

A Word from the Pastor

Dear November Saints,

As we enter November, you are probably thinking that the pastor's message will relate in some way to Thanksgiving. Although I was tempted to explore our need to give thanks, I decided instead to discuss November 19th. This coming November 19th will be the 151st anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. As I considered what I would write, I wondered whether very many people know that one of our nation's greatest speeches was given on this day.

Sue and I vacationed near Gettysburg National Military Park in March of 2012 and thoroughly enjoyed our visit to the battlefield and museum. Along with the throngs of people who were there we were immersed in history and, more importantly, our American heritage. As I prepared this message, I reread the Gettysburg address and was struck by Lincoln's ability to summarize in ten sentences the meaning and purpose of the nation. In case you haven't read it in some time, I want to include it here:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

As I reread Lincoln's words from long ago, I could not help but think about Isaiah 25:6-9 in which we are called upon to look to the future with faith in God and thanksgiving for removing the shroud of sin and iniquity from our hearts:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Out of that terrible battle 151 years ago came a new beginning "a new birth of freedom". In our daily lives, we too can find a new birth of freedom in our journey of faith to do the work that our Lord left for us to do.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Dennis

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