

HENLY TODAY

A WORD FROM PASTOR DON: TRUE FREEDOM

As the 2020 calendar rolled over to the month of July, our health-conscious reality took precedence over the parades, fireworks, live music or any number of other ways we've historically come together to celebrate the 4th of July.

Despite our desire for life to return to some level of normalcy, the need for face masks and social distancing didn't make this year's Independence Day seem like the ideal time for large family gatherings or lining our city streets to watch marching bands and floats decorated with red, white and blue flags. Most folks understand the dangers associated to crowds during a pandemic.

However, that is not to say that we should allow ourselves to become estranged from our sense of patriotism and love for our country. We recognize the hand of God in all that we've been given. We may even sing "God Bless the USA" and become teary-eyed with emotion at the sound of the words "thanking our lucky stars to be living here today 'cause the flag still stands for freedom and they can't take that away."

Sadly, the disconnect that jeopardizes our affirmation that freedom can't be taken away is the current level of unrest, disrespect, conflict and anger that we see across our land. In our Humpty Dumpty-like brokenness, solutions that orchestrate unity and promote healing may seem beyond our grasp.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an 18th Century Genevan philosopher, is credited with writing: "Man was born free but is everywhere in chains. One man thinks himself the master of others but remains more of a slave than they are."

The good news of the gospel is that God does not abandon us when life becomes difficult, but instead offers to sustain us and see us through our difficulties. We must turn to Him in the midst of our brokenness for the freedom that only God can provide. He sets the captives free. Christ said: "*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32)

The outcome of that freedom is a love that makes all men brothers. The Prophet Isaiah expressed it like this: "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.*" (Isaiah 61:1)

Jesus affirmed: "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (John 13:34-35)

What a different world ours would be if we all invited Christ to set us free. It is the only freedom that lasts.

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."



Don

FAMILY FOCUS: GALEN AND EVELYN DEMOSS

You may not know that both members of this couple serve important roles in our church. They do so unobtrusively without fanfare or the need for recognition. They are salt-of-the-earth kinds of people who quietly serve without calling attention to themselves or wanting credit for the difference they make.

Galen came into my life from three doors down in 1953. I truthfully can say that I've known him since his birth. My mother's brother was married to Galen's mother, and I was a first grader with a new cousin who lived on the same block.

Galen's childhood became a mystery to me about the time he turned three. His parents had divorced, and his mother had remarried. I remember meeting the new stepdad. He and Galen's mother came to visit my mother to share the news of their wedding.

As the saying goes: "Little pitchers have big ears." I also have a good memory. I remember the stepdad telling my mother it was not his intent to eliminate our family from Galen's life. We were always welcomed. However, the family was moving to a new home on the other side of town and, sometime later, moved away to another town.

In the providence of God, the tie that binds is a strong chord, but there was mostly a 25-year gap before Galen and I reconnected. The renewed connection came about when our family was invited to Galen and Evelyn's wedding in 1978.

I remember that Galen and Evelyn were both pleased that we were in attendance. In addition, his mother could not have been more welcoming. This time the relationship was cemented for all eternity.

Galen and Evelyn started dating in 1975. She is a native of San Marcos, although her family did live in Fredericksburg for about a year. Galen and Evelyn chose to live in San Marcos. Evelyn is gifted musically and was singing with a religious group known as the One Way Singers when they married. On a number of occasions we invited the group to come to Henly and share their music with our church.

Evelyn attended Texas State University before she and Galen moved to Austin and started a family. They are the parents of two children, Christopher and Rebecca, and the very proud grandparents of Megyn, who is Chris and Erin's daughter.

Galen is involved in property management for an office building complex, and he has worked for the same company or office complex since he got out of high school. His skillset in knowing the ins and outs of building maintenance and "how to fix it" or "who to call" is remarkable. I am happy to say that he serves in that same role for our church. In addition, he and Evelyn are the invisible people who keep the church pantry stocked, ensure that none of the breakfast foods served are out of date, and order the elements for the Lord's Supper and pretty much anything else that we need.

In addition to being a Registered Nurse for 20 years, Evelyn served as music director for our church for many years. She still contributes special music on a regular basis. Evelyn also serves as church treasurer, a task that is far more complicated and time-consuming than one might imagine.

Let me make one other note about Galen: He is an incredible father for his children. Their welfare has always been his highest priority. He provided them the nurture and care he never received from his own father. It is a testament to his character and the values he gives to life. In addition, Galen serves as one of our deacons. His is a life of servanthood.

Without Galen and Evelyn's many contributions, I think the wheels would probably fall off our wagon. Regular "thank you's" are definitely deserved, and we are grateful to have Galen and Evelyn in the Henly Baptist Church Family of Faith.

- Don Forrester



Henly Today is a monthly publication of Henly Baptist Church. Pastor and Executive Editor: Don Forrester. Our mission is to report on and encourage participation in all church activities, share stories of our church family, and to support the fulfillment of our church's 100-year-plus mission "to be a spiritual lighthouse in the community through the practice of Christ's teachings, evangelism, outreach, and social and benevolent ministries." Please send your news, comments and address updates to: HenlyToday@gmail.com.

Some Freedom IS Free

There is a popular phrase that most of you have probably heard: “Freedom isn’t free.” This phrase is usually delivered to draw attention to those cases in which someone has paid a personal price to either gain or retain certain freedoms. When we look at major events from our history and consider those involved (our Founding Fathers, Civil War combatants, civil rights advocates, women’s suffrage leaders, etc.), we will always find some personal sacrifice to achieve the desired outcome. That is the purpose of the phrase “Freedom isn’t free.” But why is there even a need for such a statement?

Why would someone feel the need to point out that there was a price that had to be paid for freedom? Presumably, someone in history felt that people were not offering due deference regarding the sacrifices made to achieve freedom. There will always be people who benefit from freedoms for which they did not fight. While it may seem unfair that they benefit without having to sacrifice, I would submit for your consideration that they are actually disadvantaged by their lack of experience in the struggle. If you have ever worked to achieve something, you probably value that achievement much more than anything you received as a gift because you truly understand what it took to secure it.



Right about now you are probably saying, “I get it, so what?” I’m glad you asked.

I wonder how many of us truly value the freedoms we enjoy in this country? If you travel abroad, you don’t have to go far to find a country with much less than we have in the United States. Even in some “first-world” countries, every family member doesn’t have a cell phone, computer, automobile, etc. Have you ever stopped to think about how your life would be if you had been born in Russia, China or the Middle East?

Similarly, if you haven’t served in the military, law enforcement, emergency services, Peace Corps or some other form of public service and/or philanthropic activity, I would argue that you are missing out on a depth of understanding that can be gained *only through* that service.

In essence, some of the freedoms you enjoy are free for you even though you did not need to – or have the opportunity to – personally share in the burden of securing those freedoms.

As Christians, we are born again through Christ. We are free from the eternal consequences of our sin, and for us that freedom *was free*. Christ paid the price. We had but to ask and it was given. More to the point, we *cannot* do anything to earn it. It was *given* of His free will to us.

I often wonder if we internalize this freedom’s value because we have not shared in its burden. Do we value the Bible as much as Christians who must read their Bibles in secret? Do we value the members of our extended family of faith as much as those who cannot acknowledge their Christian brothers and sisters or come together and worship God openly? Are we willing to sacrifice for it? I wonder.

I further wonder if we shouldn’t openly strive to acknowledge and revere it? Shouldn’t we celebrate the free nature of our Heavenly freedoms by committing ourselves to other forms of freedoms? Shouldn’t we strive to free ourselves from pride? Shouldn’t we strive to free ourselves from the need for retribution? Shouldn’t we strive to free ourselves from worry? In short, shouldn’t we strive to free ourselves of all the negatives that often come along with our human nature?

I further wonder ... despite our Heavenly freedom being free to us, if we could draw enough strength from His gift to free our lives from such things, wouldn’t we be closer to Him and be much better witness to those who do not yet know the gift of Heavenly freedom? On this occasion where we take time to celebrate our Nation’s birth and the freedoms that we enjoy, I wonder how much sacrifice we would be willing to withstand to be good witnesses for our Heavenly father. After all, we are the best advertisement this earth has for His great gift.

- Robert Hites

A Matter of Prayer

Please know that collectively as a family of faith, it is the longing of our hearts to gather together. As soon as we can safely resume our in-person worship experience, we will joyfully do so. In the interim, please pray for our continued good health and healing from all that divides our country. In God We Trust!

Connecting Through Zoom

9:30-10:15am Sundays - Sunday School: The Book of John

7-8pm Wednesdays - Men's Bible Study: *Ten Men of the Bible* by Max Lucado

If interested, contact Don Forrester at HenlyToday@gmail.com or (202) 770-9490.

Because You Asked

Folks have asked where to mail their tithes and offerings. They may be mailed directly to Evelyn DeMoss, Church Treasurer, at 17651 Panorama Drive, Dripping Springs, TX 78620 or to Henly Baptist Church at 200 Henly Loop, Dripping Springs, TX 78620. Thank you for your ongoing support!