

Blessed to Be a Blessing
Psalm 33:1-12 (NJKV)
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Good morning, our passage of scripture is Psalm 33:1-12. We read in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
² Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
³ Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
⁴ For the word of the LORD is right,
And all His work is done in truth.
⁵ He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.
⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.
⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
⁹ For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.
¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.
¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart to all generations.
¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
The people He has chosen as His own inheritance. (Psalm33:1-12 NKJV)

The 4th of July we celebrate today marks the 245th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the USA. In this message, I would like to express three things:

First, my gratitude.

My gratitude to God for this great nation, its citizens, Institutions, churches and form of government. I am not saying they are perfect by any means. But better by far than many other countries around the world. The USA is a nation that has been blessed by our heavenly father, and in her blessing, we are a blessing to many other nations. It is interesting that a big portion of our yearly budget is dedicated to foreign aid. To nations less fortunate than we are, for

different reasons. If there is a disaster abroad being by natural causes or for acts of war or terrorism - you guessed it - the USA is the first to respond with aid even to nations that are not very friendly to us.

Many others have been blessed by coming to find refuge under her wings and now call the US home. I am a USA citizen by naturalization. Even as my personal experience as an immigrant might differ from other foreign born citizen or permanent residents. The majority of us are here because of bad situations in our countries of origin, being totalitarian repressive governments, civil wars like is my particular case, others escaping violence, persecution or poverty. Very few arrive as investors.

What the USA has given us is that sense of liberty and peace. So, we join in the celebration and say: "ring the bells of freedom" as we remember and honor those who made it possible. But also, as children of the kingdom, we know the commandment given by the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah, when it says, "*And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace, you will have peace.*"

Jeremiah 29:7

As citizens of the kingdom of God we celebrate our freedom from the yoke of sin, freedom from guilt and condemnation. We celebrate and thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for redeeming us with His blood.

Revelation 5:9-10 "*And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*

Jesus said in **John 8:32** "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Paul the apostle wrote to the Galatians churches. "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*" **Galatians 5:1.**

Second, is my concern with confidence.

For the direction, our country is taking, many times we might get dishearten and even frustrated when things are changing in the opposite direction of what we believe to be right. The passing of laws that are in clear opposition to God revealed laws, an escalation in violent crimes, drug addictions, suicide, scandals of corruption, distrust, divisionism, etc. But as believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we have been given the command and privilege not only to pray for those that are in position of power and authority but also to be; to be the light of my city, my state my country. To be the conscience.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 "*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*" But we are also commanded to make

our light shine when everything looks dark around us. We are called to preach the gospel of hope, love, repentance and forgiveness.

We are the light and the salt of the world. **Matthew 5:14-16** says *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* We are called to be obedient and trust God with the consequences.

I personally enjoyed the last series of devotionals for First Baptist Church, "Fixer Upper: Renovations of the Heart" and the analogies derived from remodeling. We start with the final product in mind or on paper. But before we can get to that beautiful new kitchen or bathroom, or family room, we need to remove all furniture, take down walls, cabinets, etc. lots of dirt, and the mess all around. But with that seemingly chaos, no remodeling or improvement is accomplished, in either a personal, family or national level.

When God is at work, He needs to take down many things in our lives. It reminds me of something I read some time ago: "When life seems like a mess or total chaos. Maybe you are in the middle of a remodeling project." Or: "Sometimes when you are in a dark place, you think you have been buried, but actually you have been planted." Let us wait in the Lord and trust Him with the results. Let us continue to make God the Lord of our life and of our Nation.

In **Proverbs 14:34** we read, *"Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people."* The target of this phrase is no specific nation, but its meaning clearly applies to all nations, and that clearly includes America. Therefore, it is important for us, as Americans, to measure ourselves, especially in these challenging times. We should ask ourselves which of these two causes we now embrace, whether it is righteousness or sin.

Third, I want to express my prayer.

We have been given such a powerful resource: the power of prayer.

We are invited to come to Jesus. who says in **Matthew 11: 28-29** *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

We can face the future with confidence, **Philippians 4:6-7** states, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* And **Psalms 23:1** tells us *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."*

For many our country is going in the wrong direction, depending on who you talk with and the mixed sentiments about patriotisms, confusion and anxiety about the future of our country.

I conclude with this story: The Farmer's Prayer

A pastor attended a men's breakfast in the middle of a farming area of the country.

The group asked an older farmer, decked out on bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast:

"Lord I hate buttermilk," the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wondered where this was going.

The farmer loudly proclaimed, "Lord, I hate lard." Now the pastor was growing concerned.

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, "And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour."

The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one to feel uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, "But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits.

So, Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than them biscuits. Amen"

In that prayer there is a great wisdom for all when it comes to complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today.

Stay strong my friends, and brethren, because our life is being mixed with lots of things that we don't care for Relax and wait until the mixing is done.

Let us pray:

Dear God we ask that you help us and equip us to be God's honoring sons and daughters. Generals in your army oh God, going in love, shining in your light. We give you all our praise and glory. Thank you, Lord for our Nation, helps us to continue to be the light upon the hill. Help us Lord, that in such a time like this we will be ever so close to your heart and your leading voice guiding and protecting. Lord we lift the USA that has done many great things for the good of the world, and the advancing of the gospel. Let us be a nation that just not sing God bless America, **You have blessed America. May America bless you.** Help us to become once again the nation that honors you in everything we plan, say or do. Help us Lord to truly be that nation which God is the Lord, and that is exalted for its righteousness. In Christ Jesus our Lord and savior we pray, amen

And now receive the blessing of the Lord.

Benediction: 2 Corinthians 13:14 *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."*