

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

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JULY-AUGUST 2008

FREEDOM AND FAITH

MEMORIES ENRICH OUR LIVES AND HELP MAKE US A COMMUNITY. PEOPLE FEEL A SPECIAL BOND WITH ONE ANOTHER WHEN THEY SHARE MEMORIES. WE, AS AMERICANS AND AS CHRISTIANS, HAVE JULY AND AUGUST MEMORIES WHICH TELL US WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE VALUE.

AMERICANS RECALL JULY AND AUGUST MEMORIES IN THE LIFE OF THIS NATION. ON JULY 4, 1776, ONE OF THE GREAT MOMENTS IN HUMAN HISTORY OCCURRED WHEN A REVOLUTIONARY DOCUMENT DECLARED THAT ALL ARE CREATED EQUAL AND THAT ALL HAVE RIGHTS, NOT ONLY TO LIFE BUT ALSO TO LIBERTY AND EVEN TO THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. THE WORLD WAS NEVER QUITE THE SAME AFTER THAT. INDEED, IT WAS MEASURABLY AND PERMANENTLY BETTER.

ON AUGUST 28, 1963, MARTIN LUTHER KING DELIVERED HIS "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH, PERHAPS THE MOST POWERFUL SPEECH IN AMERICA SINCE THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS. BOTH THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS AND "I HAVE A DREAM" ECHOED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CAPTURED ITS SOARING ELOQUENCE. THE DECLARATION OF 1776 EVENTUALLY REQUIRED THE END OF SLAVERY (GETTYSBURG ADDRESS) AND IT INSPIRED AMERICANS TO DREAM IN CONCRETE WAYS ABOUT THE EQUALITY AND LIBERTY SCRIPTED INTO THE DNA OF THE NATION.

JEFFERSON AND LINCOLN AND KING FOUND THE WORDS THAT REACHED DEEPLY INTO THE AMERICAN SPIRIT AND MADE US AWARE OF WHAT WE ARE CAPABLE AND OF WHERE OUR COMMITMENTS MUST LEAD US.

WE ARE ALSO CHRISTIANS. THERE ARE JULY AND AUGUST MEMORIES WHICH CHALLENGE US AS CHRISTIANS. JULY 3rd. IS THE FEAST OF THOMAS THE APOSTLE; JULY 22nd. IS THE FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE.

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WE MEET THOMAS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. THERE HE IS CRIPPLED BY DOUBT AND CONFUSION. THE DISCIPLES CLAIM THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD BUT IS STILL WITH THEM. JESUS IS PRESENTED AS APPEARING TO THE DISCIPLES BUT, MOST MOVINGLY, OF ENCOUNTERING AND SINGLING OUT THOMAS IN PARTICULAR. JESUS ASKS THOMAS TO BELIEVE, NOT BECAUSE OTHERS TOLD HIM SOMETHING BUT BECAUSE HE HIMSELF EXPERIENCED IT. THOMAS WANTED TO BELIEVE BUT COULD NOT. IN A TENDER, INTIMATE, PERSONAL ENCOUNTER, HE FINDS HIS FAITH AND BELIEVES, NOT OUT OF OBEDIENCE OR THE TESTIMONY OF OTHERS BUT WITH HIS OWN HEART.

JULY 22nd. IS THE FEAST OF MARY MAGDALENE. THE COURAGE OF THIS WOMAN IS OVERWHELMING. SHE IS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS AT A LEVEL OF COMMITMENT THAT MAKES HER A MODEL FOR THE CHURCH. SHE FOLLOWS JESUS THROUGH THE TRIUMPH AND TRAUMA OF HIS LIFE AND THEN SHE STANDS AT THE CROSS, THE WHOLE TIME, UNAFRAID, DETERMINED THAT JESUS SHALL NOT DIE SEEING ONLY HOSTILE FACES BEFORE HIM. SHE IS THE ONLY DISCIPLE ALL FOUR GOSPELS NAME AS A WITNESS OF THE DEATH OF JESUS. AND SHE IS THE FIRST TO MEET JESUS ON EASTER SUNDAY MORNING AND TO DECLARE TO ALL BELIEVERS THAT JESUS IS NOT DEAD. SHE WHO SAW THE DEATH MORE CONCRETELY THAN ANYONE ELSE IS THE FIRST TO DECLARE THAT JESUS LIVES NONETHELESS.

AS WE BREAK BREAD TOGETHER THROUGH THE SUNDAYS OF JULY AND AUGUST WE HAVE MEMORIES TO KEEP AND CELEBRATE. IT IS A MEMORY THAT LEADS US TO CELEBRATE EUCHARIST. BUT WE BRING OTHER MEMORIES TO THE TABLE: MEMORIES OF FREEDOM AND DREAMS OF EQUALITY; MEMORIES OF DOUBT AND OF FAITH; MEMORIES OF COURAGE AND CONVICTION.

ANTHONY