

This coming Thursday we will celebrate the 4th of July, the birth of our nation. Now in many churches this week there will be no mention of God and country; they will not sing any patriotic songs; and in some churches you will not even find an American flag. However, I believe that there is and must be a relationship between our nation and God because the very survival of this great country depends on us putting our trust in God and walking in faith. So this morning as we come together to worship the Lord and prepare to celebrate the birthday of our great nation this week, let's see what the Bible has to say about nations and their relationship to God. Let's look at Psalm 33, verses 12 through 22, and see what it has to say to us this morning.

Read Psalm 33:12-22

A surgeon, an engineer, and a politician were debating as to which of their professions was the oldest. The surgeon said, "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that, of course, was a surgical procedure. Thus, surgery is the oldest profession." The engineer countered with: "Yes, but before that could occur order had to be created out of the chaos, and that was definitely an engineering project." The politician smiled and said: "That's true, but who do you think created all the chaos?"

I like political jokes ... unless they get elected! Someone said that instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.

Now I don't believe in preaching politics from the pulpit; that not my role. I am more concerned about your spiritual well-being than your political view or which political party you support. One reason is that a political platform is a lot like the second stanza of our National Anthem. Everybody knows that it is there, but few people know the words. I also read that somebody said that we need to change our National Anthem to "Deep in the Heart of **Taxes.**" The other day someone asked me if I was a democrat or a republican, and I said that I am a Christian. That is what defines who I am and the decisions that I make not only in politics, but more importantly in life.

Since we will be celebrating the 4th of July this week, I want to use the time we have this morning to address my deep concern for the spiritual well-being of our nation. In keeping with my philosophy that politics has no place in the pulpit, I'm not going to discuss any of the key political issues in this morning's newspaper such as the immigration, Iran, health care, trade agreements or tariffs.

So let's start our discussion with some historical facts. On July 2, 1776, as the excitement of independence flowed through the streets of Philadelphia, John Adams sat down at a desk in his rented room and wrote a note to his wife, Abigail that read: "The second day of July 1776 will

begin the most memorable period in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance by the solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be celebrated with pomp and parade with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other from this time forward forevermore.”

And as we know, it has been that way ever since. July 2, 1776, was the day of the final debate on Thomas Jefferson’s draft of the Declaration of Independence. This document served notice to England that America would no longer live under its tyranny. It was officially adopted two days later on July 4th.

However, just declaring separation from England did not make it happen. As Congress convened in Philadelphia, British warships gathered in the harbors of New York City waiting for an opportunity for the British army to subdue the city and push inland by river to capture the members of Congress, now declared traitors by the British government. Adams also wrote to Abigail that he was aware of the “toil and blood and treasures that it will cost to maintain this declaration.” His statement was right on target because of the years of warfare that would follow.

It is important that we stop for a moment and reflect on these eventful days 243 years ago; to pause and transport ourselves from our slick, high-tech world of convenience back to the uncertain future facing our ancestors at that time. These 56 men who signed that document immediately became outlaws, subject to the hangman’s noose if captured by the British army. Most paid dearly for their desire of self-government and independence. Five were captured and tortured before their deaths. Two lost sons in battles; others had their sons captured. Nine fought and died from the wounds that they received. Many of them were wealthy farmers, lawyers, or businessmen. But most of the founding fathers wound up bankrupt and poor; independence cost them everything.

The last sentence of the Declaration of Independence reads: “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection and divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” Adams, before the colonies declared their independence, had written that he saw the day when America would be the most powerful nation on earth. Adams was also a deeply religious man and believed that it was only through God’s providence that this nation would be established and maintained.

Were their efforts in vain? Have we stayed the course, or have we drifted away from being one nation under God? Do we still put our trust in God with the assurance that He will provide whatever we need as a nation? Do we and our leaders still daily seek His guidance? Or like the

Israelites that we read about in the Old Testament, have we deserted Him as we pursue modern day gods and idols, and our own personal agendas?

As you study the Old Testament, you see a common theme of God reaching out in love to the nation of Israel only to have them drift farther away from Him time and time again. As they chased after other gods and selfish agendas, they always seemed to get into trouble. Only then would they come to their senses, remember the Lord and call on Him again. Dialing 911 is not a modern day occurrence; the Israelites had it on speed dial. And time and time again God would come to their rescue, only to have them desert Him again after things got better. Does this sound familiar? Are we as a nation guilty of doing the very same thing?

The key verse in this morning's text is verse 12: "Blessed or happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage." Dwight D. Eisenhower placed his hand on this verse as he took the presidential oath of office in 1957. The 15th verse of Psalm 144 makes a similar statement: "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord." Now the term "chosen" in this context does not apply just to the nation of Israel; according to God's eternal plan it has a much wider application. John 15:16 tells us that all who believe in the Lord have been chosen by Jesus Christ to be His people. That includes all of us here today, and all of our brothers and sisters worshipping throughout this great country this morning in the large urban churches and the small rural country churches like the one I grew up in, regardless of denominations. It includes all worldwide, everybody who accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. It is my personal opinion, and I think many of you would agree, that God has truly blessed our nation. But let's go back to my original question – has America drifted from God? Is America blessing God? Is God still number one or even a priority in our lives today? Or are we repeating the same pattern of the Israelites and only calling on the Lord in times of crisis such as 9-11, hurricanes, and the Boston terrorist attack; then only to put God back on the shelf when things settle down and go our own way until the next crisis?

Have we forgotten our traditions? The Pledge of Alliance includes the phrase "one nation under God," and our coins are inscribed with the words "In God We Trust." Are these statements still true? Are we still one nation under God and do we still put our trust in Him?

John Adams could only imagine back then what is now a reality. We are truly a great nation, but as we stretch our hands out toward the future, let us hold firmly onto the hands that built our foundation – our heavenly Father. Our country has been built on a foundation of hope and trust in the Lord God. The last two verses of our text for this morning read: "Our hearts rejoice in God because we trust in His holy name. May Your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even

as we put our hope in You.” Our root problems are not political but spiritual, and the only way that we are going to solve them is to come back to the Lord as a nation. We need to re-establish our relationship with God as a nation. And it begins with each one of us here today. Pray for our nation each day. May we be one nation under God, and always put all our trust in Him.

Let me close with a story. A woman and her husband were invited to spend the weekend at the home of his boss. The woman was a little nervous about the weekend. The boss was a very wealthy man, with a huge home at the beach, and cars costing more than their house. The first day and evening went well, and the woman was delighted to get a rare glimpse of how the other half lived. Her husband’s boss was quite generous as a host and took them to the finest restaurants each evening.

One night as they were walking to an exclusive restaurant, the boss who was walking slightly ahead of them suddenly stopped and stood there for a moment in silence as he looked at the sidewalk. The woman wondered what he was staring at. There was nothing on the sidewalk except a single dirty penny that someone had dropped. Still in silence, the boss reached down and picked up the penny. He held it up and smiled, then put it in his pocket as if he had found a great treasure. She thought to herself – how absurd! What did this man need with a single penny? With all his wealth, why would he stop and pick up a single dirty penny?

Throughout dinner this kept nagging her, she couldn’t get it out of her mind; so when she could no longer stand it, she casually mentioned that her daughter was a coin collector, and asked if the penny he had found was of any value. A smile crept across the man’s face as he reached into his pocket to retrieve the penny and held it out for her to see. She had seen many pennies before and wondered what point he was trying to make.

“Look at it,” he said. “Read what it says.” She read the words: “United States of America.” “No, not that; read further.” “One cent?” “No, keep reading.” “In God We Trust?” “Yes! If I trust in God, the name of God is holy, even on a coin. Whenever I find a coin I see that same inscription. It is written on every single United States coin, but we never seem to notice it! God drops a message right in front of me telling me to trust Him. Who am I to pass it by? When I see a coin, I pray; then I pause and consider whether I am really trusting in God at that very moment. Then I pick up the coin as a response to God; that I do trust in Him. For a short time, at least, I cherish it as if it were gold. I think it is God’s way of starting a conversation with me. Lucky for me, God is patient and pennies are plentiful!”

The next time you see a penny lying on the ground or sidewalk, stop, pick it up, and read the words “In God We Trust,” laugh, and tell God that you got the message. No matter what problems we are facing right now as individuals and as a nation, God will take care of them; let

us put our trust in Him. If you make this a habit, you will start finding a lot of pennies, because pennies are plentiful and God is patient. Please take some time out this Thursday to pray for our nation. May we as a nation and as individuals always put our trust in God. Let us pray that not only will God continue to bless America, but America in turn will bless Him. Amen