

GRACE CHURCH  
*Proper 9-C* (RCL, track one)

Honesdale, PA  
6-7 July 2019

2 Kings 5:1-14  
Psalm 30  
Galatians 6: (1-6)7-16  
Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

*INDEPENDENCE DAY*

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I'm going to skip over today's readings -

I hope they are familiar enough, and speak clearly enough,  
that you will take their message home with you.

But I'd like to commemorate Independence Day.

In 1786, only 10 years after the American Revolution,  
those Anglicans who changed our name to the Episcopal Church  
offered the First American Book of Common Prayer  
and proposed readings and prayers for Independence Day  
as a Holy Day in the Church.

It's intriguing that former Church of England folk  
were the first Religious body to celebrate America's Independence!

So, with that Independent Spirit, I'll skip today's readings,  
deferring to our nation,  
remembering that this week has more than picnics and fireworks.

Tchaikovsky, of course, was not an American,  
and his 1812 Overture which will be heard today and tomorrow  
in venues across the country,  
was not written for the American War of 1812,  
but for Russia's own 1812 war for independence.

A number of years ago, I bought a new CD with the 1812 Overture,  
which Philip, our son, will attest to you is VERY loud -  
especially when I play it on good speakers on top of bookshelves,  
inches from the ceiling which separated his bedroom from my study.

When the canons went off,  
there was a loud thud as Philip fell off his bed onto the floor -  
he thought the house was exploding!

In 1812, the world was ripe for liberty,  
in that 50 year span from the American Revolution,  
to Russia's, then to the French,  
with her battle cry of "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite."

(Next Sunday, by the way is Bastille Day,  
and so you should all watch or listen to *Les Miserables*.)

It is human passion to exert our independence, seeking personal freedom.

But true independence is not an external battle against oppressive regimes,  
it begins with a heart tuned in solid dependence  
on God's love, forgiveness, grace and peace.

In John's Gospel, Jesus promised his disciples true peace:

"My peace I give to you, not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor let them be afraid."

*John 14: 27-28*

Sadly, Tchaikovsky's masterpiece salutes war,

those canons remind us of the violence of human against human,

from LGBTQ massacres,

to ISIS strikes around the globe,

to those who refuse to remember and celebrate

that we are a country of "Liberty and Justice for All."

Lady Liberty's crown slides down her head and her torch flickers out.

The world's battles for peace are the most ludicrous human folly

if we take Christ's Gospel truly to heart.

Every true religion - be it Islam, Buddhism, Native American, Christian -

teaches humans to reach deep within our hearts, souls and minds

and not fight for selfish independence,

but to join hands around the world for justice, freedom and peace,

and as our Baptismal Covenant promises,

the dignity of every human being.

The Propers in the Book of Common Prayer for Independence Day

offers these words from Matthew's Gospel

as the message for us:

"Jesus says to his followers, 'You have heard how it was said, 'You will love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.'"

*Matthew 5: 43-44*

I suggest that what Jesus intends is implied in between the lines as,

"So that by loving your enemies, and praying for those who persecute you - by this and this only - you may be children of your Father in heaven."

10 years after our war of independence,

the newly named Episcopal Church

proclaimed Jesus' injunction to love our enemies

as the Gospel message.

The battle cry of the French Revolution was Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

They got it backwards.

We should begin with brother- and sister-hood.

We should begin every spiritual revolution with our unity in humanity,

acknowledging and celebrating that every human being is equal -

no matter our nationality, our religion, our gender, our sexuality.

And with that, we are truly and totally free.

Not independent, but free.

We praise God today for the Freedom, Liberty and Brotherhood  
which makes us one to another in the truest kingdom -  
where God reigns eternally.  
Our true independence is built on dependence -  
dependence on God,  
and dependence on the gifts and joys of every human being.  
May true Dependence - on Christ, on one another - be our celebration.  
And let the cannons and the fireworks blaze forth!  
AMEN.

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CHILDREN'S SERMON - *George - the Marionette*

I've brought a friend with me today.  
His name is George.  
I named him after George Washington, our first President of the US.

George has these strings that help him to move, wave, dance...

But, he feels constricted.  
Do you know what that means?  
He wants his independence, because he can't do what he wants to.  
He has to do what the Puppet Master wills him to do.  
So one day he tried to take a pair of scissors and cut his strings.  
And you know what happened?  
What do you think?

Yep! He landed in a pile on the floor and couldn't move.  
He couldn't lift his head,  
he couldn't wave,  
he couldn't dance.  
He became very sad at what he had done.

And so, he asked God to be connected again.  
And God took the strings, and tied them together with knots,  
and God took the controls  
and George was able to dance again.  
and to wave,  
and to celebrate his dependence.

Let's pray.  
God we want our independence, and yet we know that we need you,  
we need our family, we need our teachers, we need our friends.