIAH 61:2 which proclaimed the arrival of “the acceptable year of The Lord” because CHRIST’s First Coming was as The Suffering Servant, that He might – by sacrificing Himself on our behalf – pay for our sins and reconcile the elect back to Himself! His Second Coming will be as The Victorious King to bring fully His Kingdom to earth as it is in Heaven!

See what great things JESUS CHRIST brings to men in True Liberty: The Gospel of salvation is preached to men, especially to the poor, who are often overlooked for inclusion into The Kingdom of GOD by more respectable men of religion and their institutions. The brokenhearted are healed by the love of The Saviour. There is deliverance from those in bondage to the fruits of sin - suffering, sickness, sorrow and death. The blind of spirit who can not see either GOD or hope for this life or the next are made to see Their Deliverer. To free those that are bruised from the beatings of life’s strifes. To declare The Time of Redemption and Mercy through The First Advent of The CHRIST! So we see that CHRIST alone brings True and Lasting Liberty!

IX. LUKE 4:21 – JESUS IS THE CHRIST AND AUTHOR OF TRUE LIBERTY

Verse 21 documents The Lord revealing that He is The Messiah: “And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”²¹ What was the response of these religious men who had known JESUS as a youth well versed in

¹⁸ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:18-20.

¹⁹ 3, KJV, ISAIAH 61:2b.

²⁰ 4, Walvoord and Zuck, LUKE 4:16-30, paragraph 1, page 214.

²¹ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:21.

Scripture, a hardworking young man, respectful to His parents and a pious keeper of GOD's Laws? For now they hear His declaration, "Behold, I The Messiah have arrived in your midst!"

Wycliffe offers that CHRIST's "...opening words of comment must have been a shock to His hearers. They had known Him from boyhood and had taken Him for granted. When He claimed to be the fulfillment of this Messianic prophecy, they were astounded!"²² But could these men have been ignorant of all the messianic prophecies which surrounded JESUS from the very moment of His conception? Are we to think that this Messianic proclamation of True Liberty in His Person came completely out of the blue?

Did they not know of the Revelations of the coming Saviour by GOD through His angelic messengers to the shepherds, to the Magi and to Mary and Joseph? Or the adoration of the baby JESUS at His birth by the shepherds and Magi? Or the adoration of the pious old Simeon and Anna in The Jerusalem Temple at His circumcision? Or Herod's twisted murder not many years before of newborn male children, that he might prevent The Messiah from displacing him from his usurped palace throne? This was an age of great messianic expectation, and surely their curiosity should have been engaged over who JESUS was!

Had these men not heard of how "their" ESUS had been teaching and had been praised by their fellow Jews in the surrounding synagogues? For LUKE 4:14-15 which immediately precedes our passage, reports that "...JESUS returned in the power of The Spirit [from His temptations in the desert] into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all!"²³ And yet these religious men could not see that, as JOHN 1:17 declares, "For The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST!"²⁴

But if perhaps these men might be argued to have some excuse for not seeing that JESUS is The CHRIST, we today certainly do not! For these men had only The Old Testament, while we have both The Old and New Testaments. They had the witness of the prophetic history of ancient Israel, but we have both that and also the witness of The Church. These Jewish men, though they thought they had liberty from spiritual darkness in The Law of Moses, were in fact in bondage to their spiritual blindness.

For as CHRIST says elsewhere to the Jewish leaders in JOHN 10:25-26, "...I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's Name, they bear witness of Me. But ye believe not..."²⁵ Yet, by GOD's Grace, we see what those men that day in their synagogue could not see – that JESUS is The CHRIST and The Author of That True Liberty!

²² 5, Wycliffe, LUKE 4:21, PAGE 1036.

²³ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:14-15.

²⁴ 3, KJV, JOHN 1:17.

²⁵ 3, KJV, JOHN 10:25-26.

X. IN CONCLUSION

Recall again that our forefathers knew well and embraced what we today in this time and place often forget, that GOD Almighty is The Author of True Liberty, and that without Him there is no freedom:

Our fathers' GOD, to Thee,
Author of liberty, to Thee we sing;
long may our land be bright
with freedom's holy light;
protect us by Thy might, great GOD, our King. ²⁶

See again The True Liberty which The Almighty declares in The Gospels, and of which The faithful Church is the custodian of, which beacons all men to partake of at The Cross of CHRIST! The Saviour has declared to us this Divine Liberty as we have seen in LUKE 4:18-19, “The Spirit of The Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach The Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of The Lord!” ²⁷

Human liberty among nations come and go on the stage of history. But True Liberty which does not fade away into the dust with the passing of mere nations of men is to be found in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Those men who sat in that synagogue that day long ago and heard The Lord declare from ISAIAH His First Coming might have been with some excuse at their spiritual blindness, but we certainly are not!

Therefore, let us embrace The Saviour JESUS CHRIST, Who is The Author of This True Liberty, of which Saint John proclaims in JOHN 3:16-18, “For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For GOD sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in The Name of The only begotten Son of God!” ²⁸

As we have observed, True Liberty is not that which is devised by men, but that which is decreed by GOD! For JESUS is The CHRIST and Author of True and Lasting Liberty! In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son, and The Holy Spirit, AMEN!

²⁶ 2, Hymn: America (My Country 'Tis of Thee), Stanza 4.

²⁷ 3, KJV, LUKE 4:18-19.

²⁸ 3, KJV, JOHN 3:16-18.

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