

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost – Year C
September 15, 2019
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- SERMON -

Today is **Constitution Day** a national holiday to commemorate the signing of the U.S. Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787. As a result of the American Revolution the Thirteen Colonies won independence from Great Britain, becoming the United States of America.

As a result of that revolutionary war, the Constitution of the United State of America set up a government that has held our country together for 232 years.

And this morning we are pleased to have with us members of the local Daughters of the American Revolution as well as the local chapters' Sons of the American Revolution to help us remember that day.

Thank you for joining us this morning.

The Daughters of the American Revolution is an organization with a deeply rich history while also being truly relevant in today's world. More than 930,000 women have joined the organization since it was founded on October 11, 1890. They became members to honor their heritage as well as make a difference in their communities across the country and the world.

They, like many of us, are proud of their American heritage. Why?

In a letter to George Washington, John Hancock wrote: "The American republic was founded on a set of beliefs that were tested during the Revolutionary War. Among them was the idea that all people are Created equal, whether European, Native American, or African American, and that these people have fundamental rights, such as liberty, free speech, freedom of religion, due process of law, and freedom of assembly."

Our Founding Fathers actually embedded this Principle in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are Created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

To stand up for and defend these beliefs, those who fought in the American Revolution suffered injustice, bodily harm and death. But the independence from Britain and the government that our Founding Fathers formed as a result brought

great celebration and a sense of pride that has carried through well over two centuries.

Ours is not the only citizenship which has an ancestral heritage to be proud of. I know some of you are from a different heritage and culture and have reason to be proud of your ancestry, as well.

And there is another heritage we can look to as members of the Body of Christ. In Him we see God, our Heavenly Father, who loves us greatly. It's been said that God loves you so much that, if he had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. Because of that love he sent His Son, Jesus, the Christ, (the Messiah), who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

To pave our way to Salvation, Jesus suffered injustice, bodily harm and death. But His resurrection from the dead, brought us His salvation and a relationship with God in the here and now, and in His Kingdom. This is cause for celebration!

Since time began there have been battles, anger, wars, hardship and sorrow. There are those who are arrogant, self-serving and who mistreat others.

Our first reading this morning said, "Human arrogance begins when people rebel against the Lord, and their hearts rebel against the one who made them." And then it says, "Humans were not created to be arrogant".

Do you know why it says this? Of course, you do. This kind of pride or arrogance is thinking of *yourself* as better than you think of others. That YOU deserve more than others do.

But what does God say about "others?" Luke 6 says, "Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you."

Ohh, that means stepping out of *yourself* and *doing* for *others*.

And this brings us back to when Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is ... to love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

THIS is what we were created for!

Jesus even gives us an attitude to follow in our gospel reading this morning advising us not to be so arrogant as to assume the place of honor at a banquet as the host might just humble us by having us move, because someone else is to sit there. That could be rather humiliating! But rather, be humble and sit somewhere else. Who knows, it's possible the host might just ask us to move into a place of honor...

There's a story about a man who received a promotion to the position of Vice President of the company he worked for. The promotion went to his head, and for weeks on end he bragged to anyone and everyone that he was now VP. His bragging came to an abrupt halt when his wife, so embarrassed by his behavior, said, "Listen Honey, it's not that big a deal. These days everyone's a vice president. Why, they even have a vice president of peas down at the supermarket!"

Somewhat deflated, he rang the local supermarket to find out if this was true. "Can I speak to the Vice President of peas please?" he asked, to which the reply came: "of fresh or frozen?" - (Source: unknown)

I know there are times when we see others behaving in ways we feel they shouldn't. And even as great as our government was formed under the U.S. Constitution, there are always going to be people in authority over us whom we disagree with. And some with varying degrees of intensity.

But I'd like to bring our attention to our second reading this morning in Paul's first letter to Timothy.

The Apostle Paul had invested so much in the life of young Timothy, and here Paul helps Timothy prepare for a new beginning by offering him a starting place for success in this new ministry.

Timothy had been left at Ephesus to manage the affairs of the church there – there, in the absence of Paul. How exciting it must have been for Timothy to take the leadership in this Church.

Paul had met him and his family on his first trip to Lystra or Derbe. Timothy's father was a Gentile and his mother was a devout Jew. Paul was instrumental in making sure that Timothy was circumcised according to Jewish custom and then ordained for ministry by the laying on of hands by the presbytery. This was done so that young Timothy would be free to minister among Jews and Gentiles without opposition.

But to help keep young Timothy from setting goals for HIS ministry, HIS church, HIS popularity and personal interest, Paul give him "A Starting Place for Success." A Starting Place designed to allow God to be at the center of all he would do. Young Timothy needed this advice because every new beginning requires a new focus.

Any time we undertake new responsibilities, begin a new year, take on a new job, or desire to improve or change, we need a new focus. We all desire a better world, filled with better family. The apostle Paul gives us some specific things we can do to help the world be a better place.

He says to Timothy, "FIRST OF ALL, ..."

Whatever you do second, Timothy, FIRST OF ALL... do the following...

His next words were, "I ask that requests, prayers, petitions, and thanksgiving be made for ALL people."

Requests for ALL people.

Prayers for ALL people.

Petitions and thanksgiving be made for ALL people.

Then he says, "Pray for kings (reflect on this...) and EVERYONE who is in authority so that we can live a quiet and peaceful life in complete godliness and dignity."

"This is right and it pleases God our savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

II Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Faithfulness to prayer not only changes things, and others, but it changes us.

And then there's Heb. 4:16 "Let us then approach the throne of grace...

"Let US then – you and me -- approach the throne of grace... with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

When you love someone, you want to be with them, to talk to them, don't you? They are the one you feel most comfortable sharing your innermost secrets, desires and concerns.

God is here. His presence is here, right now. He has experienced pain. He has shed tears. He understands. And he is listening. Pray to Him. Talk to Him.

Those who fought in the American Revolution suffered injustice, bodily harm and even death to give us the choice of how we worship and how we pray.

Before the day is out, have that conversation with Him. You know the one. That conversation you've been putting off... until now.

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