

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, July 3, 2011 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**God Bless America - Psalm 33:12**

**Introduction:** Tomorrow our nation will pause to celebrate the 235<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nation's independence from England. If you're like most Americans, you are proud of our heritage and the freedoms our forefathers struggled to obtain and preserve. And during this Independence Day celebration weekend, you'll fly the flag proudly.

That reminds me of the time I heard about when a kindergarten teacher who was showing her class the flags of several countries she had obtained. She pointed to the American flag and asked, "What flag is this?" A little girl raised her hand and said, "That's the flag of our country." "Very good," the teacher said. "And what is the name of our country?" "Tis of thee," the girl said confidently.

Tomorrow, we celebrate our past, but it's also a time to contemplate our future. And as we think about the future of America, it makes a lot of people more than a little nervous. I don't have to tell you all the reasons because you know them all too well. But I don't want this entire message to be about what is wrong with America. All I will say up front is that I'm not here to talk about politics, and here's why... The word "politics" is a compound word – "poly," which means "many" and "tics," which of course are "blood-sucking creatures." That was bad wasn't it? Now I'm really in trouble!

This morning, I want to talk about the God who has and is blessing our nation. We sing "God Bless America," and we certainly hope He continues to do so. We have a motto in America which says "One Nation Under God." We say it every time we say our pledge to the flag, and we're reminded of it every time we reach into our pockets and pay for something with our cash. But this morning, I want to put the emphasis on the God who is over our nation. The God who blesses America.

There are several Scriptures that bear this out, but today, I want to read just one. The Bible says in **Psalm 33:12 (NIV)**, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance."

**Pastoral Prayer**

The Bible teaches that not only does God want to have a personal relationship with us through Jesus Christ, but also that He chooses to have relationships with nations; and nations are accountable before God. I believe we as Americans are blessed more than any nation on earth and the reason is we are a "... nation whose God is the Lord." I want to give you 3 reasons why I believe America has been so blessed. First, we are so blessed because:

**1. America's Foundation was Built upon God**

The first settlers in what is now called America came seeking a place to freely express their Christian faith. We can truthfully say that the reason there is an America today is because during the Protestant Reformation in Europe, as Christians were being persecuted for their faith in God, they flocked to the New World. If you look at some of the early documents of the very first Americans you'll see this foundational faith in God. The Pilgrims wrote the first official American document called "The Mayflower Compact" and this is what they wrote:

*"In the name of God, Amen, having undertaken for the glory of God and for the advancement of the Christian faith, do solemnly and mutually in the presence of God covenant and combine ourselves together."* And they go on and talk about how they are there so they can express their faith in Jesus Christ.

In 1643 as the early New England Colonies began to understand that they needed to unite together, met and created the New England Confederation Constitution. It begins: "Whereas, we all come into these parts with one and the same end and aim; namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity and peace."

How much plainer can it be? And did you know when that motion was offered, there was no opposition to it; no debate. The reason why was because there was no ACLU back then. They said, "This is why we are here... We all came here to express the kingdom of Jesus Christ" That is America's foundation – a nation built upon a faith in God for the purpose of advancing the gospel of Christ! The second reason I believe we're so blessed in America is because:

**2. America's Founders Acknowledged God's Authority.**

Now I don't want us to get the idea that every one of our founding fathers were Christians, and we certainly need to understand that the first Continental Congress was not a revival meeting. However it is undeniable that

those early American founding fathers wrote documents that acknowledged the presence and authority of God.

For example, the Treaty of Paris in 1783 which ended the Revolutionary War, grew out of an earlier Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War in 1763. The prelude to that treaty says, *“In the name of the most Holy and undivided Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so be it.”* This is how our earliest peace treaty began in America.

Then on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1776, when our founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, they acknowledged there was a God. Now they didn't use Christian terminology in this document but that was by design. In the culture of the 18th century there was such reverence and respect for the name of God and the name of Jesus, they seldom used it in public so they used other words to describe God. For instance, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and we are endowed by their Creator...”* They believed there was a God who created us and He gave us certain rights that can't be transferred to another and among them are *“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”*

They were pretty smart, weren't they? They didn't say that the Declaration of Independence gave us those rights; they didn't say the President gives us these rights; they didn't even say that the constitution gives us these rights. They said it is God the Creator who gives us these rights! They acknowledged God's authority.

One of our founding fathers who acknowledged God was America's first President, George Washington. He was a Christian - a believer in Christ. Now he was very private about his faith, but he held onto that faith. And when he was sworn in as the first President, he requested his Bible be used for him to place his hand on to take the oath of office. And when he came to the end of that oath, he said, *“So help me, God.”*

Later that day, when Washington gave his first inaugural speech to the Congress, the very first thing the first President of the United States ever said in his Inaugural Address was: *“It would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations and whose providential aid can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.”*

George Washington believed God was involved in the founding of America. He believed in a God who presides in the councils of nations. And before he ever made his first official act as the first President of the United States, George Washington prayed and thanked God and sought God's blessings. America has been blessed because from the beginning our founding fathers acknowledged the authority of God over our nation! The third reason I believe America is so blessed is this:

### **3. America's Very Fabric Honors God.**

America's history has been to honor God in our public life. From the very beginning our founding fathers invited God into the public forum and proudly displayed our faith in Him for all to see. It's everywhere. You don't have to look for it.

For example, Pierre Charles, the chief architect of Washington Monument...his original design was for the monument to be at the center of a perfect cross with the White House to the North, the Jefferson Memorial to the South, The Capitol Building to the East, and the Lincoln Memorial to the West. Also, at the very pinnacle of the Washington Monument – the tallest building in Washington D.C are written these words, *“Laus Deo”* which means *“Praise Be to God!”* America, all we have to do is look to our core and lift up our eyes and see we have always been a nation who gives praise to God.

As I mentioned earlier, America honors God on our money, *“In God We Trust.”* We honor God in our Pledge of Allegiance, *“One nation under God.”* By the way, did you know that our Pledge of Allegiance was written in 1892 by a Baptist preacher named Francis Bellamy. He first wrote it for schoolchildren to say, *“I pledge allegiance to my flag.”* And then in 1923 the United States Flag Conference changed it changed to *“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America”* because so many immigrants didn't know which flag they were supposed to be pledging allegiance to. Maybe we need to reiterate that today!

In 1942, Congress designated the Pledge of Allegiance as the official pledge, but it wasn't until 1954, that President Eisenhower said, *“We need to add ‘one nation under God.’”* The reason... because World War II was the deadliest war in the history of the world: 62 million people lost their lives; 420,000 of those were Americans. America had just come out of that. And that generation of leaders understood had it not been for the power and the grace and the help of God, they might be speaking Japanese or German. They said, *“It's proper for us to say ‘One nation under God’”* And now you know the rest of the story! America's very fabric honors God!

On April 25, 1976, the Chicago Cubs were playing the Los Angeles Dodgers at Dodger Stadium. Rick

Monday was playing center field for the Dodgers. Rick Monday played ball for 19 years, and had a lifetime batting average of .264. He'll never make it to the Hall of Fame, but he did something on that night that honored God and his country. In between innings, two guys leapt out of the stands and began to try to set an American flag on fire. Rick Monday ran over and grabbed that flag and ran with it to the dugout. And when he did that, the crowd stood to their feet and began singing "*God Bless America.*" Thirty years later Rick Monday commented on what happened that night. "*I don't remember if we won or lost the game but I'll never forget the crowd singing! That little piece of cloth represents a lot of rights and freedoms that people have given up their lives to protect.*" Americans ought to take that kind of stand when it comes to not forgetting who gives us our freedom. God blesses America, but how long will that continue?

You see, there's a word of warning given to every nation in Psalm 9:17 (NIV: "*The wicked return to the grave; all the nations that forget God.*") The biggest danger we face as Americans is allowing the voices that want to remove God from our public forum to take over. We must stand up for what's right! We must humble ourselves before God and continue to seek His face.

As bad as it was in World War II and as bad as we think we may have it right now with the war against terrorism, it's nothing like it must have been during the Civil War when brothers were killing brothers and our nation was being ripped apart. That's why Abraham Lincoln, called for "*A National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer.*" And in his speech to the nation then, he said these words then to try to bring America back together. We need to pay attention to these words today.

*"Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."... "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!"... "All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace."*

Abraham Lincoln said that what was wrong with America then is what is wrong with America today - We've forgotten God and that's why we're so divided. We're divided politically, morally, and spiritually. We need to do the same thing Abraham Lincoln said to do in 1863 .We need to seek the face of God and confess our national sins and when we do that, God will restore our nation.

What can you do? We must pray for those in authority as the Bible says. We must vote and get involved in the political process and let the voice for morality and the voice for the Word of God be heard! You can bet that those who have agendas other than a biblical agenda are mobilized and they are loud and they are active and we don't need to be a part of the silent majority.

**Conclusion:** I close by reminding us of the last line of our National Anthem. It ends with a question. "*Oh, say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*" The answer is...It does! That banner still waves o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave because America's foundation was built upon God, our founding fathers acknowledged God's authority early on, and because we've honored and recognized God in our very fabric.

But today, the only hope for America is for us to continue to honor and acknowledge the one true God as the God over our nation! Will you be part of that wave? May God continue to bless America!