

Sermon Notes

Life Notes

Upcoming Week

**"Being a Christian in America"**  
John 18:33-37

**Opener:**

What is one freedom you are especially grateful to enjoy as an American?

**Go Deeper:** *(Exploring the Bible)*

1. Read John 18:33-37. What does Jesus mean when He says, "My kingdom is not of this world"? What does this teach us about the difference between Christ's kingdom and earthly governments?
2. Read Jeremiah 29:4-7. Why did God tell His people to seek the welfare of Babylon, even though it was not their true home? What does this teach Christians about serving the communities and nation where God has placed us?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17. What is the significance of Peter's instruction to "fear God" but only "honor the emperor"? How does this help Christians keep earthly authority in its proper place?
4. Read Galatians 5:13-14. According to Paul, what is Christian freedom for? How is biblical freedom different from simply doing whatever we want?

**Live It:** *(Applying to Our Lives)*

1. The sermon says, "Freedom is easy to enjoy and easy to forget." What freedoms have become so familiar that you may sometimes take them for granted?
2. How can you help your children, grandchildren, or someone from a younger generation understand the value and responsibility of religious freedom?
3. Where are you most tempted in public life—to withdraw, become combative, place too much hope in politics, or remain silent when love requires you to speak?
4. What is one practical way you can use your freedom this week to serve another person, share the hope of Christ, or seek the good of your community?

**Daily Bible Readings (July 5-11)**

Sun: John 18:33-37	Christ Our King
Mon: Jeremiah 29:4-7	Seek the Good
Tues: Psalm 77:11-15	Remember God's Works
Wed: Romans 13:1-7	God and Government
Thurs: 1 Timothy 2:1-6	Pray for Leaders
Fri: Galatians 5:13-15	Freedom to Serve
Sat: Hebrews 11:13-16	A Better Country

**Sunday, July 5**  
**COMMUNION WEEKEND**

8:30-11am Morning Fellowship, FH  
8am Worship & Communion, WC  
9:30am Worship, WC

**11am Patriotic Potluck, FH**



**Monday, July 6**

9-11:30am Food Pantry  
12:30pm GriefShare, C4

**Tuesday, July 7**

7pm AA Men's Meeting, C5

**Wednesday, July 8**

9-11:30am Food Pantry  
10am Men's Bible Study, LR  
12:30pm Al-Anon, C4

**2pm Bill Harrison AZ Road Scholar Presentation on Turquoise, CH**  
**Cost \$5. Sign up by July 5th.**



**Thursday, July 9**

10am Prayer Group, B7  
11am Al-Anon Meeting, C5

**Friday, July 10**

OFFICE CLOSED

**Saturday, July 11**

8am Men's Bible Study, FS  
4pm Worship, WC

CH = Chapel  
FH = Fellowship Hall  
C5 = Fireside Room  
NR = Nursery  
WC = Worship Center  
C4 = Community Room

**Victory Lutheran Church**

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July 4 & 5, 2026

*Being Christian in America*

John 18:33-37



Todd Mathison, Lead Pastor  
Denton Bennet, Associate Pastor  
Dirk Duhlstine, Chaplain  
Kristin Holton Prouty, Director of Worship & Music



Connect with us!



**GOD TIME: Love Your Country—But Trust Your Savior**  
**Todd Mathison, Lead Pastor**

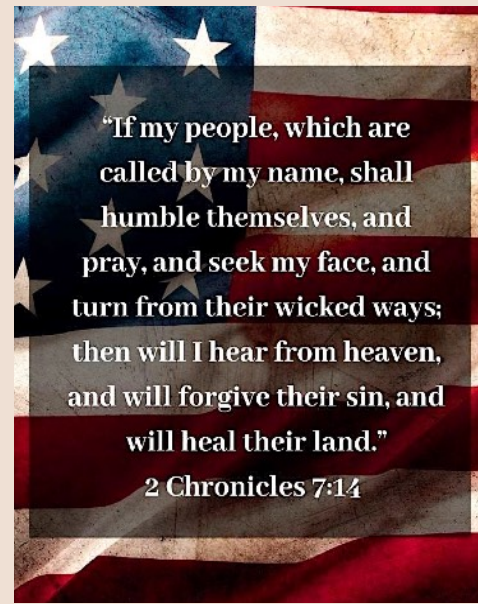
As America marks its 250th anniversary, Christians have much for which to give thanks. We live in a nation where we can gather openly for worship, read the Bible, proclaim the Gospel, teach the faith, receive the Sacraments, and speak the name of Jesus publicly. These are precious freedoms, and we should never take them for granted.

At the same time, our gratitude should be clear-eyed. America's story includes courage, sacrifice, and remarkable blessings, but also sin, injustice, and failure. We can cherish what is good without pretending everything has always been good.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). His kingdom does not rest on political power, military strength, elections, or public approval. It comes through His cross and resurrection, through the Gospel, and through the work of the Holy Spirit.

That means we can love our country without asking it to save us. We are called to pray for our leaders, speak the truth, participate faithfully as citizens, seek the good of our communities, and care for our neighbors. We are called to serve the widow, welcome those displaced, stand with those on the margins, and care tenderly for those beaten down by life. But government cannot forgive sin. A nation cannot create faith. Political leaders cannot raise the dead. Only Jesus can do that.

So celebrate this anniversary with gratitude. Honor those who served and sacrificed. Cherish the freedoms God has given us. But remember: our hope does not rise and fall with the headlines. America is our earthly home. God's kingdom is our eternal home. And our deepest freedom is found in Christ alone.

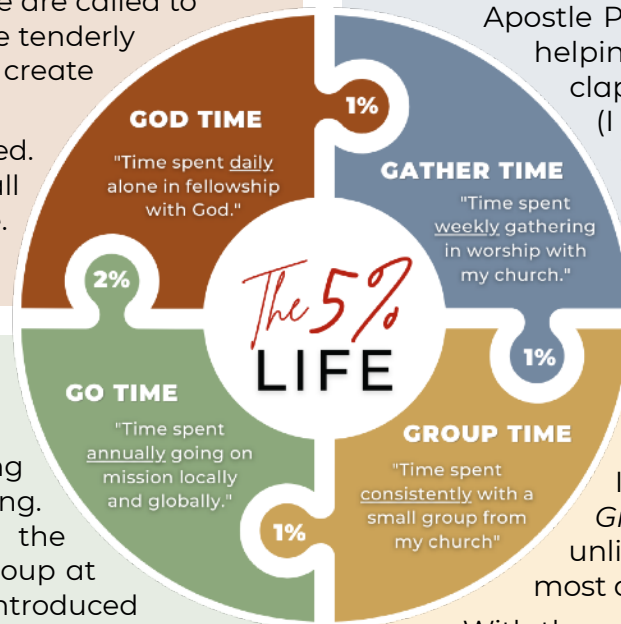


**GATHER TIME: Hands and Hearts in Worship**

Martin Luther wrote, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through Music." At Victory, we hold that conviction close. Music is one of the primary ways this congregation worships, and in our recent church survey, it was mentioned nearly as often as preaching. That is both humbling and inspiring, and it strengthens our commitment to offering excellent musical gifts to God each week.

The question has been asked, "why is there clapping in church?" While the whole congregation participates in hymns, songs, and liturgical responses, there are also moments when music is offered by an individual or ensemble—not as performance, but as another way to pray, meditate, and praise. During those moments, the worshiping body is invited to lift their hearts along with the music being shared. Sometimes that shared participation expresses itself in spontaneous applause. The Psalmist encourages, "Clap your hands, all you peoples!" reminding us that joyful praise is deeply biblical. At the same time, the Apostle Paul calls us to offer worship "with reverence and awe," helping us discern when to be still and when to respond. So clapping, when used appropriately, similar to saying Amen (I agree), can be another form of worship.

There are times to listen quietly, times to bow in reflection, and times to clap in celebration. But in all things, our calling remains the same: praise the Lord.



**GO TIME: Finding Purpose After Loss**  
**Suellen Palya, GriefShare Leader**

Last month, Suellen Palya donated Altar Flowers in loving memory of her son, Kris, on the ninth anniversary of his passing. Three years went by without support of others surviving the ripple effects of homicide. Suellen facilitates a GriefShare group at Victory Lutheran and a survivor of her own son's homicide introduced herself to the group. This survivor brought Suellen to her first National Parents Of Murdered Children conference in Scottsdale, Arizona. Suellen met members of her new extended family and joined Valley of the Sun as her in-person support group. The following five years have found Suellen serving on the local Board as a Virtual Zoom support group facilitator, a court support member, a National Conference workshop leader, a speaker at Mesa

Community College on Victim's Rights, and a speaker at a local prison facility about the ripple effects of homicide. She has authored a book called "Conversations With Kris." It contains letters between a Mom and her murdered son as it covers their life journey together. It is available on Amazon. Speaking and writing about her son Kris keeps his memory alive and allows Suellen to be his voice for justice. For more information visit [www.pomc.org](http://www.pomc.org).

**GriefShare - Mondays, 12:30-2:30pm**

GriefShare is a program for help in your journey through grief after the death of a spouse, child, family member or friend. Our group is led by caring people who have experienced grief and desire to help you through the difficult days ahead. Video presentation and discussion. Each weekly session is designed to be "open," meaning a person can begin attending at any time.

**Note:** The current session will end July 20th and we will resume a new 13-week session beginning September 14-December 7, 2026.



**GROUP TIME: Summer Movie Matinee — "A Great Awakening"**  
**Monday, July 13 @ 9:30am**

In honor of America's 250th anniversary, *A Great Awakening* tells the true story of an unlikely friendship that resulted in one of the most defining moments in American history.

With the colonies on the brink of collapse, the Reverend George Whitefield sparks the first Great Awakening, uniting an entire generation with his thundering proclamation of liberty in Christ. In a miraculous turn of events, one of Whitefield's closest friends and greatest promoters becomes none other than Benjamin Franklin. With the nation's freedom hanging in the balance, Franklin discovers true liberty cannot only be written into law — it must be awakened in the hearts of the people.

Everyone is welcome to attend, whether you are already part of our church family or joining us for the first time.

Bring a friend, come as you are, and enjoy a morning of fellowship and inspiration.

This event is **FREE** and open to everyone. We hope to see you there!

