

Robert's Reflections

Friday was the celebration of the independence of the United States of America from Great Britain. We often simply call it "The 4th of July". This holiday serves as a reminder of the price of freedom, and is a time to remember those who gave everything so we could enjoy the benefits of liberty. This celebration helps us remember, so we will be less likely to take it all for granted. Fireworks, hotdogs and parades are great fun, but there is more to it than that. Freedom isn't free.

Suppose a group of people decided to celebrate the contributions of Abraham Lincoln. They would remember his wit, wisdom and his work. The Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address would stand out as some of his finest contributions to our great country. And of course it would be sadly remembered that he died by an assassin's bullet, but that would certainly be seen as a tragedy, and not any part of a celebration.

Likewise, if admirers of John F. Kennedy thought to do the same in his memory, what would they celebrate? They would fondly remember his charisma, his work with civil rights and especially the Cuban Missile crisis, where he stood up to the USSR. But again, his death would be seen as a terrible loss to our country, and they might wonder what more he might have accomplished had he lived.

BUT...Christians celebrate the death of Jesus Christ, as His ultimate accomplishment. We do not think about what more Jesus could have accomplished had He not been crucified. We do not see His as a life wasted. In fact we do not see any waste at all regarding the death of the Son of God. Our Lord's death on the cross made it possible for us, and for all men, to be made free from certain destruction. His death provided the only escape from the curse of sin, and brought about the opportunity for any man to be free from eternal death.

We do not celebrate the death of Christ as some morbid ritual. Nor do we rejoice that He had to die. Rather we celebrate that Jesus was willing to die to set us free. And we celebrate the wonderful effect that horrible death had on lost man's relationship with our heavenly Father.

Every Sunday we CELEBRATE the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as we gather around the Lord's Table and partake of the communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Unlike the deaths of great men and women throughout history, Christ's death was not the end of hope, but the way by which we could have real lasting hope. And unlike the condition of all the great people of this world whose bodies lie waiting in their graves, Jesus lives again. Now that is something to celebrate!

Robert