



FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA
TO: The People of Zion
DATE: July 3, 2020

CELEBRATING THE FOURTH OF JULY (In Love for God, Family, and Country)

Tomorrow our nation will celebrate July 4, marking 244 years since the 13 original colonies declared their independence from British rule. Even though the pandemic will create some restrictions on the celebrations of the day, it will still be a day filled with cook-outs and fireworks, often spent with family and friends. It's a day of celebration and a time to remember the blessings afforded to us here in the United States of America.

As I look forward to the day, I am reminded that my gratitude for and love of my country is expressed best when it's, as church philosopher and theologian Augustine says, a "rightly ordered love." In this case, having rightly ordered love can help ensure that our love for country is in check with the other loves within our lives. We can only properly love (and serve) our country if we prioritize our love for God and our love for family over our love for our country, for the country was founded to serve and protect our love for God and family, not the other way around.

LOVE FOR GOD

Scripture is clear that love for God should be the driving motivation within our lives. Jesus affirmed the greatest commandment in Matthew 22 where he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This commandment is reaffirmed throughout Scripture, as one's love and devotion to God is expressed through a heart which is oriented toward God. It's seen in Daniel's devotion to pray to God, in David's willingness to fight the giant, and in Moses' defiance of an oppressive nation.

Properly understood, love for God also compels us to love others. Jesus explains that love for God is the "greatest commandment," but then proceeds to elaborate on this statement by saying, "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." From Jesus' words, we understand that a heart oriented to God will result in a heart responsive to the needs of others in a meaningful way.

LOVE FOR FAMILY

This love for others means love for various groups of people including friends, neighbors, colleagues, and co-workers, not just our immediate families. However, it means love for those even closer to us as well. All too often, we find ourselves overlooking those nearest to us, especially our family, as we seek to love others within our lives. This is important because the Bible has a lot to say about the family unit. Not only is the family affirmed throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the family was actually the first institution established within Scripture. In Genesis 2, we hear the first reference to the family, which indicates, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."

As we rightly love God, we are then able to begin to rightly love others, starting with our family. We can serve them, help provide for them, and point them in a direction so they, too, can love

God and love others. As the family unit is strengthened and cared for, we can then become the type of citizens who effectively love and serve our country.

LOVE FOR COUNTRY

Living as a community of those who love God and those committed to our families allows us to become better citizens of this nation. As a demonstration of our love for God and a commitment to our family, we naturally have a desire to help our nation become the best it can be. We help in all ways available to us. We pay our taxes, we help improve our communities, we care for those in need. We are honest in our business transactions, we ethically care for the sick, and we govern by moral standards. At the heart of our service is a willingness to put the needs of others ahead of ourselves in a display of love for God and a commitment to doing what is best for our families and our country.

This fourth of July, as we celebrate our country, let's also celebrate our love for God and family. And as we do celebrate our love for God and family, may it be a way to more fully comprehend the blessing it is to live in this nation and to serve your neighbors.



In God We Trust!

Happy July 4th, 2020