

## TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor /Opening Prayer by: Walden David

Morning Assembly Song Leader: Michael Simmons

#528 I Know That My Redeemer Lives  
# Let Him Have His Way With Thee

Scripture Reading by: Rock Cary

#382 Why Did My Savior Come to Earth?

**Lord's Supper and Contribution**

#412 Jesus Hold My Hand

**Sermon: "Freedom From Bondage"**  
**Romans 6:16-18**

#852 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder  
#966 Amen

Closing Prayer by: Tommy Cary

Welcome by: Don Taylor

Evening Assembly Song Leader: Michael Simmons

#742 When Upon Life's Billows  
#286 Wonderful Story of Love

Scripture Reading: Tristan Strickhausen

Prayer by: Phillip Strickhausen

#417 Where He Lead's I'll Follow

**Sermon: "Twelve Ordinary Men"**  
**Mark 3:13-19**

#934 Softly and Tenderly  
#406 Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Closing Prayer by: David Warren

### Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

**Sunday:** 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 6:00pm — Worship

**Wednesday:** 10:00am — Ladies Bible Class, 7:00pm — Bible Study Classes

July 1, 2018

## *“Stand Firm in...Liberty”*

Galatians 5:1

### The Christian Nation

This week we will celebrate Independence Day, commemorating the Declaration by the Continental Congress that the 13 colonies constituted a new nation separate from the British Empire. We are all fortunate to live in the United States; that is certainly something worth remembering, and we should thank God for this privilege.

But that thanksgiving can go too far. A good example comes from just this past week, where First Baptist Church in Dallas held a “Freedom Sunday” service. They took out a series of billboards declaring that “America is a Christian Nation” to promote the event. That was also the theme of the sermon. The expressed purpose of the gathering was to “celebrate our freedom as Americans and our freedom in Christ with patriotic worship.”

The point is not to single out one group, but to give a recent example of a common phenomenon: celebrating the US as a “Christian Nation.” That identification is problematic.

On one level, this is just bad history. Without getting too in-depth, as popularly articulated, the primary evidence consists of quoting as many Founders as possible to demonstrate an intention for the country to be formally Christian. The issues of historical method with this approach are numerous, but the most straightforward reply is that not all of the Founders were of a piece with their religious beliefs; you can line up dissenting voices, too.

The greater problem is theological. God rules over the nations, utilizing them for his purpose. It is more than a little audacious to conceive of America as specially favored by God because of its supposed Christian principles. This stands out more sharply when we recognize that the nation was founded through revolution – a transgression of the submission ethic advocated by Paul in **Romans 13** and Peter in **1 Peter 2** – fomented largely because of taxes that were regarded as onerous – a rejection of Jesus' injunction on paying taxes (**Mark 12:17**).

In other words, America was conceived through rebellion against God.

Now, please don't misunderstand this as some sort of anti-American rant. That does not make the United States uniquely evil. But it does belie any sort of exclusive status as a chosen people. Beyond that, it is unclear why America's appeals to an overruling providence would inherently carry more weight than those of a King who ruled “by the grace of God” to say nothing of his claim to being a “Defender of the Faith.” Great Britain was just as much of a

# Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

## Our Sick

**Doris Trahan** its taking chemo treatments.

**Frances Petree** is in Hermann Hospital room 850.

## Continued Prayers

### (Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Gwen Pettit, James Scott, Gary Nielsen, Harold Cryer, Gerald Lucy, Steve Ward, Teresa McKewen, Jackie David, Patricia Padon, Frank & Tina Garcia, Ronnie Davis, Bill Lunceford, Eric Davis, J. P. Williams, Mark Wilcox, Phillip Cottle

## Shut Ins

### (Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Pauline Taylor, Winona Angelle, Pat Henley, Myrtle Sheffield, Ronnie Rubit, Joe Leonard

## Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Mwanza, Africa, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

## Plastic Bags

The Food Bank is in need of plastic grocery bags. A barrel is in the foyer.

## Help Needed

We are in need of teachers and helpers for Children's Bible Hour and help in the nursery. If you are interested in helping with either of these, please let the office know and we will work you into the rotation.

## Upcoming Activities

### **No Elders meeting, Monday, July 2nd.**

We have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, July 3rd at 9:00 am.

**Deacons** meet Sunday, July 8th at 4:45 pm.

**Primetimers** are having a Baked Potato Supper on Tuesday, July 10th at 6:30 pm in the fellowship room. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

**VBS** is July 23-26th. Make your plans to attend. Our theme this year is "Trailblazers of Faith". Invite your friends to come VBS.

It's almost time for those Happy Campers to head off to church camp....

The kiddos will be going to Camp Bandina this year. Please register ASAP for spots are filling up fast.

Ages 10-18, Camp Bandina-Elliot Session  
July 15-21

Online registration and payment @ camp-bandina.org.

FYI-Don't forget to print the medical release form for they will need this when they get to camp.

See Phillip Strickhausen if you have any questions

## Privilege to Serve

Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>

Communion Preparation: Barbara Pringle

Nursery Attendants: Raven & Sharon Lartigue

Children's Bible Hour: Tania Balch

Teen Helpers: Addie David

Communion Preparation for Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>: Marsha Rader

Nursery Attendants for Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>: Tania Balch, Catherine Parker

Children's Bible Hour for Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>: Emily Nance

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"Christian nation" as the budding United States. Its people worshipped the same God and no doubt many believed he was on their side.

The United States is a Christian nation only in the general sense that most every country in the Western world is historically. Certainly, Christianity continues to play a more prominent role here than in many other countries. But we are not privileged by a unique status before God.

Instead, as the New Testament makes clear repeatedly, the true Christian nation is the church. This means that our allegiance is to God and his Kingdom first and foremost (**Matt 6:33**) and not to any nation-state. God's people are called out from every earthly state to form his holy nation. As the 2nd century Epistle to Diognetus put it, "Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign" (Diogn. 5:5). Or, as Peter put it, we are *a holy nation, a people for his own possession*, but in this world, we are *sojourners and exiles* (**1 Peter 2:9, 11**).

As citizens of the Christian nation, we must not conflate it with our earthly nation, allowing—or worse, advocating—our exclusive truth claims to be watered down in the name promoting a good society. It undermines the status and the claims of God's holy nation for the sake of an earthly one. The church, not the state, is the bearer of meaning in history, and it is not tied to any one earthly country.

Thank God we live in the United States! We enjoy a great many freedoms in this country that the rest of the world does not have. In some places on earth, we could not even freely assembly here today to worship our Lord. We are truly blessed.

But don't elevate our nation to a place that only the church deserves. *The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will* (**Daniel 4:7**). America is no different from Babylon or Persia or Rome or any other nation. But Jesus' Kingdom, the one that shatters all others and fills up the entire world, the one that is indestructible – that one is unique (**Daniel 2:44-45**).

*Bryant Perkins*