

July 4th Musings 2021

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, July 4, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Happy Independence Day! Thank you for taking the time to join us either in person or online. It is my joy to share with you this morning, as our nation celebrates its 245th birthday. May the Lord give us ears to hear what He is speaking in this hour! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – The United States has a rich spiritual heritage that we should consider, reflect upon and draw from. Though I cannot claim that all our forebears and/or prominent leaders through the years knew the Lord by faith, their enduring works and writings do reveal the undeniable influence of a Judeo-Christian ethic and worldview...

NOTE 2 – Having immersed myself in their writings as of late, I am moved by the degree to which biblical principle has shaped this nation since its founding and through the generations. In fact, I posit that this worldview or ethic is a driving contributor to the blessing we have known (i.e., despite our greatest failings). Ultimately...

Psalm 33:12a, NIV

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord . . .

KEY – This morning I would like to consider a selection of quotes from our forefathers and key leaders on an array of topics. For each I will elaborate with corresponding passage and/or principle. May the history of our great nation help to shape our collective present and future! Let's delve in...

DANIEL WEBSTER

The first quote I want to consider comes from Daniel Webster and centers upon the spiritual heritage of our nation. Daniel Webster (1782–1852) was an American lawyer and statesman who represented New Hampshire and Massachusetts in the U.S. Congress and served as the U.S. Secretary of State under Presidents William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, and Millard Fillmore.

QUOTE – "Finally, let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers were brought hither by their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light, and labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate its principles with the elements of their society, and to diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary. Let us cherish these sentiments, and extend this influence still more widely; in full conviction that that is the happiest society which partakes in the highest degree of the mild and peaceful spirit of Christianity."

NOTE 1 – Webster notes that his forebears were moved by the Christian faith; they journeyed by it; they labored in its hope, seeking to incorporate biblical principle into the fabric of life and living (personal, institutional, etc.). Moved by his ancestry, he felt the need to call his contemporaries to cherish, appreciate, esteem and treasure their shared spiritual heritage and the faith upon which it was established, that it might extend in ever-increasing degrees...

NOTE 2 – Let us be a people who are moved by the faith we profess. Let us journey by it, laboring in its hope. Let us seek to incorporate biblical principle into every facet of life and living, calling our contemporaries to come to the faith and to the “knowledge of the truth.” In this way our shared heritage and faith might extend in ever-increasing degrees.

NOTE 3 – Webster operated from the conviction that the “happiest society” is that which is founded upon and moved by the Christian faith. The closer a people draw to the Lord and His ways, the happier (i.e., blessed) they will be. Concurrently, the more a nation withdraws and/or retreats from the Lord, the more such blessing dissipates. Again...

Psalm 33:12a

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord . . .

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Moving along, President George Washington offered the following remarks in his Farewell Address...

QUOTE – “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

FYI – It is incredible how much Washington communicates in so few words...

NOTE 1 – Religion and morality are crucial supports for any “prosperous” society.

NOTE 2 – ‘Genuine’ patriots revere the place of religion and morality (v. subversion).

NOTE 3 – Religious tradition and moral concerns must be respected and/or cherished.

NOTE 4 – Words cannot fully express the rich connection between religion and felicity.

NOTE 5 – How can a society endure if “all” religious obligation and morality dissipate?

NOTE 6 – Morality finds its source in and is sustained by religion (i.e., transcendent).

NOTE 7 – Structure and reason are crucial, but they cannot sustain without rel. pr.

This leads me to the next quote which complements Washington’s remarks...

JOHN Q. ADAMS

The following quote comes from John Q. Adams (6th U.S. President)...

QUOTE – "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our constitution was made for a moral and religious people. . . . it is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

NOTE 1 – Adams, like Washington before him, notes the critical role of morality and religion in society. He contends that our system of government only works if the population is first moral and guided by transcendent religious sentiment. If the people are immoral and unbridled, there is little the government can do to restrain human evil and bad behavior. The government cannot "legislate" righteousness!

NOTE 2 – To what degree are we seeing this play out in real time? To what degree are we seeing the end result of what happens when you remove God from everything aspect of society, diminish religious sentiment, and cast aside moral truth? We now have a generation of people who sound quite a bit like the days of the Old Testament Judges...

Judges 21:25

25 In those . . . everyone did as they saw fit.

KEY 1 – Yet the Lord defines and has told us what is true, right, and wrong...

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

John 14:6

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

KEY 2 – Yet the Lord can still transform us from the inside out...

Galatians 5:16–17, 19–23

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. . . .

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

KEY 3 – I pray for a spiritual awakening and revival in our day! It is the only way we will ever come back from the precipice we are beginning to look over. We have become a godless, deteriorating society that needs to heed the very message of Christ to the wayward (Matt. 4:17; Rev. 2–3): "Repent!"

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Our next quote comes from Benjamin Franklin and speaks to the need of prayer and reliance upon the providence of God. The following words were spoken in June of 1787, when the Constitutional Convention that produced the foundation of the U.S. government was deadlocked. In that moment, Franklin offered the following remarks...

QUOTE – “The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable than an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that, without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. . . . I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in the Assembly every morning.”

Q. What do we see herein as the founders laid the “foundation” for our nation?

A. A call for ongoing prayer and reliance upon the assistance and intervention of God.

NOTE – Pastor D. James Kennedy offers the following complementary words: "In reading over the Constitutions of all fifty of our states, I discovered something which some of you may not know: there is in all fifty, without exception, an appeal or a prayer to the Almighty God of the universe. . . . Through all fifty state Constitutions, without exception, there runs this same appeal and reference to God who is the Creator of our liberties and the preserver of our freedoms."

KEY 1 – I do not have time to offer a sermon on the necessity of prayer and reliance upon the Lord. If I were to touch upon how dominant of a theme this is in Scripture, I would have to hand you the whole of the Book! To what degree are we, as a people, committed to prayer and reliant upon the Lord? To what degree do we live by the principles espoused by Franklin?

KEY 2 – I would add that it is biblically mandated to pray for the aid and intervention of God in the affairs of government and the leaders thereof. In an age where we like to complain about and excoriate our leaders on social media, we should be a people of intercessory prayer...

1 Timothy 2:1–4

1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

JOHN Q. ADAMS

If we are going to talk about the priority and power of prayer, let us also talk about the import of the Word of God! Our next quote comes, again, from John Q. Adams (6th President of the United States). Consider his remarks regarding the Bible...

QUOTE – "I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you, Search the Scriptures! The Bible is the book of all others, to be read at all ages, and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice or thrice through, and then laid aside, but to be read in small portions of one of two chapters every day, and never to be intermitted, unless by some overruling necessity."

NOTE – "The Bible reveals the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is gained, Heaven opened, and hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It shall fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, promises the highest reward for labor, and condemns all who trifle with its sacred contents.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Joshua 1:8

8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

ILL – If you want to know how much the biblical greats valued Scripture, consider the entirety of Ps. 119.

KEY – These opening quotes esteem our religious heritage and the value of prayer and Scripture in our society. The quotes that I want to begin to examine talk about the inevitable danger of removing ourselves from such foundations. Let us heed the warnings of previous generations...

GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY

Omar Bradley (1893–1981) was a senior officer of the U.S. Army during and after World War II, holding the rank of General of the Army. Bradley was the first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and oversaw the U.S. military's policymaking in the Korean War. Consider two of his many remarks...

QUOTE 1 – "America today is running on the momentum of a godly ancestry, and when that momentum runs down, God help America."

QUOTE 2 – "We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. . . . The world has achieved brilliance without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants."

FYI – There is much to unpack in these statements, and I would recommend taking the time to contemplate them further on your own time. With the minimal time we have this morning, I would make the following comments...

KEY 1 – For some time our nation has run on the momentum of a godly heritage, and for a time that did propel and/or sustain us. It would seem, however, that in our time that momentum has run out. It is no longer enough to claim a godly heritage in a generation that has become godless. This reminds me of the words of John the Baptist to his generation—a wicked generation that reveled in their sp. ancestry...

Matthew 3:1–9

1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'" [Isa. 40:3]

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

KEY 2 – Moreover, it would seem the Lord cares more about our sp. character than about our capacities. Despite our tremendous advances on nearly every front, we have regressed morally and drifted further and further from the Lord. The message of John the Baptist continues to ring forth: "Repent!"

Q. What happens when a nation persists in the wrong direction morally, etc.?

A. The answer is posited by the author of our next excerpt – please take note...

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR

Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964) was an American military leader who served as General of the Army for the United States, as well as a Field Marshal to the Philippine Army. He was Chief of Staff of the United States Army during the 1930s, and he played a prominent role in the Pacific theater during World War II.

QUOTE 1 – "History fails to record a single precedent in which nations subject to moral decay have not passed into political and economic decline. There has been either a spiritual awakening to overcome the moral lapse, or a progressive deterioration leading to ultimate national disaster."

NOTE 1 – This leads me to consider this secondary quote worthy of note by John Adams (2nd President)...

QUOTE 2 – "Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

Proverbs 14:34

34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin condemns any people.

NOTE 2 – If the OT is anything, it is the story of v. 34. We can see in Israel the reality of this truth (cf. Deut. 28).

Q. So what are we to do in light of such a potential trajectory?

EDMUND BURKE (IRISH STATESMAN, ECONOMIST AND PHILOSOPHER)

QUOTE – "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Matthew 28:18–20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 16:15–16

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Colossians 1:28–29

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

2 Chronicles 7:14

14 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 I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for joining us today! Allow me to close with the following...

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of the Lord!

NOTE 2 – With COVID-19 behind us we are beginning to reestablish ministries and events. Sunday School is set to resume on August 1. We are also coordinating a Family Fun Day “outreach” for July 31 (Aug. 1 rain date) and a Church Picnic after service on the final Sunday of August (more info. to come).

NOTE 3 – Those who wish to linger in this sanctuary may feel free to do so. This is to be a house of prayer, so those who feel the need to pray may do so as they please. Moreover, I would be more than happy to pray with those who have need.

KEY – I close with the following...

Numbers 6:24–26

24 ““The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.””