

Melva's Corner

LET FREEDOM RING FOREVER!

July 11, 2005

Bible Text: John 3:16 Romans 5:6-8

Central Truth: The Cross and Empty Tomb are our symbols of the cost of true freedom for all people.

The fourth of July has come and gone. For most of us in the United States, it was a day of fireworks and celebration. It is, in fact, a national holiday to celebrate our independence. How wonderful it is to be free! Yet there is much that lies beneath the surface of such a day.

Freedom fought for during the war of independence was bitter-sweet for the mother who lost her two sons and now nursed a crippled husband, after the war was won.

It was difficult to rejoice in the empty frontier cabin built by the young fiancée to be shared with his bride to be as soon as he returned. Unfortunately he — and many others — never did return.

Someone, some where, paid a terrible cost for our wonderful freedom.

Perhaps with every celebration day, there should also be a moment of remembrance for the cost. Every freedom we enjoy has come at a tremendous price— a mother or father, a husband or wife, a son or a daughter, brother or sister, was left grieving for the democracy we enjoy. Who could ever put a value on such a high price for freedom?

Enjoy your freedom...

And the greatest freedom of all, freedom from sin and death, is no different. It was purchased at the greatest cost of all. The Father, **who did not have to**, gave His Son, **who could have chosen not to** give up His life, to purchase freedom for a people who did not really seem to care.

We may never really know what makes one sacrifice his or her life to benefit others. We certainly will not understand why **"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."** (John 3:16 RSV)

Why Jesus should choose to die for all humankind — and each of us individually — is beyond our finite minds to grasp. The Scripture says, **"While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."** (Romans 5:6-8 RSV)

Our forefathers died for family and friends. Our Lord died for His disobedient creation. Many a hero died in fierce defiance and hate of his enemy. Jesus died out of love for them.

Rejoice in your freedom...

This freedom was purchased at great cost. The symbol of this cost is not a hillside with rows of white crosses, the tomb of the unknown soldiers, or a reflective black wall of names. As precious as these symbols are, they do not compare to the symbols of the Cross and the Empty Tomb. These symbols transcend ethnic, geographical, and national boundaries.

The Cross and Empty Tomb are our symbols of the cost of true freedom for all people — the cost of Jesus leaving the security and safety of heaven and becoming earthbound and mortal. It is the symbol of the degradation of a crucifixion, the humiliation of mockers, the agonizing death on a cross, and three days in a tomb. His experience reflect the words the song, "Find the cost of freedom, no longer in the ground."

You see, the Empty Tomb is the symbol of ultimate freedom. It is the reminder that we no longer have to fear death. All of our mortal fears are conquered. As the apostle Paul says, **"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? . . . But thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"** (I Corinthians 15:54-57 RVS)

"Since we, God's children are human beings — made of flesh and blood — He became flesh and blood too by being born in human form; for only as a human being could he die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death. Only in that way could He deliver those who through fear of death have been living all their lives as slaves to constant dread." (Hebrews 2:14-15 NLT)

For the Christian, Independence Day doesn't come once a year, but every day. Each day let us remember the Lord's death and anticipate His return because the freedom from sin and death had been won. The ultimate Independence Day for Christians is the day of the Empty Tomb! Although the fourth of July has come and gone- as believers, let's remember the awesome price of our freedom and give thanks daily!

Celebrate your freedom...

Memory Text:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 RSV)