

Polly's Pondering - Celebrating Traditions

“Through Christ, the Spirit gives life and sets us free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2

On July 2, 1776, a vote was taken by the Continental Congress to seek independence from British rule and to be united as free and independent states. The approval for the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress occurred on July 4, 1776.

The first organized celebration of Independence Day occurred in Philadelphia and Boston on July 4, 1777. It was declared a Federal Holiday in 1938 and it continues to be a Federal Holiday. Today it is celebrated with picnics, fireworks, parades, and family celebrations. All of which are supposed to remind the people of our nation of a time when we fought and struggled together because of beliefs and ideals.

John Adams, writing his wife Abigail, rightly believed that the celebration of Independence would “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 Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illumination from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.”

There are hymns that have been written over the years that give devotion to God for this land. “America the Beautiful”, “Battle Hymn of the Republic”, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”, “O God, Our Help In Ages Past”, and God of our Fathers; which is often called the “National Hymn” and was famously played at the 1876 US Centennial and petitions God to be a perpetual ruler and defense.

Every Sunday we gather and celebrate our freedom to worship and the Almighty God who gives true freedom, over sin and death. We sing the Doxology to remind us that all blessing come from God, and we end each worship service with a hymn to place our thoughts in proper perspective to go forth in praise of God to serve Him and the world for which He gave His only Begotten Son, Jesus.

I love traditions, but any tradition is only worth something if the motivation for that celebration is true to the intent. People can lift their voice to sing the Hymns and Praise Songs, they can join in Prayers, recite of the Apostles Creed, but if the intent is not in their hearts to honor and celebrate the Almighty God, then it is nothing more than worthless noise. But if that celebration of worship comes from the children of God, who worship God as their Heavenly Father and seek to be reconciled with Him, then our hymns become a beautiful symphony of voices being lifted as a sweet offering to God. John Wesley, our founder would have put it this way, “Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye toward God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature.”

I pray that you will have a glorious Fourth of July with Family and Friends – celebrating our Independence and freedom to worship the Almighty God upon whom our nation was founded and then join us on Sunday the 5th as well as we glorify God for the freedom over sin and death that He ushered in through belief in Jesus Christ.

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36