

God gives greater than you ask, His promises exceed everything that you desire. For your country, your church, your life. Consider your country. Perhaps sounds of war kept you up last night; a nap today sounds good. We celebrate 250 years solely as the Lord's preserved this great country we've as our heritage, this government, this people. Really amazing, freedom, a quiet life we're privileged to enjoy; what we've celebrated with rocket's red glare, bombs bursting in air. There are many graphic war movies, like Gettysburg, Saving Private Ryan, Band of Brothers, Flags of Our Fathers, We Were Soldiers, Lone Survivor, History channel stuff; which try to give a sense of what soldiers endured. Unless you're there, you can't presume to know war, but even in so many movies: arouses honor to the patriots who took up pen and musket, who put on the uniform, to secure our freedom. Deep gratitude, be humbled by the faithful folk who've stood guard against our enemies, whose blood shed on battlefields far and near for the sake of this nation. Be in awe of the Lord's hand in the nation to preserve this thing called freedom; still shudder when the guns of a military salute go off and tear-up at the funerals of veterans when a soldier gets down on one knee, presents the flag to the bereaved on behalf of a grateful nation.

250 yrs. ago, Lutheran church in Virginia, Pastor Peter Muhlenberg began his sermon from Ecclesiastes: **To everything there is a season...**; after reading the 8th verse, **a time of war, a time of peace**, he declared, "And this is the time of war," remove his vestments to reveal a Colonel's uniform. Personally requested, commissioned to serve by George Washington. Outside the church door the drums began to roll, men turned to kiss their wives, hugged their children, walked down the aisle to enlist. 300 men. Every Christian must take a stand for what is right against evil, lies in our day. This Lutheran pastor's statue found in the rotunda of the capital.

His brother, Pastor Frederick Muhlenberg disagreed with going to war. They exchange letters back and forth over just war. He writes, if King George doesn't prevent the gospel, I won't prevent King George. Commendable statement. The Early Church is not in insurrection against evil governments. As Christians, we should be prepared to endure suffering at the hands of the government, even today. Things changed when the British burned down his Lutheran church in NY. This Lutheran pastor, enters politics, becomes the first-ever US speaker of the House of Representatives and 1 of 2 signers, sponsors of the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution -that our freedom of religion protected.

Declaration of Independence. *We hold these truths to be self-evident, all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.* One of America's most foundational ideas, but where does it come? Look around, we aren't equal in intelligence, moral virtue or courage or anything. We're radically unequal, and what of these rights we have, that don't come from government. No government in history has ever talked like that. All men equal, having rights endowed by their Creator.

No classical political philosophers believed that. Aristotle didn't, Plato, Cicero didn't. Not ever in the world of emperors, kings, rulers, certainly not Muslims lands. That statement of the Declaration, only made possible by the Christian. Uniquely Christian. And why we must be vigilant against ideas of communism, Islam, man's morality for they are incapable with our Lord's divine truth on which our country is founded. Pray we remain faithful enough, strong enough to speak forth His Word of rescue to a people intent on hurting itself, divorcing Christian virtue from our land.

God gives greater than you ask, His promises exceed everything that you desire. Consider your Church. You see in the Gospel, He provides. He sees that the net is cast, that even reached you. He ensures His own are gathered. And to see to it, He sends His pastors, to preach, **Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sin**. He still defies the wisdom of man and pours out the treasures of His sacraments, from His cross. His kingdom here as in no other way in the world. To be forgiven. Holy. Eternal life as He never departs from you. You have eternity.

God gives greater than you ask, His promises exceed everything that you desire. Consider your life. St. Peter tired, toiled all night, nothing. You can relate. Frustrations, things not as you desire in life, failures, disappointments. With faith that trusts at Jesus direction: Peter responds, **At Your word, I will**. This statement is as good as faith gets on this side of eternity.

Where do you spend your time and effort? What are you focused on? What are your goals and dreams? What do you pray for and ask God to give you? How often are you frustrated, despair like Elijah there? Even with all you have, all His gifts He's given, how long are you satisfied? Repent. Your goals, dreams aren't what they should be. God knows what's good for you even better than you do. God's still good when He doesn't give you what you what you ask for. God was good when He allowed the disciples to catch nothing that night. It is for your good now, if you don't have what you desire.

St. Peter: **Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord**, a foolish prayer; he's rightfully ashamed of the person he is, repentant, but misunderstands the Lord is there to give Him life, to abide with Him forever and never depart. As with you. Jesus says, **Do not be afraid**. You have many roles, vocations, but primary vocation of every Christian: trust. His baptized people of God live by faith.

Do not be afraid. Fears for yourself, your family, for your pasts, for your futures, for your vocations, for your health and success –all met in Christ. The overwhelming, most often, admonition in all of Scripture is when your God tells you, **Do not be afraid**. God gives better than you ask, His promises exceed everything that you desire. Your country, even amid evil, corruption -the greatest country in the history of the world that He made you part of, and may God sustain her for another 250 years. Your Church, your Lord never fails to pour out His gifts of forgiveness and life, caught you in the net of the Church. Your Life, every need, every care, comfort and bind your wounds, evil will not prevail over you, your Lord involved in every detail of your life, to see to your good as. Each of you have a duty, vocation: God will use you as His instrument of His work, no less that Elijah, St. Peter. **At Your Word, I will...**is your confession. **Do not be afraid**.