



JUNETEENTH: A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

By Rev. Michael J. Burns

Juneteenth, also known as ***Freedom Day, Jubilee Day and Cel-Liberation Day***, is an American holiday celebrated on June 19th. On June 19, 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation— which had been issued on January 1, 1863, though it took two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was first issued and two months after the end of the Civil War—when hundreds of thousands of enslaved men and women in Texas finally learned they had been freed.

Juneteenth is an **important** milestone in American culture. It represents resistance, resilience, and Black Joy as Republican **President, Abraham Lincoln** issued an executive order that later became known as the 14th Amendment. General order #3 was read to enslaved African Americans in Texas by General Gordon Granger on June 19th 1865 in Galveston, Texas. Although this event took place in the Great State of Texas, it is considered to be a day that should be remembered and celebrated throughout our country both then and now.

It was philosopher, novelist, essayist and poet, *George Santayana*, who is quoted as saying, ***Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*** The bible is correct about the need to forget certain things such as our *sins that God has forgiven, the wrongs that others have done to us, and things of the past that are unimportant and cannot affect our lives today.*

We must not try to live on yesterdays manna as it breeds worms and stinks. A hard lesson the *Children of Israel* learned. Yet yesterday's dung can become the fertilizer for future sustenance. ***There is a fine line between remembering and forgetting along with the discernment needed to know where our focus should be placed.***

We commemorate such tragic days as the JFK, Martin Luther King, Jr. and RFK assassinations. We can never forget the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, or the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and those who have laid their lives down in wars gone by.

The United States of America is one of the youngest nations that was born some 245 years ago. Personally, I like to focus my attention on all the good that America has done and the contributions that have been made to the world. Still our nation has had some terrible historical events that some may argue as to whether they were, in fact, terrible. ***Slavery of the negroes from Africa and other countries where people of color lived is certainly at the top of the list in my opinion.***

Men like **President Abraham Lincoln** and *Frederick Douglas* were both pioneers that helped our nation recognize the injustice that had been being done to those imprisoned in slavery. Now it would be unfair of me to not say that there were some negro slaves that were well treated and did not consider themselves to be victims. It is apparent that many did consider themselves as brutal recipients of slavery's blight and it sent forth a ***Spirit*** in our nation of racial prejudice that has existed in our country for generations.

Many ancestor's today of those black slaves have felt the need to keep the memories alive of that part of our US history. Personally my wife, son and myself have been honored to visit the **Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee**. It is housed, in part, at the infamous Lorraine Motel where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was gunned down. It was a life changing experience to see the struggle that our

fellow citizens have had to endure especially after our government officially ended slavery in 1863.

The freedom that was established in our government and nation has taken more time for the reality of '*all men are created equally*' to settle in the hearts and minds of our citizenry. I grew up in a home with a father that was an alcoholic. He was an abusive individual to my mother and my siblings and me. Sadly, he was a racially prejudice person who used the '**N**' word without hesitation or consideration of its impact on dark skinned human beings.

I could have grown up to be a *racist* like him but thankfully I did not! I have had negative experiences with people of all races but even then, I never thought of it as an issue of that person's race. I realized that everyone has a past and unfortunately that past has impacted their present day views, attitudes and actions.

If we would be honest with ourselves, we would admit that when we are seriously wronged by someone, no matter what their racial culture might be, we want to *get even* OR *take revenge on them, their culture or possibly even their family*. Several years ago my younger sister went to a *Children's Worker Conference* in Detroit, Michigan. While there, she became acquainted with a young man with whom she went out to dinner.

They noticed an October Festival going on and decided to stop to add to the enjoyment of their evening. Unfortunately they had to park several blocks away. They discovered that the festival was closing down for the evening and they headed back to their car. On their way back to their vehicle, a black man jumped out of an alley with a gun pointed in their faces and led them down the dark alley. There he barraged them with curse words, pistol whipped them and then robbed them.

He took from my sister a beautiful diamond necklace she had won that was worth quite a bit of money. This whole time my sister and this gentleman were calling on the name of Jesus and praying in tongues. When the incident was over the police came and the

detective in charge told them that there had been a string of robberies that had ended in murder and believed that they were victims of this same individual! ***He told them that he did not understand why he had let them live, but that there must be someone above, in heaven, that must have liked them!***

How would you have felt toward a young black man who had done this to your sister or family member? We have all had injustices done to us. Sadly, we have allowed these negative experiences to shape our opinions of the people who have perpetrated these things on us, our loved ones or even our friends.

When my family went through the Civil Rights Museum, which could have taken several days to properly visit, we saw and read the many stories of injustices that have happened to these dear precious people. Horrific things that could have caused a cynicism to be cemented in their hearts and minds to those who have done these things. **All of us are subject to these kind of reactions and on going formed opinions for the rest of our lives.**

Unless of course, we have come to a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you think of any individual in history who suffered such injustice as *He*? I am certainly not saying that others have not suffered in life, but the Lord Jesus Christ, in his earthly life and ministry, suffered in *His spirit, His Mind, Will and Emotions, as well as in his body*. He did not do it for any crimes that *He* had committed, but *He* did it for you and me!

There have been many falsely imprisoned individuals that were convicted and sentenced to prison who have been exonerated later on by DNA evidence that proved they did not commit the crimes they were accused of doing. Yet none of these people who have lost so much suffered for anyone but themselves, their loved ones and friends. The Lord Jesus Christ suffered not for *Himself* but for all of humanity, *past, present and future!*

Ever since Adam & Eve sinned in the garden of eden, they set in motion a force called ***spiritual death*** that has progressively impacted every generation since their fall from God's presence, love and grace. The world has not understood the significance of this act of disobedience that has caused the negative repercussions that have taken place for many millennia.

Wars, diseases, crimes against humanity, the holocaust, terrorism, poverty, racism amongst various races, slavery, hatred, murder, starvation, famine, drought, natural disasters, and false religions. The list goes on and on! This was not God's original intention but *He* chose to take a risk by giving the original man the power of choice. When you take an honest view of the choice they made you can understand, perhaps a bit, the incredible outcome that this force of ***spiritual death*** has had and its impact on our world.

The reason God established the church was because it was *His* divine plan to rebut the plan of Satan who came to *steal, kill and destroy*. The devil has been having a measure of success in all three of these areas for thousands of years. When God gave the authority to man to ***tend and keep*** the garden *He* put zero restrictions on that authority except to not eat the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

If Adam had simply resisted the devil and his lies, that were disguised as truth, the world would be living a much different experience than we have been living. Adam was a ***sell out*** because he knew better than to abuse the trust God had given to him. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ***2nd Adam*** and has given back to mankind the right to rule our lives under *God's Authority!*

Mankind has allowed the issues mentioned above to dominate their thoughts, lives and actions in such a way that this world continues to spiral downward. The church should continue to pray for people's eyes to be opened. We **MUST** continue to preach and teach the message of God's unwavering love for man with supernatural signs, wonders and miracles that confirm the word.

When it comes to remembering days like **Juneteenth**, it is incumbent upon us to recognize that issues like *prejudice and racism* are rooted in man's heart and mind. I am not speaking about a one direction *prejudice and racism* but one that goes from all races of people. While I understand people's reasoning to protest and hold rallies against racial injustice, the answer in my opinion is found in the changing of people's hearts and in the renewing of their minds to the Word of God!

Violent protests are NOT the answer. Neither is the burning down of store buildings and cities. Stealing and the beating up of people that are mischaracterized as culprits, or even the defunding of our police would not represent what men like President Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, stood, worked and sacrificed their lives to bring about.

There is no **one single article** that could properly address this subject on what days like **Juneteenth** represent. I have shared my thoughts that have come from interacting with people from all types of backgrounds, ethnic cultures and persuasions over the course of my 60 years. My objective was not to offend but to bring a clearer perspective to what **Juneteenth** means to the world.

It is my sincere prayer that the spirit, in which I have shared my thoughts, would have a positive impact on each individual who takes the time to read this in it entirety.

- Rev. Michael J. Burns

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