

Devotions - July 1-7, 2007
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As our nation celebrates its independence and we celebrate the freedoms given to us through our government, I would like us to ponder the freedom we received through God's sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ and how we use those freedoms for a better world. My hope is that as you journey through these verses of scripture and hymns and pray the prayers of our church found in the ELW that you may see a way to use your freedom, both as a Christian and an American, as a blessing to others.

Sunday, July 1

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. *John 8:34-36*

This Is My Song

Text: Lloyd Stone, 1912-1993, sts. 1-2; Georgia Harkness, 1891-1974, st. 3

This is my song, O God of all the nations,
a song of peace for lands afar and mine.
This is my home, the country where my heart is;
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;
but other hearts in other lands are beating
with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,
and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.
But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
and skies are ev'rywhere as blue as mine.
So hear my song, O God of all the nations,
a song of peace for their land and for mine.

This is my prayer, O God of all earth's kingdoms,
your kingdom come; on earth your will be done.
O God, be lifted up till all shall serve you,
and hearts united learn to live as one.
So hear my prayer, O God of all the nations;
myself I give you; let your will be done.

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself. We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.

Monday, July 2

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. *Galatians 5:1*

Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace

Text: Olive Wise Spannaus, b. 1916, alt.

Lord of all nations, grant me grace
to love all people, ev'ry race;
and in each person may I see
my kindred, loved, redeemed by thee.

Break down the wall that would divide
thy children, Lord, on ev'ry side.
My neighbor's good let me pursue;
let Christian love bind warm and true.

Forgive me, Lord, where I have erred
by loveless act and thoughtless word.
Make me to see the wrong I do
will crucify my Lord anew.

Give me thy courage, Lord, to speak
whenever strong oppress the weak.
Should I myself the victim be,
help me forgive, rememb'ring thee.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth; so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Tuesday, July 3

As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil.
Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. *1 Peter 2:16-17*

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life

Text: Frank M. North, 1850-1935, alt.

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
where sound the cries of race and clan,
above the noise of selfish strife,
we hear your voice, O Son of Man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
on shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
from paths where hide the lures of greed,
we catch the vision of your tears.

From tender childhood's helplessness,
from human grief and burdened toil,
from famished souls, from sorrow's stress,
your heart has never known recoil.

The cup of water giv'n for you
still holds the freshness of your grace;
yet long these multitudes to view
the strong compassion in your face.

O Master, from the mountainside
make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
among these restless throngs abide;
oh, tread the city's streets again;

Till all the world shall learn your love,
and follow where your feet have trod;
till glorious from your heav'n above
shall come the city of our God.

Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, July 4

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act — they will be blessed in their doing. *James 1:22-25*

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies

Text: Katherine L. Bates, 1859-1929

O beautiful for spacious skies,
for amber waves of grain,
for purple mountain majesties
above the fruited plain:
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
and crown thy good with brotherhood
from sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for heroes proved
in liberating strife,
who more than self their country loved,
and mercy more than life:
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
till all success be nobleness,
and ev'ry gain divine.

O beautiful for patriot dream
that sees beyond the years
thine alabaster cities gleam,
undimmed by human tears:
America! America!
God mend thine ev'ry flaw,
confirm thy soul in self-control,
thy liberty in law.

Almighty God, you have given us this good land as our heritage. Make us always remember your generosity and constantly do your will. Bless our land with honesty in the workplace, truth in education, and honor in daily life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance; and from every evil course of action. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and, in troubled times, do not let our trust in you fail. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday, July 5

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; *Isaiah 61:1*

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984, alt.

Lord, whose love in humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
worked your mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart;
consecrating to your purpose
ev'ry gift which you impart.

Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
by your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.

Almighty and most merciful God, we call to mind before you all whom it is easy to forget: those who are homeless, destitute, sick, isolated, and all who have no one to care for them. May we bring help and healing to those who are broken in body or spirit, that they may have comfort in sorrow, company in loneliness, and a place of safety and warmth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday, July 6

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. *James 2:12*

“Oh that the Lord Would Guide My Ways”

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, alt.

Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways
to keep his statutes still!
Oh, that my God would grant me grace
to know and do his will!

Order my footsteps by your word
and make my heart sincere;
let sin have no dominion, Lord,
but keep my conscience clear.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray,
a stricter watch to keep;
and should I e'er forget your way,
restore your wand'ring sheep.

Make me to walk in your commands,
'tis a delightful road;
nor let my head or heart or hands
offend against my God.

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ dignified our labor by sharing our toil. Guide us with your justice in the workplace, so that we may never value things above people, or surrender honor to love of gain or lust for power. Prosper all efforts to put an end to work that brings no joy, and teach us how to govern the ways of business to the harm of none and for the sake of the common good; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saturday, July 7

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *Galatians 5:13-14*

A New Commandment

Text: John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give unto you,
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall people know you are my disciples,
if you have love one for another;
by this shall people know you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another.

O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.