

Freedom Isn't Free

I don't know about you but every time I hear the National Anthem and see our flag I get emotional. I realize how blessed we are to live in this great nation where we have such freedom. We are gathered here with no fear of reprisal as we are free to worship as we see fit.

In just a few days we will celebrate the birthday of our nation with Independence Day. The Fourth of July has come to mean a lot of things to we Americans. It means baseball, hotdogs and Chevrolet to some. To others it is a day off to lay around the pool or beach. The Fourth is a time for us to relax and spend time with our families, to eat and to watch parades and fireworks. Sometimes we forget the real meaning of the holiday, to celebrate the fact that our Founding Father's risked their lives so that we can be free.

Down through the years there have been many countless sacrifices to maintain our freedom. From Valley Forge, to Gettysburg, to San Juan Hill, to WWI, to the beaches of Normandy and Okinawa, to Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, brave men and women serve so that we can eat hotdogs and ice cream in peace and freedom. As we look at the rows of white tombstones in our cemeteries we are reminded that freedom isn't free. It was bought with the blood of patriots and kept by the sacrifice of countless men and women who serve around the globe.

We have an even greater freedom today than the freedom's our nation grants us. We are free in Christ. His sacrifice purchased for us a pardon from sin and set us free to live a new and meaningful life. As our flag symbolizes our freedom as a nation so the cross symbolizes that we are free in Christ. The great hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote in *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, "When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small: Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."

We can never give a gift to repay God for the sacrifice of His Son. The point of the hymn is not that we should try to repay God with our gifts. The point is that a sacrifice like that so freely given causes us to WANT to give back to Him freely, willingly and out of love. As our ushers come forward this morning consider what gift you can give to celebrate the freedoms you have in Christ.