

Revolution 5

Acts 2:42-47

May 31

Intro: Believe it or Not Memorial Day is not to celebrate the opening of the local water park or Amusement park. It was not a reminder to have the first picnic or the beginning of camping season. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service.

In my mind it is not only to stop and remember those who have died defending our freedom. It is a time to honor our veterans and encourage those serving today!

Do you remember Definition 5 of a revolutionary from last week. – Overthrow of a government or social system, with another taking its place. This is what a Revolutionary Christian is supposed to be.

Overturing even the best systems like the U.S to establish the kingdom of God-when America is out of harmony with God's Kingdom!

On memorial day it causes me to ask can a Christian be a Patriot? Is a Christian Patriot an oxymoron?

What makes a Christian patriot? How does an American church conduct itself? Can the church have a theology of patriotism without celebrating the destruction of it's enemies that Christ also died for? In order to be an effective witness of the power and love of God, the church must be both a part of the culture and country in which it lives, without making American more important than the Kingdom of God!

Remember last week I talking about George Barna, who says the Revolutionary mind-set is simple; "Do whatever it takes to get closer to God and to help others do the same. Obliterate any obstacle that prevents you from honoring God with every breath you take. Be such an outstanding example of the Christian faith so that no one will question your heart or lifestyle." Now it's obvious that if we the following at some point we be in conflict with our School, Congress and possibly even the President of

the United States? So is it possible for the church to be both a revolutionary force and supporter of the American way?

One of Doug Marlette's "Kudzu" cartoons portrayed the seldom honest pastor Will B. Dunn preaching on "What are some of the tough issues facing the church, you ask? Should the sanctuary carpet be red or green, should the church speak out on social issues, and just who should sing the solo Easter Sunday?" I believe on this nationalistic planet one of the toughest issues facing the church is how to love the country we belong to, without making America bigger and a more important role than the growth of the Kingdom of God!

***Explain Patriotism versus a revolutionary Church.***

Patriotism seems to be an emotion which rides on a tide of fashion sometimes the currents of public opinion find it praiseworthy and virtuous, then sometimes quite abruptly the irresistible pull of events shifts our field of vision and patriotism appears suspect, shallow, or at the very least quaintly old-fashioned. Regardless of its momentary appeal, none of us can escape from the fact that we are all from a particular place a town, a region, a nation and that the experience of that place has, to varying degrees, shaped who we are and what we believe. What begins as an accident of birth becomes an integral part of our very being.

With our country's strong evangelical tradition, Christianity has a historical influence in all the corners of Americana. The problem is America has not always been either "true" or "chosen" to the embodiment of Christian ideals.

In fact the historical disasters resulting from foolishly trying to make the Kingdom of God and our country of origin one in the same as led to some of the church's greatest sins. Doubt me? Consider the barbarism of the European "Crusaders'" attempts to wrest the holy lands from the "Infidels," to the massacres of Native Americans at the hands of the United States Army, and onto the pathetic excuses for "homelands" in the black townships huddling on the fringes of affluent all-white cities in apartheid stained South Africa.

Let's revisit a couple of passages in Acts to understand our duties as followers of Christ. All the

believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup>Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup>Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. **Acts 2:44-47**

Recognizing the other believers as brothers and sisters in the family of God, the Christians in Jerusalem shared all they had so that all could benefit from God's gifts. It is tempting—especially if we have material wealth—to cut ourselves off from one another, concerning ourselves with only our interests and enjoying only our own little piece of the world. But as part of God's spiritual family, it is our responsibility to help one another in every way possible. God's family works best when its members work together.

This also made the early church revolutionary, because they were fully integrated in the Roman Empire and yet separate. They recognized the Kingdom of God was going to be better at meeting the physical and emotional needs of other Christians than the Romans! They were apart of Rome and Jewish World and yet they were separate!

The people who are thinking this way are the Revolutionaries of today.

They have

searched for ways to deepen their relationship with God, they have listened to the

traditional thoughts of the past and they have found that they are not working.

The Revolutionary is looking for the love of God, they are looking for holiness, they

are looking for God's blessings but they are also looking for something that isn't

going to fizzle out in a few months. They are looking for something that is

substantial and real.

They are looking for something that is only found in an intimate relationship with

God through Jesus Christ. And in order to have that kind of relationship you have

to change, you have to transform, and you have to pay the price.

When you become a Revolutionary you are going to be faced with challenges and

even opposition.

There are going to have to be some tough choices made and they will have to make

those choices carefully because each choice we make matters to God.

But when the Revolutionaries make the right choices we find that there is an

awesome eternal reward waiting for them. Just this last week I encountered, heroes

of the faith, who are revolutionaries. I have a friend who has been a ministry

position of 30 years, considering leaving the paid position for an unpaid position, to advance the kingdom of God! A young lady from my old youth Group,

leaving her young son for 3 weeks seeking answers to what God is calling her to

do! The servants in the church who are making the Basketball camp happen-VBS

happen! Barry Ward is going to African in part because of the generosity of the

missions committee-and the church in Elbert!

Remember, a Revolutionary is a person who will "Do whatever it takes to get

closer to God and to help others do the same. Obliterate any obstacle that prevents

you from honoring God with every breath you take. When we are the Church, we

naturally peacefully revolt against those issue that keep people from honoring God

and yet we are Patriotic, because as we the church serve the needs of those around

us our whole nation is strengthened!

Second Scripture we need to look at is Acts 4:18-20 *hen they called them in again and*

*commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup>For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

I am certain this is one of the passages our ancestor used to justify their revolt against England. It is a passage that in no uncertain terms states if obeying man and his structure, causes us to disobey God-we

should take our lumps and say no! This is why the church is feared and respected when Christians say no to any government and yes to obeying Christ-revolutionary changes happen! Nations are born. Martyrs die. Wars end. Injustices are righted. We are truly patriotic, when we obey God rather than man and force society to deal with sin!

**Illustrate:** What is a great church? Some like a big church, some a small church. Some a city church and some a country Church.

You might be in a country church if: The Call to Worship is, "Y'all come on in!"

The Preacher says, "I'd like to ask Bubba to pray for the offering" - and five guys stand up.

Opening day of deer hunting season is recognized as an official church holiday.

A member requests to be buried in his truck because, "I ain't never been in a hole it couldn't get me out of".

The only time people lock their cars in the parking lot is during the summer and only so no one leaves them another bag of Zucchini!

Baptism is referred to as "branding."

What made the church in Jerusalem great is they were willing to obey God Rather than man. This Church was great because they were more concerned about pleasing God, than honoring man! It is a revolutionary concept, that needs to be practiced again!

I am convinced, the most patriotic thing we can do this memorial day is to obey God not Man! To insist the church care for its own, rather than relying on government beaurcrats is both Godly and patriotic! To create a society that models God's plan for man is both patriotic and worthy of God's glory! This memorial day, I think one of the most honoring thing we can do for the fallen is to not follow our government blindly, but instead to follow Jesus with our eyes wide open!

**Demonstrate:**

Francis Scott Key was a Christian Revolutionary who Dared to love and serve both God and

country with integrity. The author of the words to our difficult-to-sing and imperfectly-memorized national anthem took seriously his responsibilities as both a Christian and an American. Key was a strong Episcopalian who seriously considered joining the clergy on two different occasions. But he ultimately declined the offer to serve as an assistant rector at the highly respected St. Paul's Church in Baltimore. He feared that by taking such a prestigious position some might feel he had acted "under the influence of unworthy inducements, and thus the cause of religion in some measure might receive injury."

It was in the midst of War of 1812, **was well into its second year, and things did not look promising for the 16 United States of America. Despite the repeated violation of American ships that precipitated the war, it was not a popular conflict. Many Americans referred to it disdainfully as "Madison's War", Attorney Key among them.** On the night bridging September 13 and 14, 1814, Key found himself sloshing about in a boat on Chesapeake Bay on a mission of Christian Mercy. Key had volunteered to take part in a not-very optimistic prisoner exchange attempt - trading a captured British officer for the release of an aged, but highly respected American physician, Dr. William Beane. With the approval of President Madison and with all the official documentation he might need, Key began a two-week voyage down the Bay searching for the already departed British fleet.

Key's negotiating abilities were apparently quite good, for he duly returned with Dr. Beane, and "The Star Spangled Banner, " an almost completed poem he had composed during his mission of mercy. Originally intended to be sung as a hymn of thanks for the rescue of the city of Baltimore from bombardment from the British fleet, its hymn-like qualities are still quite evident. Unlike other national anthems, "The Star Spangled Banner" does not extol the glories of battle or the nobility of soldiering, instead it offers up gratitude for the event of an unexpected salvation. In the national anthem all eyes are focused on the American Flag, hoping against hope that as dawn breaks, the light will reveal that the United States' flag will still be flying there. Today as we face the dawning of a new day of challenges and opportunities, what will we be able to see in the first glimpses of that light? If we are content to focus only on the flagpole, we might not

notice some of the destruction that has occurred around it. Will we notice the pollution staining the Gulf and the waters lying under the protection of this flag? Will we notice the shocking number of Americans suffering from the violence of an unsecured border? Can we the church open our eyes and see the homeless men and women and children wandering aimlessly under the banner of freedom? Will we notice the bullet holes that drug lords have shot into this flag or the layer of cocaine powder sootily smudging its colors? Can we as followers of Christ both protect this nation from radical and jihadist's and give our life for them to meet Jesus? If the light that dawns is not strong enough or bright enough to reveal these faults, then it is up to the Church, to increase the intensity of the light and to boldly speak the word of God to the country we love.

**Application:** Christianity is love in action. God's love for humanity is singularly incarnated in the God-made-flesh Jesus. Jesus' love for his Father and for all his Father's other children was manifested in the sacrifice of his own life on the cross for our sake. But even the universal love of God and Christ were initially particularized. God chose a specific people, the Hebrews, to join the divine in a special relationship. Jesus was born a Jew, a Galilean, and a Nazarene. Jesus' nationality and heritage are an integral part of God's salvation story. Even Jesus' own mission and ministry were initially directed only at God's historic partners, the Jews. It is only after he is rejected by his own people that Jesus feels the freedom to turn his ministry toward the Gentiles. Christians cannot, then, count it as a sign of weakness or fanaticism to feel a special bond of attachment to a specific place. Persons not able to love their country are seriously handicapped, for it is this same preference for the particular that inspires the ability to love our husbands and wives, our children, our homes. Christians should not be embarrassed to love their nation or fear that their love for one place and one people will hinder their ability to love others as well. But for the Church to be the church we must love Jesus more than our Country! We must obey God rather than Man to be the church!

Let me give you some steps the early church took to start a revolution of love. . .

Reached out to the Lost

The first three steps of the 12 step program, are just a restatement of universal truths most

humans accept. Listen. . . We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.<sup>2</sup> Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (As followers of Christ we know the only power that can overturn man's insanity is Jesus our Lord and Savior)

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*. Followers of Christ, have always known the only true way to change the world is to change one heart at a time through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ residing in that heart thru the power of the Holy Spirit? So to become both a revolutionary and patriot ask yourself Are you ready to do outreach? Are you ready to spend your life reaching one more for Jesus?

Reeducated the Saved. Paul in Ephesians 4:17-19 Says ***So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*** This is where every new believer starts, that is why in Acts 2 the new society, the city on the hill, dedicated themselves to the apostles teaching, and meeting together daily-reeducate! The natural tendency of human beings is to think their way away from God—leaving them “hopelessly confused.” Intellectual pride, rationalizations, and excuses all keep people from God. Don't be surprised if people can't grasp the Good News. The Good News will seem foolish to those who forsake faith and rely on their own understanding. That's why we need to ask every attender of Elbert Christian Church Are you ready for Spiritual Growth? Do you have plan? What are doing to push yourself in growth! Because stagnation is the natural order of this world!

They revolutionary first Century church readied New Leaders? The reality is new leaders lead us into new unexplored areas. For the church to revolutionize the world and the church to strengthen we need to be about developing new leaders-because new leaders are God's answer to

the problems of today! Acts one problem was who would replace Judas-the answer Matthias-this prepared them for the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts two. The Problem of Acts two was the world thought the apostles were a little drunk at 9 in morning-solution Peter to step up and out for Christ! God's answers to problems is not so much a program-but people-specifically leaders! So ask yourself ECCAre you ready to develop New leaders?

**Conclusion:** We have a world that want's to know what is God's Answer to the Oil Spill in Gulf? And other environmental concerns. God's answer is the church-not another government agency! We have a world waiting for God to do something about the suffering around them- God's arm's , legs, feet and fist the church is too often spinning in neutral! Because, God designed the church you and I to be a revolutionary force that defeats evil and injustice!

Did you know 1 st 25 years of the church in the book of Acts-0=100,000. A revolutionary community attracts people to Christ. The Jerusalem church's zeal for worship and brotherly love was contagious. A healthy, loving church will grow in numbers.

As the pastor of Elbert Christian Church, I get way too much credit when things go right- and especially way too much blame when things go wrong! The truth is the church is the people who are a part of Elbert Christian church! The church in Elbert is only as strong as it's weakest link. So ask yourself what are you doing to make your church the kind of place that will attract others to Christ?

Are you a revolutionary? What are we going to do to reach the lost in Elbert this year? What are you going to help the People of Elbert Christian Church grow more like Jesus? What are you going to do to develop a new leader this year? Who are you going to pray for this year?

But it all starts by giving your life to Christ and finding a church family you can grow in-if either of these are your decisions come up front as we stand to sing!