

July 2017
From the Desk of Rev. Chuck
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Dear Friends,

July is the month in which we celebrate freedom from the authoritarian rule of a king to that of independent rule. And here are a couple of facts not known by many today:

The resolution declaring our independence from England was completed on July 2nd and not July 4th--the day we have set aside to celebrate our declaration. And that they waited for two days before the famous ringing of the Liberty Bell proclaiming liberty throughout the land and to all inhabitants thereof. Also, the statement "...proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all inhabitants thereof" which is on the Liberty Bell comes from the 25th Chapter of Leviticus verse 10 and deals with freedom and liberty as the Hebrews enter into the promise land.

The Hebrews entered the promise land but freedom from being taken over by other tribes, nations, and empires seemed to be a constant struggle. Then Jesus enters the picture during a period when Rome ruled most of the known world. The people desired freedom and many thought Jesus was the one to do and free them from Rome. However, his idea of freedom was different.

It was his teachings that freed people, not the sword, as he proclaimed individual liberty as found in this dialogue he had with his followers in John 8:31: *"Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

And the truth he taught that set all humanity free was: God's will for us is that we are free. Everyone is born with the power to turn to God at any time and during any need for the strength and courage to rededicate and reclaim their freedom from any and all limitations and bondage. Remembering a simple affirmation such as: "God's will for me is freedom," will help us

remember that we are free regardless of how negative a situation may be.

Someone once said, "There can be no freedom where intolerance is allowed to breed, no liberty where indifference is seeded." Who of us have not had a bias, negative thought about a person or persons during our lifetime? How many people feel safer within a group of people that are just like them and will do almost anything to keep "others" out?

Jesus and all the great spiritual leaders gave humanity teachings that embraced the ideals of inclusiveness and love. When Jesus healed the lepers, walked among the unwanted, healed the Roman Centurion's slave, these weren't keeping people away but opening the door to all who wished to be free from the pain and suffering of intolerance and indifference.

True freedom is defined as the opportunity to choose among alternatives. And herein lies the key to any and all freedom, all liberty and that's the right to self-determination. Freedom to live as I wish; to be responsible for myself; to have the opportunity to live my personal credo; to travel my spiritual journey as I best understand that journey, and; to invite others to share their experiences with me as I share mine.

When you develop a consciousness of self-determination, you develop a freedom that allows you to let your divine self express without restrictions or societal pressures. You are free to do anything with others that you choose to do so long as their wishes do not conflict with yours and it's for the highest good of all concerned. When you incorporate the teachings that Jesus gave the world, you will truly know and live the meaning of "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

May you and yours have a joyous and safe 4th of July celebration.