

SLIDE ONE

Canada Day

This past Thursday we celebrated Canada Day and today our friends to the south are celebrating the fourth of July. Two Western Democracies that have much to be thankful for.

Many of the citizens in each country, probably the majority of citizens in each of our countries, would argue that theirs is the best country on the planet.

And there is no doubt that at least in secular terms we are in the top tier of wealthy and privileged countries. While we seniors might complain about the meagre increase to our monthly OAS check, many countries have no retirement income plan for seniors.

We might complain about our health plan, wish that certain things might be added to it, but for all its faults it serves us pretty well. Even our US friends to the south have no such plan.

SLIDE TWO

We could go on to list the natural beauty of the land, and its 3.8 million square miles of territory, an area large enough to accommodate the United Kingdom forty times.

We could talk about its vast natural resources and its food growing capabilities. We do indeed live in a blessed land.

Our official motto reads “A Mari Usque Ad Mare”. Which is taken from the Latin version of Psalm 72 which in English reads. *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,*

This motto appears on our official coat of arms and can be seen on the front cover of your Canadian Passport.

SLIDE THREE:

The preamble to the Canadian Bill of Rights reads as follows:

The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions;

Affirming also that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law;

And being desirous of enshrining these principles and the human rights and fundamental freedoms derived from them, in a Bill of Rights which shall reflect the respect of Parliament for its constitutional authority and which shall ensure the protection of these rights and freedoms in Canada:

Now while it doesn't say so specifically, the God mentioned in this historical document is the God of the bible given the sourcing of our motto from the Psalms.

But much has changed in the intervening years since these words were first written. The reference to God in our official documents has been hotly debated with many wanting it expunged from all such writings.

And of course, the make up of those who govern this country consists of those who do not acknowledge any faith and those who worship other gods.

And while we as believers might feel strongly about this aspect of our heritage, we would have to admit that there is no longer any tangible consideration given to the supremacy of God when drafting and passing new laws.

That phrase ‘the dignity and worth of the human person’ also rings hollow.

Where was the dignity and worth of the human person during the years of the residential school system?

Where is the dignity and worth of the human person when an unborn child is aborted?

When loving parents receive the gift of a premature baby no one questions the child’s personhood and worth. By contrast when the unborn are aborted they are deemed by man made laws to never have achieved personhood.

It would seem that our government has decided that the dignity and worth of the human will not be decided by the supremacy of God as the giver of life but by the decisions and definitions of men and women.

So on one hand we have sin and the work of the enemy apparently abounding all around us. But on the other hand, there is no doubt that we as Canadians have much to celebrate. We are hugely blessed when we consider that vast majority of others on the planet.

But we also should realize that promises and good intentions made on ancient paper are gradually fading away.

Decisions and policies today are far more driven by political trends and political correctness than consideration of what God might think.

Our current Prime Minister's father once famously said when changes to our constitution were being considered that he didn't think God cared about being written into our constitution.

I believe the opposite is quite true. I believe that God does care about nations, does care about how they are ruled and the values they espouse.

Those who govern for the immediate time may choose to ignore the supremacy of God, may choose to ignore his values and commands and choose to rule based on the latest trends and political correctness but there is coming a time when the righteous judge of all the earth will hold everyone accountable.

SLIDE FOUR

In Psalm 110 verses five and six we read:

The Lord is at your right hand he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

Where we are today is not entirely the fault of those in charge. They have listened to many voices.

They have listened and responded to people who are passionate about their causes.

By comparison, the voice of God's people has been relatively quiet while the deterioration progressed. Many have yet to write a single letter, make a single, phone call or send a single email.

Democracy is based on the principle of governing for the wishes of the people.

Is it any wonder then that the voices of the passionate have prevailed while those who refrain from making their concerns known who are left with only mumbling and complaining about how things used to be?

SLIDE FIVE

If you care about your Canada, if you care about our God's values make your voice heard.

Prayer for Canada

Today is not only Canada day observance it is communion observance. A day when we remember that the God our country wants to ignore cared so much about human worth and dignity that he sent his own son to deal with our sin problem that could not be resolved through our own efforts.

One of the arguments against keeping the reference to the supremacy God in our documents is that our people now come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures.

They worship gods not part of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures.

They conclude therefore, we are being judgemental and discriminatory by insisting that our God is the only true God.

Within our society there is a growing belief that there are many ways to God, or many ways to heaven or many ways to find meaningful spirituality.

So then, it really doesn't matter what you believe or who you believe in, your faith in whatever will see you through to whatever heaven or paradise lies ahead.

Once again, the inference is clear. You Christians are judgemental insisting that there is only one way. You are promoting an exclusive religion and we who are now the enlightened of our society know that exclusivity is out, the in thing now is inclusiveness.

Hopefully when faced with such charges we plead guilty. We plead guilty because we are not influenced by the latest trends but rather by the word of God.

We believe first of all in the supremacy of God as mentioned in our scriptures. We believe in the sovereignty of God.

We believe that God by definition has the right to make the rules. And we believe that he has the right and moral duty if he is a holy and just God to hold us accountable.

SLIDE SIX

From the earliest of time, he has called his people to accept him as their exclusive God.

Listen to the very first of the ten commandments given to Moses found in Exodus 20 beginning at verse two.

I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.

So here we have God declaring himself to be the exclusive God to any and all who would choose to follow him.

SLIDE SEVEN

In the New Testament Jesus reminded his followers of the exclusive nature of God and tells his listeners that there is an exclusive way to develop a relationship with him.

In John 14:6 (NLT) Jesus says: *“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”*

The disciple Peter must have been listening that day because shortly after the death of his Lord Peter in Acts 4 verse twelve says:

“There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Now in the language of the day a name also reflected a title or level of authority.

So, Peter here is saying to his listeners that the only way you can be saved, that is saved from the penalty we deserve because of our sin, is through the name, title and authority of Jesus.

So, the question that emerges is why does Jesus have this exclusive authority, what has he done in order to be able to save us?

This brings us back to another key principle of our faith, a principle that many would claim to be exclusive.

Our Christian faith believes that the only way our sins can be forgiven is through a blood sacrifice.

We now are living in a culture which is becoming increasingly sensitive to the welfare of animals. So, the very thought of an animal blood sacrifice is repulsive to many.

SLIDE EIGHT

But consistently, from the earliest days in the Garden of Eden throughout the entire Old Testament period, animals were sacrificed and the blood that was shed was received by God as a temporary covering for the sin of men and women until a permanent solution would come.

In Hebrews nine, verses nineteen to twenty-two we read:

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Note carefully that last phrase “; *and without shedding of blood is no remission.*”

Once again, we have a very exclusive position that is a key part of our faith.

There is no other way to find forgiveness, no other way to have the penalty that came as a result of our sin cancelled, no other way to be set free from the enemy reminding us that there is coming a terrible punishment for our sin.

So, when people accuse us of being rather narrow minded, or exclusive we should respectively plead guilty.

Now God does want to be inclusive, in the sense that he wants everyone to come to him.

SLIDE NINE

In II Peter 3:9 (NLT) we read:

He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

God wants everyone to be included in his Kingdom but there is only one exclusive way to get there and that is through the blood of Jesus that was shed as a sacrifice for you.

Now that word ‘remission’ is an interesting one. It is a translation of the Greek word *aphesis* used in the book of Hebrews that can also be translated ‘forgiveness’.

It has the connotation of being released from bondage or imprisonment, of being pardoned for our sins as if they had never been committed, of complete expungement of the penalty due us.

Isn't that the kind of remission you want when it comes to your sins? The kind of remission that washes everything clean, the kind of remission that fully restores as if our sin never happened.

Have you ever done something in life that you regret ever so deeply? Something that you just wish you could undo as if it had never happened?

Well in God's eyes such an expungement is both possible and promised when the right blood sacrifice is offered.

And today in our communion observance it is that ‘right blood’ that we observe and celebrate.

A long time ago the hymnwriter Robert Lowry in 1876 asked the question “What can take away my sin” to which he answered ‘nothing but the blood of Jesus’.

SLIDE TEN

Notice how exclusive his answer was? But his answer was entirely based on scripture. Listen to these words from Hebrews 9: 24-28.

For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal.

SLIDE ELEVEN

If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.*

SLIDE TWELVE

And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

Now the good news is that the need for animal sacrifice is past. As we read here Jesus was offered once for all time and for all people. The right sacrifice has been made.

The right blood shed and presented. Forgiveness that complete expungement of our sins is ours if we choose to ask forgiveness and commit ourselves to living for Jesus.

Yes, we have an exclusive faith, there is only one way to find God, and one way to find heaven. Plead guilty when charged with exclusivity, but also remind any one who will listen that God is inclusive, he does want everyone to come, wants it so desperately that he sent his son to die so that a way to come to him would be possible.

SLIDE THIRTEEN

Communion Reading

Mark 14:22

22 As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take it, for this is my body."

23 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And he said to them, "This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many."*