

"DECLARING YOUR INTERDEPENDENCE"

A Sermon By

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COOPERATION IS CALLED FOR

Cooperation is called for all around us.... cooperation rather than confrontation speeds up the prospect and the entire process of progress for us all. Therefore, for a few moments here this morning on this special weekend, do give thought please... not so much to INDEPENDENCE, but rather to "INTER-DEPENDENCE".

We come into this world as helpless creatures...in need of nurture and protection. As we grow and mature, we aspire to be independent, but taken to an extreme, there's something sad about the person who refuses the guidance or the love of those who offer a bit of help along the way. "I want to do it myself" says the growing child, but that same spirit can sometimes lead one off into the "far country" as it were....as it did with the Prodigal Son that Jesus spoke of... with thoughts of standing, walking and working - ALONE....completely alone, until he separates himself geographically and emotionally and spiritually from others.

Whereas in actuality, no one has ever succeeded in any endeavor who has not been in some way dependent both upon the power of God "within" and upon the hands and hearts of others "without"....contributing in both ways direct and indirect. Was not Jesus dealing with both terms - independence and inter-dependence - when He encouraged His followers to,

"Love God....with all your heart, soul, mind and strength....and to love your neighbor as yourself?"

I believe He was. I believe that a person grows and matures spiritually as he or she grows into the realization that we must "feed" each other in life. Jesus once said that "If I be lifted up...will draw all men unto Myself".

Think for a moment of all those individuals who help to get us through a day with their labors: beginning with the South American coffee grower and the dairy farmer who provides us with milk for our coffee and cereal; then the paper boy who drops off the paper at our door; the bus driver or the subway motor man, or perhaps the taxi-cab driver.....and all those we see and touch along the way - the policeman, the sanitation worker, the mail-man, the barber, the beautician, the banker, the doctor, the dress-maker....and so it goes...all day long. And were it not for those good and faithful people upon whom you and I are dependent....WHY... we would be as helpless as Robinson Crusoe was when he first reached his little island....outcasts in a wilderness of confusion...BECAUSE no person is really independent.

You cannot have prosperity unless you help others to prosper. You cannot have harmony unless you are willing to promote the harmony of all. There were some very moving and touching words spoken last Sunday afternoon in the Memorial Service at Riverside Church for Betty Shabazz and I was touched by something her oldest daughter, Attallah, said in the closing moments:

"I'd like to ask you to look to the person to the left and to the right of you and genuinely say, 'I wish you the best'....and by the power invested in us all, consider us brothers and sisters..."

Turn on the switch of love and genuine concern for others. Try to avoid from here on the mistake of simply tolerating people and putting up with them. Learn to appreciate people for what they are and for what they do and not for what we

can get out of them. We grow in our ability to love when we understand just how much we really do need others....and how much we are "INTER-DEPENDENT". Think of it this way. First, we are to LOVE GOD in order to establish a core and a consciousness of being..."WITHIN", dependent, if you will, on God, And then move out to love our neighbor in order to be "INTER-DEPENDENT". I think it was Carl Jung who once said,

"Where there is love...there is no will to power".

When we get committed to an attitude of interdependence, we no longer let ourselves get out of tune with God...letting selfish pride and willfulness and egotism take over. We catch a glimpse of that attitude of harmful and limiting independence in the story of the Prodigal Son....we see it running amuck....one of the first of the "ME-FIRST GENERATION". How grateful we are to find that there are friends and family members who serve as channels in bringing us back....through whom so much good comes. As we mature and grow up, we are less concerned as to who goes first and to whom goes the credit.

It brings to mind the story of the young army recruit from Kentucky whose parents came to visit him at boot camp and returned home several days later, bragging to all about their son, Johnny.....

"And you should have seen our Johnny....all dressed up in uniform. They even had a parade while we were there...and everyone in that parade was out of step except our boy, Johnny".

CLOSING LINES

We've all known people like that....and admittedly they are a bit hard to love, but let us stay with those lifting words of St. Paul who challenged us...

"To pursue those things which make for peace and the building up of one another...."

Public and private "declarations of independence" someone has pointed out are "a dime a dozen now-a-days". Both individuals and nations proclaim that, at long last, they are on their own and sometimes angry words get spoken and fists get shaken at adversaries. We need to remember that "liberty is the luxury of self-discipline"...that's a favorite of mine. Cooperation speeds up the process and the prospect for progress in human relations.

And maybe what's needed all around the world...here at home as well as abroad....is a fresh DECLARATION OF INTER-DEPENDENCE, somewhere in between our 4th of July celebration and Bastille Day of July 14th in France....a day that will remind us that "alone" and "separate" in confrontation we can probably do very little, but with cooperation and goodwill and mutual understanding... and a listening ear....it may yet even be possible to create a safer and a more decent nation and world for all of God's many and wonderful children. Anyway, we can dream of such things and work hard to make those dreams come true.

Belatedly, a happy 4th of July to all of you!

PRAYER God of our Fathers, whose Almighty hand has made and preserved our nation, grant that our many people may understand what it is they have celebrated in recent hours.

Help us always to remember how bitterly our freedom was won...the down payment that was made for it....the many installments that have been made since this Republic was born and the price that must yet be paid for our continuing liberty.

May freedom be seen, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to please to do what is right.

And may it ever be understood that our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else.

May our faith be something that is not merely stamped on our coins, but expressed in our hearts.

Visit our sick and those whom we mention now in our prayers before you:

Richie Gribben. Richard Laube. Sally Gill.  
Ruth Frame. Eric deFreitas. Monte Kovacs.  
Wendy Bowen. Carl Staaterman.

Encircle the bereaved with your warming, healing presence. Make us sensitive to Your nearness and to your presence, your peace and power in these moments this hour. For the race is so short and we would try always to run it well....always to Your glory. In the spirit of Jesus, we pray. Amen.