

Life Under the Flag **AND** the Cross

These words we all know: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” are not merely patriotic ideals. They are an invitation to think deeply about what it means to live faithfully as citizens of this country and, even more importantly, as followers of Christ.

Pursuing Happiness

When the Founding Fathers wrote about the pursuit of happiness, they were not simply talking about chasing comfort, entertainment, or personal success. Happiness, as they understood it, involved the freedom to grow in character, live virtuously, practice self-control, and work for the common good. That understanding challenges us to ask: Who does our pursuit of happiness serve? Is it only ourselves, or are we serving the world as Christ commands us to do?

Christian Freedom Is a Gift of Grace

Martin Luther described a powerful paradox: the Christian is perfectly free, subject to none, and at the same time a servant of all. That means our Christian freedom is not a freedom FROM, but a freedom TO. We are not merely free from worldly limits or rules. This freedom given by God through Christ is freedom to abandon fear, freedom to accept salvation as a free gift from God, and embracing those understandings, freedom to love and serve others willingly.

The Depth of Christian Life, Liberty, and Happiness

As Christians, we understand life as more than physical existence. We are called to protect and preserve human life, but we are also entrusted with the good news of eternal life in Christ. Liberty, too, is more than political freedom. In Christ, we are free from separation from God and free to serve others out of love. And happiness is not something we can achieve by our own effort; it is rooted in the grace and identity God gives us.

Justice Must Be Held Together with Mercy

Our American Pledge of Allegiance speaks of liberty and justice for all. As followers of Christ, we are called to seek justice that is fair and impartial. We are also called to remember mercy. God has shown us mercy we did not earn, and that mercy shapes how we see others—even when consequences are necessary. Christian justice must never be separated from love, repentance, and the hope of restoration.

Our Hope and Prayer

We are grateful to live in a country where we are free to follow Christ. It is good to give thanks for national ideals that point us toward life, liberty, justice, and the common good. But we must also remember that our deepest identity is not found under our flag alone. Let us give thanks to God that we live under the cross of Christ, where our true freedom from the power of sin and death, the promise of lasting life, and the assurance of God's endless mercy are found. My prayer for us all is that God will guide us to serve the people of not only our nation, but all of God's creation in the light of that heavenly love.