

of human rights in addressing the disparity between the treatment of our black citizens. In addition to that issue, do we feel the same urgency in proclaiming that we are all equal in our need for God's grace? Do we proclaim the idea that we all stand in need of God's forgiveness and mercy? Write your thoughts here.

Thursday, July 9

Read John 8:31-36. What does the word "freedom" mean to you? Do you have a different understanding of freedom depending on the context in which it is used? In other words, do you understand freedom in your faith differently from freedom as a citizen of the United States?

Does freedom in one context take precedent over freedom in the other? In what ways do you still seek freedom? It is truly a matter of trust. Each of us needs forgiveness. Each of us needs independence from slavery to sin. The good news is that we gain this freedom when we put our trust in Christ and follow him in faith! Praise God for this gift of freedom, available only through Christ our Lord. Write your thoughts here.

Friday, July 10

Read 1 Peter 2:16-17. In his first letter, Peter gives this practical advice to the Christian community of his day: "As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor." Peter wants us to live as free people but warns us about using our Declaration of Independence as a permission slip to do evil.

As Christians, we know that happiness isn't an isolated and individual experience. Instead, it comes from being part of a community in which God's abundant goodness is shared and enjoyed by all. How might your pursuit of happiness be blessed through this understanding? Write your ideas here.

Message Notes – July 5, 2020

*A Nation Undivided?**

- I. Exactly 60 years ago yesterday, on July 4, 1960, the 50-star flag of the United States was flown for the first time in _____.
 - A. We've now had 60 _____ of 50 _____.
 - B. As human beings, we like certain _____. And this goes way back. Since ancient times, people have attached symbolic significance to _____.
 - C. We like to be complete; to experience some type of _____ is in a way the goal of both the followers of Christ and citizens of the United States.

- II. Those who tried to _____ Jesus into saying something either something against the Roman government or the religious laws of the Jewish people were very aware of this dilemma of adhering to religious laws as well as the laws of the ruling nation – in this case the occupying Roman government.
 - A. Some have looked at this scripture and used it as an example of _____ of church and state.
 - B. Others have used it as a justification for conscientious _____.
 - C. Still others have used this very same scripture as Biblical support for being religiously _____.
 - D. I believe that Jesus' words, "Then give to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor's and to God the things that are God's." implies _____ citizenship.

- III. The beauty of this dual-citizenship is that many of the

* Luke 20:20-26 and I Peter 2:11-17

pursuits and _____ of our faith and our nation are in line with each other.

- A. First let's think about _____.
- B. The second goal our nation and the kingdom of God have in common is _____.
- C. Third, let's think of the common goals of the pursuit of _____.

- IV. The very words "pursuit of happiness" implies that we're _____ complete either as citizens of the United States and as followers of Christ.
 - A. May we continue to pursue _____, the way, the truth and the life as we continue to pursue life, liberty and happiness.
 - B. And in our pursuits, may we be _____ by God.

Daily Devotional Guide

This study guide is designed for you to daily, throughout this next week, consider the lessons of today's message and delve further into scripture that will enhance your growth as a Christian.

Monday, July 6

Exactly 60 years ago yesterday, on July 4, 1960, the 50-star flag of the United States was flown for the first time in Philadelphia. The 50th star was added because Hawaii had been admitted as the 50th state only the year before. We've now had 50 years of 50 stars. In the minds of some people, 50 stars represent completeness and perfection.

But life in America is never perfect and complete. When the Declaration of Independence was signed, 244 years ago, its words described the *beginning* of a process, not the end.

What is involved in your process of being complete or whole? What needs to happen for that feeling of completeness in your faith? What about your goals as a citizen of the United States? What makes you complete and whole? Pray that God will grant you the wisdom to contemplate such questions.

Tuesday, July 7

The message offered the observation that as followers of Christ, we hold dual-citizenship; first, as citizens of God's earthly Kingdom and second, as citizens of the United States.

Jesus fully understood this concept of dual-citizenship; that he was in the world but not of it. For the time in which Jesus walked this planet he was a Jew living under Roman occupation, who spoke the common language of Aramaic. He came to this world to save it and as long as he was in the world, we are told that he was the light of the world.

How do you understand your dual-citizenship as a follower of Christ? How do you or would you reconcile conflicts between these two entities – the church and our government? Where would your ultimate loyalties lie? May God grant us the peace and confidence to make such choices and may we be thankful that we live in a nation where we can express our different citizenships! Write your thoughts here.

Wednesday, July 8

Read Psalm 8. Let's consider the common goal of equality shared by God's kingdom and by our United States. On this past Independence Day, 60 years after the addition of the 50th star, it's appropriate for us, as Christians in America, to look at where we've been and where we're going.

Sixty years ago, it wasn't at all clear that "all men are created equal" because segregation was enforced in many parts of our country. Black men and women were treated as second-class citizens. It took a massive civil-rights movement to outlaw racial discrimination and move us closer to a society in which all people are accepted as equals. Obviously there is much to do in the realm