

Pentecost, Proper 8, July 2, 2017. July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday Weekend. Nigel Taber-Hamilton. Matthew 10: 40-42  
St. Augustine's in-the-Woods, Freeland WA

Happy Independence Day!! I say that because on July 2, 1776 delegates at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia – representing all thirteen colonies – officially separated these American colonies from Britain by approving a resolution proposed by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia declaring “the establishment of a new country.” This approved resolution was the actual declaration of independence. The next day, on July 3, John Adams – one of the five authors of the official Declaration that would follow the next day – wrote a letter to his wife Abigail with this prediction:

“The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable [date] in the History of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with [shows], Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.”

July 4<sup>th</sup> ended up being the date we all celebrate because that's when the document we know as the Declaration of Independence was itself adopted. But the date on which this nation came into being was the date that original motion for independence was adopted: July 2<sup>nd</sup> – 241 years ago, today.

Myth has a way of overtaking history; we can forget the details and – sometimes – lose track of the fundamental forming truths that constitute who we are. This is really important, because that sort of forgetfulness can be damaging to the integrity of this nation, damaging to the common identity we share as Americans, damaging to the core values that hold us true to our common vision.

“Remembering” is a word Jesus used at the Last Meal – it isn't a word that means, only, “being called to mind again.” It also means “drawing the past into the present and making it real again.” That's why on this day - July 2<sup>nd</sup> - we should remember who we are.

Perhaps fifteen thousand years ago the first Americans journeyed across a land-bridge from Siberia to Alaska and set foot on the virgin soil of this great continent. We are all immigrants or their children in this land between the shining seas.

And across the deep oceans of water and time we have continued to come from all over this fragile Earth; from North and East, from West and South, willing and unwilling, with little and with much, swayed across the passing years by the promise of a new community where we might all equally be valued.

For us who here find our hearth and home and our community that vision was re-forged in Revolution, solidified by Civil War, tested in other wars beyond our shores, wounded by assassinations, enriched by explorations, expanded by Civil Rights, informed by faith, defined by simple words that speak across time to the deepest hopes and dreams of every human being of every religion in every culture and every nation: that we shall all be free some day.

Our union of consent is always fragile, for it depends on our active commitment to the greater whole, our pledge of allegiance to the Common Good, and our willingness to move beyond the bitter words of partisan perspective and dedicate our lives to a bigger vision. This is never easy, which is why we are again living in a time when the integrity of this great Union is sorely tested, a time when the unfinished

dream that is the United States of America summons us to work in solidarity with one another to make its fate our own concern, and make real the vision that binds us all together: one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.

For us as Christians, the vision of our faith – handed down from “the apostles and prophets, [with] Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” – provides us with the foundation, the structure and the tools to do this. We are called into the unity that our faith proclaims; we are called into the work our Savior has laid out for us, that hospitality and welcome may be our badge of honor; compassion and love the insignia of our faith; justice and freedom our rallying cry.

On this day – July 2<sup>nd</sup> – and on July 4<sup>th</sup> – we are invited to pause and to celebrate, and to remember, and make real again, the sacred bond of relationship between this nation’s living and dead that reminds us of the cost of freedom, and unites us in one common identity.

That bond challenges us who now live to remember that we are Americans – a generous, welcoming, inclusive, hard-working, optimistic, faith-filled people – and, as the passing years roll on, to live into that identity, so that when in joy we are all reunited on the distant field of peace that lies somewhere beyond this present time we may be able to proclaim this as truth: that in all we did compassion was always our guide, and justice ever our watchword because freedom was our sacred purpose, in this land of majestic purple mountains and amber waves of grain.