

Sermon: One Nation Under ... Who? (Revised)
Text: Prov. 14:34; Ps. 33:12; 2 Chron. 7:13 – 14
Date: July 5, 2009 AM
Place: Jesup First UMC

Sermon: One Nation Under ... Who?
Text: Prov. 14:34; Ps. 33:12; 2 Chron. 7:13 – 14
Date: July 4, 2004 AM
Place: Wrightsville First and Cedar Grove

What would July 4th be without a family picnic? Now, most folks grill steaks or burgers and dogs, but the most popular item on the menu this year was boiled frog. You know how to boil a frog, don't you? First, you take a living frog and you drop him in a pot of cold water, and then you start turning up the heat a little at a time until the water starts to boil and the frog is cooked. Now, some folks start out by bringing their water to a boil and then they try to drop the frog into the water, but they tell me that the frog will jump out every time. But when you put that frog down into the cold water and slowly turn up the heat, it'll work every time.

Now, we're not having cooked frog for our picnic; No, sadly, we are the frog! Good people like you and me who love this country, who feel a great sense of patriotism, have suddenly found ourselves in the boiling pot. Oh, it didn't happen overnight. If it had, then we would have felt the change and we would have rebelled and done something about it. But slowly and surely, we have had the water turned up on us and without even realizing it, now we find ourselves in an almost uncontrollable situation. Let me explain:

It all started with a glorious beginning. On a chilly day in 1607, three boats appeared on the horizon. Aboard these boats were 120 very tired Englishmen. They came ashore, bringing with them a seven foot cross which they immediately erected on the beach. Then, they gathered around the cross, got down on their knees, and prayed. They prayed that the glory of God would prevail upon

them in their new homeland. Oh what a glorious beginning!

Thirteen years later, in November 1620, a ship of Englishmen came ashore at Cape Cod. And within days, they had drafted the Mayflower Compact. It said: "*In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten ... having undertaken for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to place the first colony in northern Virginia.*" Oh what a glorious beginning.

A few years later, the Charter of Massachusetts Bay was written. It said: "*Whereby our said people, inhabitants there, may be so religiously, peaceably, and civilly governed, as their good life and orderly conversation may win and incite the natives of this country, to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Savior of mankind and the Christian faith.*" Oh what a glorious beginning.

On July 4, 1776, 56 men gathered in a room in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and signed the Declaration of Independence. It said: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ... We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America in general congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions ... and for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.*" Oh what a glorious beginning!

It was at this meeting as the debate about the wording of the Declaration of Independence became heated that

Benjamin Franklin stood and said: *“Gentlemen, if it is true that not one single petal from any flower falls to the ground without escaping God’s attention, will the distress of this nation go unheeded? Let us therefore determine to seek His face.”* And at that, all 56 men fell on their knees before God and prayed together for God’s wisdom and guidance.

Oh what a glorious beginning. And I believe that it is partly because of that beginning that our nation has been so blessed throughout its history. The Psalmist said: **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”** Our nation was founded – for the most part – by men and women who recognized the importance of acknowledging the providence of God.

John Quincy Adams said: *“From the time of the Declaration of Independence, the American people were bound by the laws of God and the laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which they all acknowledge as the root of all conduct.”* George Washington said: *“Do not let anyone claim tribute of American Patriotism if they even attempt to remove religion from politics.”* Patrick Henry said: *“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists but by Christians, not on religion but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.”* Thomas Jefferson said: *“The First Amendment has created a wall of separation between church and state, but that wall is a one directional wall; it keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government.”* Oh what a glorious beginning.

But oh how the mighty have fallen! The Psalmist said: **“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”** This great nation that was founded on such

godly principles no longer seeks God. We can no longer acknowledge our faith in the public arena without being instantly subjected to criticism.

The one directional wall that Thomas Jefferson said created a protection for the church has been used as a rallying cry for everyone who would seek to take God out of the public arena. In 1964, we took prayer out of our schools; later, we took out the Bible. We've taken the Ten Commandments from the walls of our schools and our courthouses. Recently, attempts have been made to strike "Under God" from our Pledge of Allegiance. We've given women the right to murder as long as the baby is inside their bodies at the time. Today, over 4000 abortions are performed in the United States every day. Oh how the mighty have fallen!

I don't think it's a coincidence that the transformation of our culture from a Christian culture to a post-Christian culture coincides with the rise in many of our social problems. 58% of all marriages end in divorce. 1 of every 5 women is a single mom. 40% of teenage girls will be pregnant by their 19th birthday. 60% of our students say they have experimented with drugs or alcohol. Child abuse is up 240% in the last 35 years. Sexual abuse of children is up 1375% in the last 35 years. Oh how the mighty have fallen!

So, what's the answer? The father of Rachel Scott who lost her life at Columbine High School appeared before a senate committee in Washington and read this poem: *"Your laws ignore our deepest needs; your words are empty air; you've stripped away our heritage; you've outlawed simple prayer. Now shotguns fill our classrooms and our*

precious children die. You seek for answers everywhere and you ask the question why. You regulate restrictive laws through legislative creed and yet, you fail to understand that God is what we really need.”

The answer to the problems we face as a country is not higher taxes or more government programs. The answer isn't welfare or socialized medicine. America's problem is a spiritual problem. We are a sin-sick nation. We say we trust in God, but we really trust in George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Alexander Hamilton. And so we find ourselves is boiling water this morning.

As we celebrate this 4th of July weekend, I'm reminded of God's promise to King Solomon in II Chronicles. It was a great day in Israel's history, a new temple was being dedicated and God had just filled the temple with His glory. And God appeared to Solomon at night and said: **“Solomon, I have heard your prayers and have chosen this place for myself. Now, when I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, 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 sins, and heal their land.”** In other words, God says: *“Solomon, if Israel turns her back on me, then I will chastise you, but if you turn back to me, then I will heal your land.”*

Oh friends, this great nation started out in a blaze of glory, but oh how the mighty have fallen! We've turned our back on God, and what we need is not a national day of celebration, but a national day of repentance, a turning back to the God who made us great. Oh that America

would fall on its face before God in gratitude for what He has done and in repentance for what we have done. You see, we can't rest on yesterday's accomplishments; we can't trust in yesterday's glory; we must return to our heritage as "one nation under God."

Every Saturday morning, Fred drove his wife into town. And he'd pull the car up in front of the store and let her out and then, he'd drive around the block looking for a parking space. Now, he hated to spend his money in the parking meter so he kept driving around the block until he found a parking meter with time left. So he was always parking for free, parking on someone else's nickel.

So have we! We've been reaping the benefits of our founding fathers who established God as the leader of our nation. And do you know what it cost them? 56 men signed the Declaration of Independence. Five of them were captured, tortured, and killed by the British. 12 of them had their homes burned. Two lost their sons in the war. One had two sons captured. Nine fought and died from wounds or the hardships of war. Carter Baxter sold everything he had to pay his debts and died in rags. Thomas Nelson had his home seized by the British and he went to General Washington and told him to open fire and then stood nearby and watched his home burn. Our forefathers paid the price and we've been living off of their nickel ever since.

But friends, I'm afraid the nickel has almost run out and so has God's patience. How long will we continue to be a great nation, if we continue to turn our backs on God? A French political philosopher visited the United States; he traveled from town to town interviewing

hundreds of people, looking for the key to America's greatness. This is what he said: "*I searched for America's greatness. I found it, not in her fields or forests. I found it not in her mines and factories. I found it not in her Congress or tribunals. It was only when I entered her churches and heard her pulpits thundering against sin and preaching righteousness, that I discovered the secret to her greatness.*" Then he added: "*America is great because America is good and if she ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.*"

We started out in a blaze of glory, but oh how the mighty have fallen. But you know, the final chapter hasn't yet been written. Let us then, humble ourselves and pray and seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways. So that He might hear us from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My apologies for the use of "borrowed" material without giving due credit. Since I first used this material, I have lost the endnotes.