

**Friday, July 2, 2021 - Scripture: Matthew 28:20; Song: "God Bless Our Native Land"**

Today we begin what has traditionally become known as "the 4th of July weekend." If you haven't studied your American history, the 4th of July might be just another holiday to watch parades, shoot off fireworks and take another day off work. The fact that this year, the 4th of July comes on Sunday, might lead us to dig in a bit deeper with the meaning of this weekend than just the fireworks, parades, and parties. One of the hymns we will sing Sunday is "God Bless Our Native Land," and I have chosen it as our hymn for the day. On the 4th of July we should rightfully be thankful for the courage of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, which is the real reason we celebrate the 4th of July. It was the day these brave men, declared their independence from England and eventually set up the Constitution which gives us all the freedom we have, including the freedom to worship as we will again on Sunday. But if you read the newsletter and see my quote from one of the signers of the Declaration, Benjamin Franklin, it says he saw God's hand in how this all came to be. The first verse asks God to save the state. And in the second verse, we hear about God who is ever nigh, which translates in today's English to "God is always with us," guarding with a watchful eye as the hymn says. Jesus promised before he went back to heaven in his last words to the disciples in Matthew 28:20: "Behold, I am with you always, the end of the age." And we know that words of God's attributes are that he is perfect and keeps all his promises. So this 4th of July, remember to be thankful for our forefathers who established this great nation, and to God for watching over us and blessing our Native Land. Take time on Sunday to come to church during all the festivities and to thank God for his guidance and care for our nation and for each of us personally.

[Hymn of the Week - God Bless Our Native Land](#)

**Monday, July 5, 2021 - Scripture: Corinthians 12:9-10; Song: "Before You, Lord, We Bow"**

Yesterday we celebrated Independence Day, or the 4th of July as it is often called. Not very often does it come on Sunday and in Portland it caused a few issues. Most churches had a service at 10 and the town parade was scheduled for the same time. What a tough choice - church or a parade. Which you choose might have depended on how you think about the relationship between God and our nation. Do you see our nation as something special, blessed by God because of how good we are? Or do you see our nation as blessed by God through grace? That is, does God bless our nation, despite how bad we are, despite the fact that we don't do an excellent job of following him? Today's hymn, one we sang in church yesterday, is titled "Before You, Lord, We Bow." It points us to the truth, that God blesses by grace not because we are anything special as a nation. In fact, despite our weakness, God in his grace continues to bless us and take care of us. The lesson of Independence Day ought to be the same one that Paul shared with us in our Epistle lesson from 2 Corinthians 12, verses 9 and 10" where God told Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in

weakness. “ And Paul responds: “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” The reason we bow before the Lord is clear. God doesn’t bless our nation because our of strengths, because of how much better we are than other countries, but because of his grace and mercy. So sing the hymn along with the organ and use the words printed on the screen and continue to celebrate God’s grace in making us the great nation we are. And don’t worry if you went to the parade yesterday and not to church, when our priorities get a bit mixed up, Jesus is with us, offering us the forgiveness we need, and a fresh start for the next time the 4th of July comes on Sunday.

[LSB 966 Before you Lord we bow](#)

**Wednesday, July 7, 2021 - Scripture: Romans 5:8-9; Song: "Fighting for Me"**

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday is over, and we are officially in the doldrums of summer. There’s not much to look forward to except heat and humidity and school starting before you know it. That is, unless you are going on vacation but even that won’t be long enough to escape this “Woe is Me” time of the year. It’s better than last year when we couldn’t go anywhere without a mask and couldn’t even spend time with our close friends and relatives, unless they lived with us, of course. We might think we are alone in these doldrums, that nobody cares, that nobody is fighting for us. On to the scene comes our song for today to say, “Hey, you’re wrong, someone is always fighting for you and for me, you’re not alone. The song is “Fighting for Me” by Riley Clemmons. She reminds us that God was fighting for us even before we were part of his family; when we were stuck in our sin and our do it our own way lives, exemplified by thinking we are alone in the doldrums of summer. God didn’t start fighting for us because we did something great, but as Paul reminds us in our Scripture from Romans 5:3-9: “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.” God was fighting for you in Christ, saving you, when you didn’t even know him. And he continues to do that now, doldrums of summer or not. There’s so much encouragement in these words of Paul and in the song as well. Read those words again and again and listen to the song. Be reminded that God is always fighting for you, you are never alone, whatever your circumstances are this summer!

[Riley Clemmons - Fighting for Me \(Lyric Video\)](#)

**Friday, July 9, 2021 - Scripture: Matthew 8:24-25; Song: "Jesus Priceless Treasure"**

This Sunday, during our online service, the last one before we stop recording one for at least two weeks while Nancy and I are on vacation, we had planned to sing today’s

hymn for our song devotion but in the end it didn't work out. I still wanted to use it today.. It's one of the classic hymns of the Christian faith: "Jesus, Priceless Treasure." It's sung by one of my favorite groups, the Lutheran quartet. In the past few weeks, we have dealing with lots of storms and threats of storms. There were 2 tornadoes in Lake Odessa, not too far from Portland and as usual the Grand River flooded at Ionia, causing their fireworks to be postponed until Labor Day weekend. And there have other types of storms in people's lives as well, including the tragic collapse of the condominium in Florida that may eventually by the time they remove all the rubble, account for the death of over 150 folks, men, women, and children. That doesn't account for the personal storms in our lives either, things like illness, financial problems, family problems and more. The second verse of our hymn talks about these storms: "In your arms I rest me; Foes who would molest me Cannot reach me here. Though the earth be shaking, Every heart be quaking, Jesus calms my fear. Sin and hell in conflict fell. With their bitter storms assail me; Jesus will not fail me." What comfort these words can give us in all the situations I mentioned earlier in this devotion. What comfort they give us in any tough situation in our lives. Thinking of Jesus calming the storms in our lives, reminds me of Matthew 8 where Jesus was sleeping in the boat and a big storm came out on the Lake. The disciples were afraid, and they woke Jesus and said, "Save us, Lord, we are perishing," and he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm. And what did the men on the boat do, they marveled saying, "What sort of man is this, that even wind and seas obey him?" In all our storms when you realize that you might perish on your own, remember this, the title of our hymn: Jesus is our priceless treasure. He is greater than of the storms of our lives, those I listed, and those I might not know about. Read the Scripture again and be strengthened and then listen to the hymn and know that Jesus is greater than all the storms in your lives. He even conquered death!

["Jesus, Priceless Treasure," by the Lutheran Quartet](#)

**Wednesday, July 14, 2021 - Scripture: Isaiah 45:23-24; Song: "Sound of the Saints"**

When this is published, Nancy and I will be on the first full day of two weeks of vacation, something we've been looking forward to for a long time. It's the first vacation we've taken for ourselves in several years as most of our time off the past few years involved traveling to the West coast to take care of Nancy's parents who are now both with the Lord. We will travel to Washington again this time but most of the time we will be

traveling to many of our favorite spots: the ocean in Oregon, a small town on the east side of the mountains, a few days near Seattle, and places like Oak Harbor and Whidbey Island, some place available only by ferry. We will see mountains and oceans and rain forests, all in the same state, things that remind us of that God created. What we will be doing brought to mind today's song by Audio Adrenaline titled "Song of the Saints." The first verses reminded me of all we will see as the group sings of the sounds of creation, the wind and rain, the thunder, the roar of the ocean, and the sound of the trees clapping their hands. But the group also sings of appreciating the songs of the saints, singing things like Hallelujah and Amen. And as much as we'll miss doing that with our St. Andrew community, we will take the time each Sunday while we are gone to worship, the first week at Nancy's parent's church and the second week at a Lutheran church close to where we will be staying. Nancy and I also appreciate the songs of the saints and being fed by God's Word. If you're in Portland while we're gone, come join Mark Haworth the first week and Pastor Sutterer the second week to join in the song of the Saints and to be fed by God's Word. And if, like us, you enjoy nature, or some other type of vacation take the time on Sunday morning to join the song of the Saints wherever you are. We look forward to sharing about our time away when we return and worshipping along with you and joining the song of the Saints. Isaiah 45:23 and 24 our Scripture verses for today echo the last chorus of the song as the group sings of every knee bowing and tongues confessing the name of the Lord. Isaiah writes the Lord's words: "By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked; Before me, every knee will bow, by me every tongue will swear; They will say of me, 'In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.'" Vacations and nature give us some knowledge of God's majesty but His Word in Scripture as it points

to Jesus and what he has done in delivering us from sin is much clearer. Enjoy your vacation time but take time see Jesus revealed along with the song of the Saints this Sunday and the next and the next. Enjoy today's song and mediate on his Word.

[Audio Adrenaline - Sound of the Saints \(Official Lyric Video\)](#)