



Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

Share God's Word, share His love, and do it now!

Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

"Freed from Tyranny" – Psalm 148

4th Sunday after Pentecost – July 2, 2017

Pastor Chip Winter

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the epistle appointed for the day and already read for us from 1 Peter, the first chapter.

My dear family in Christ, we are a most fortunate people, living in the United States of America. As we celebrate this Independence Day weekend we rejoice in the freedoms we have: Freedom of Speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom to keep and bear arms, freedom to petition the government to redress wrongs, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and, among others, the freedom to worship.

As we exercise this freedom to worship, we do so worshipping the one true God of heaven and earth Who, in our text, is referred to as **"...rais(ing) up a horn for his people..."**. What does it mean that He has raised up a horn for His people? What that means is God is to be praised in this psalm for establishing a King for the people He claims as His own possession.

We are a possession. We are living under a King. Does that really fit well with all the celebrating, the barbecuing, the camping and the shooting off of fireworks of an independent people? Can we really be an independent people if we are owned and ruled?

Lest we try to get past this by reasoning that this is simply Old Testament language, St. Paul regularly refers to himself and to us all as “δουλος”, a word that can mean either “slave” or “servant.” And the Gospels and the book of Revelation make reference to the Lordship of Christ Jesus, as well as the Kingdom of God.

Owned and serving under a King, how is it that we are independent? American independence speaks to an independence from a tyrannical power. England and King George had become such a power in the eyes of the colonists. The Declaration of Independence addresses a veritable laundry list of injustices, including taxation without representation. Such injustices were crushing the pioneers of America – crushing their spirit and inhibiting their growth – and they didn’t mince words.

In our recent trip to Ireland Jami and I learned that such tyranny was also felt by the Irish, resulting in their rebellion and uprising 1916. There were videos recorded last year by some Irish residents who were centenarians, and thus older than the country in which they were living!

As for the Americans, it was tyranny. They needed to get out from under the rule of England and King George. They needed their own government, **“deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed.”**

That is what American Independence is: freedom from a tyrannical power.

That being the case, we can thank heaven that there is truly little independence in our society overall. We are dependent on one another. We are dependent on our armed forces. We are dependent upon our Constitution and all the laws that curb and control a safe community. We are dependent upon our local government for police protection, fire protection, roads and bridges. We are dependent upon internet providers and communication satellites. We are dependent upon farmers to produce our food, truckers to haul it to market, store owners to stock it and clerks to sell

it. We are dependent upon doctors and nurses, teachers and administrators, linemen, roughnecks, engineers, manufacturers, attorneys and judges.

You can see how little independence there is in American Independence! Except that we are free from tyrannical power to be freely dependent upon one another. We have this free choice as have many, many people over the decades of the US' existence. Explorers and pilgrims, merchants and settlers, the English, the Irish, the Asians, the Germans, the Bosnians and what have you have freely chosen this interdependence. Floods of immigrants have come to call the United States of American their own, to embrace this melting-pot dependence that we freely share.

This is quite different from God's Kingdom. All of our choices, the exercise of our free will, are misdirected from the start. Our attention is curved in ourselves due to sin. When our lives are examined from the perspective of what is true, what is right and what is holy we find that we exist under the tyrannical control of the deceitful devil, the seduction of the world and our own sinful flesh.

And it is here that we find, wonder of wonders, that our Creator and King, the God whose servants we are, is the One Who has freely chosen us. He chose to free us from the tyrannical power of sin and the damnable dead end to which it inexorably leads. By His only-begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, the ultimate Ambassador of the Kingdom of God, the Father has even freed us from that strongest of tyrants, Death.

He did so, oddly enough, by dying. Jesus freely came to live among those in bondage. Born of Mary and placed in the manger, Jesus came to know the roughness of this world. In the journey taken to Egypt, to avoid the assassination plotted by King Herod, Jesus came to know the plight of the exile, the concerns of the hunted. In the verbal traps set for Him by the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus came to know the devious nature of the insecure mind and the animosity that can reside in the

human heart. In His trials before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate Jesus felt the heavy-handedness of corrupt administrations. In His agony on the cross Jesus came to encounter to the full the pain of abandonment and the punishment the Father had in store for the sins of the world.

After His burial, Jesus rose from death. Jesus opened the gates of the eternal Kingdom of God to us, forever, through faith in Him!

God chooses us. The Father loves us, Jesus saves us through His passion, death and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit brings that saving faith to our hearts by grace. We are God's dearly loved, whom He blesses with grace upon grace.

God, our King and Master, is no tyrant! He is a God rich in blessing. He is generous with expensive gifts like freedom, forgiveness and forever.

The result, the Psalmist tells us, is praise! I cannot imagine a week which could serve as a better example than the one we've just experienced, as far as the heavens praising God with the sun and the moon joining in. The creation – earth and all its creatures – join to praise the Almighty in the wonder of their beauty and activity. The mountains cannot be kept quiet. Forests shout aloud. The nations and their people praise the Lord God.

Why do these entities praise God? Is it because they are ordered to? No. They are created to.

And we join them in these praises on this weekend because we have been freed from tyranny – the tyranny of unjust rule, but even more so, the tyranny of sin, death and everlasting condemnation. We are freed and our tongues are loosed to praise our Savior.

God has blessed us – the happily dependent people who rely on the mercy and grace He so lavishly has shed on us. Let us praise the Lord! Amen.