

Sermon on November 5, 2006

Entitled: Freedom from Responsible Veterans and True Disciples

Now that the big election has passed and hopefully all of us have performed their American and Christian duty to vote, we have once again tasted the freedom which democracy offers us.

In my last sermon, I spoke about how God through His Son, Jesus, has given all of true freedom. How we are free to love and to help others, and importantly to accept the responsibilities freedom requires.

As Thanksgiving now approaches, we are reminded about the great sacrifices that have been made, by our United States soldiers. In the movies, they have had a World War I, movie about U.S. pilots in that War, named "Flyboys" who were American soldiers who signed up to protect the freedoms of the French and other Europeans, on the brink of our own government's commitment to saving Europe and our own country. What struck me as being so interesting in that movie, was the fact that one pilot had lost his own family and the family ranch and had joined the fighting force to protect the rights of others, even though it could cost him his life. He ended up saving a young Frenchwoman and her family from the Germans and from either death or the destruction of her freedoms. For him as a soldier and airman his average life expectancy as a World War I American/French pilot, was about four weeks or 28 days. Today in Iraq the life expectancy is undoubtedly longer, but still the effects of war, on one's mind and soul are intense. This upcoming Thanksgiving we should thank the Almighty for those who have braved unfathomable odds and looked death in the face, to protect the freedoms that we all so deeply cherish.

So in the face of this great sacrifice, that great responsibility which those soldiers have undertaken we must reflect on who we are as Christians and as Americans. God asked Elijah, why have you come to this place? Today, I believe God, asks the same question of us, why are we at this place in our lives, in our church and in America. We then must define who we are, what we stand for, and who we believe in. As disciples and soldiers of Christ, who is Love, we must look to the cross, bear our own crosses, and stand up for that which is Righteous. The Bible mentions in the Old Testament, the prophets of Baal, the god found in the Semitic languages, which represented the master or owner of the property. The Semitic people were descendents of Shem, the eldest son of Noah. So these were not people who knew about the One True God, but instead worshiped other gods, namely those of the rain, fire, wind, agriculture and fertility. Namely they were the gods of the physical things that people either feared or needed. Other gods, who were equivalent to Baal included Set, the Egyptian god, Zeus, the Greek god and Jupiter, the Roman god. But none of them, taught us the lesson of self-sacrifice which Jesus, and his followers, including those First World War soldiers, who died to save the lives of the French, taught us about True Love and True Sacrifice, in order to Honor the Almighty.

One might ask what today the false god of Baal might be. We have the gods of convenience, of abortion, the gods of conspicuous consumerism, materiality, and me-first-ism, radical feminism, where men are unnecessary, and then the gods of immorality. Today we have too much competition and too little cooperation. Many have forgotten to come together as a community, to stand up for Christianity, to take a stand for Jesus, to sacrifice their time and come to church, and to help others. In my last sermon, I mentioned the Good Samaritan. You may ask well what does democracy and freedom have to do with the Good Samaritan. And I believe that the Good Samaritan has everything to do with democracy and freedom. You see, by the Good Samaritan stopping by the roadside to help the injured person, who others had abandoned, he freed that person from his afflictions. He treated that person as his equal, and that is what the mission of every democracy is and should be. To treat all as equals and to help all those in need. The one true God who we worship is the God of Truth, and of Love, and of Freedom. He is the one who supports equality of mankind and brings us freedom in the form of democracy, which all people, in all parts of the world, yearn for and need. No matter what race, religion, nationality, Christ is reaching out to the ends of the world to make these people free and to have true democracy.

Our own government reflects the need of the people to be both free and independent as well as to have a spirit of cooperation and true love. In Alex De Tocqueville book, "Democracy in America" he states that it was the wish of "one party to convert the Union into a league of independent states, or a sort of congress, at which the representatives of the several nations would meet to discuss certain points of common interest. (p.118) Today, we call this league of independent states, the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. De Tocqueville continues on to state that the other party, "desired to unite the inhabitants of the American colonies into one and the same people and to establish a government that should act as the sole representative of the nation, although in a limited sphere." Today we call that body the United States Senate.

Our very government is based on the combination of two ideals one being of freedom and independence and the other being of unity and responsibility of having a common concern. So to, our Christian freedom is also combined with our Christian responsibility. We are free from the shackles of materialism and immorality and now have the responsibility for caring for others, no matter who they might be. And as much as we can see that there is evil in the world, we also have to see the injuries, even those of our enemies, and care for them as Christ has cared for us.

Those World War One soldiers were Americans, but they saw that Germany was threatening the freedom of other Europeans, and that the French were being killed and maimed. They cared for the injured by defending them in the air, land, and sea battles which happened during that tumultuous time period. Today, we feel, after September 11, 2001, that same tumultuous time period. Today, there is poverty all over the world. And there is a need for God's love to be spread by us, all over the world. People need our love and forgiveness. It will shine more brightly than the sun. And it will overcome the hatred and fears that those who would terrorize others and ourselves try to bring.

Forgiveness and God's love is more powerful than any IED. No matter how the dark hearts try, they can not suppress God's love. What side are you on today? We can not let pessimism be our Baal. Instead we must rise up as Christ's soldiers of the cross and let God's love reign and be glorified.

It is not for us to hate but to forgive. Let's remember once again the prayer of Saint Francis, who said, “.”

And we should support the efforts to increase freedom all over the world. De Tocqueville said that the secret to the success of our democracy is that “several Presidents of the United States have been known to lose the majority in the legislative body without being obliged to abandon the supreme power and without inflicting any serious evil upon society.” (p.127) Popularity may be something but it is not everything. Sometimes the righteous fight for freedom becomes unpopular but it should not be abandon. De Tocqueville goes on to say, “In America the President cannot prevent any law from being passed, nor can he evade the obligation of enforcing it. His sincere and zealous COOPERATION is no doubt useful in carrying on public affairs, but is not indispensable. ... It is therefore his weakness, and not his power, that enables him to remain in opposition to the Congress.” And it is our power, as citizens, to vote in the good and to vote out the wrong. It is within our power, as citizens, to have a Congress that protects the environment, that ends global warming, by passing legislation that shows good Christian stewardship of the earth, and that promotes hybrid and electric vehicles and stops us from riding the rollercoaster of higher and lower gas prices and increased air and water pollution, from oil that destroyed the environment of pristine Alaska in Prince William Sound. Do you know the real cost of oil in Alaska? When the Exxon Valdez sank it caused billions of dollars of oil destruction on the coast of Alaska, which destroyed the fishing economy of Alaska, and lead to a much higher rate of divorce in Alaska as compared to the rest of the country. It was the largest corporate disaster in U.S. history. Oil may be one of today's Baal gods. We need to look beyond oil, beyond Baal, and find our direction from the Almighty.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt looked to the Almighty at the beginning of D-Day. Today, I would ask you to join me in prayer, with his prayer, as we give thanks for the many American and Christian soldiers who have sacrificed their lives and their time to protect us, and to defend our freedoms, and our democracy and to give light and love and hope to others all over this world. F.D.R. prayed,

My Fellow Americans:

Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:

Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest -- until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violence of war.

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise, and tolerance and goodwill among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

And for us at home -- fathers, mothers, children, wives, sisters, and brothers of brave men overseas, whose thoughts and prayers are ever with them -- help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

Many people have urged that I call the nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.

Give us strength, too -- strength in our daily tasks, to redouble the contributions we make in the physical and the material support of our armed forces.

And let our hearts be stout, to wait out the long travail, to bear sorrows that may come, to impart our courage unto our sons wheresoever they may be.

And, O Lord, give us faith. Give us faith in Thee; faith in our sons; faith in each other; faith in our united crusade. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment -- let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace -- a peace invulnerable to the schemes of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

Thy will be done, Almighty God.

Amen.

Our soldiers in Iraq fight too, for the same, reason. Not for CONQUEST but instead to LIBERATE. If only the Shiites could realize that. If only the Syrians, Iranians, and Afghanis and others could see that we have liberated Iraq, not enslaved it. But today we need God's direction and I believe He is asking, like he asked Elijah, why are we here, where we are? We need God to lead us, for we are his soldiers. Amen. Where are you today? For Jesus is calling you to come out from your cave, just like Elijah was in his, to come to this church and worship God and find your true direction in this life.

Recently, when I was on a business trip with the NFDA's convention, I visited the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia. I saw where John Hancock signed his signature, that being the largest signature, to insure our freedom as Americans, from those who would try to oppress us. Today, we have freed others in foreign lands but it is now time to have them return to us, to celebrate true FREEDOM. If those in foreign lands want freedom, like Hancock they will have to sign on to it, themselves, and bear the consequences as well as the liberties of Declaring their Independence.

Finally, Vana, my wife, who accompanied me on the trip, stopped by the Constitution Museum, we realized that freedom is an evolving concept. Originally though it was not in agreement with the Bible, nor with John Lock's philosophy, we had slavery in this country. It took over a hundred years to address that and to overcome that injustice. Freedom is not free and when those in power take too much of it, then those of good conscience must stand up for it. For Freedom. God Bless America.