*“You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.”*

(John 13:13 NIV)

 We take great pride in our freedom as Americans. July 4th marks the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and each year we celebrate our nation and its values. One of the most important parts of the Declaration of Independence reads:

***We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,***

***that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,***

***that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.***

 We should all pause to reflect upon the meaning of that sentence penned by the founders of our country so long ago. The values of our country expressed as “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” emanate from God. The founders said we are endowed with these rights.

 This makes the Apostle Paul’s explanation of freedom in the Bible even more astounding. Paul says in Galatians 5:

***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.***

***Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

The values upon which our nation were founded are the values of our faith, emanating from God. Significantly these values call us all to a future determined by our walk with God. We seem to have forgotten that over the years. While we cherish freedom, I question how free we really are. We seem to have ignored the words of Paul and made ourselves slaves again.

While we may not be subjects of Britain any longer and we may no longer allow the ownership of human beings by other human beings we still allow and even endorse slavery in our country. Many American are slaves to drugs. Others are slaves to power or money. Many of us, even people of faith, are slaves of hatred and discord.

Paul and the founders of our country recognized that we were meant to be free. Let us then redouble our efforts to spread freedom far and wide. Perhaps the British aren’t coming but we are under attack and we should sound the alarm just as Paul Revere did hundreds of years ago. Let us all stand up and proclaim that freedom means the absence of slavery to everything and everyone but Christ. Perhaps we should see ourselves as a Paul Revere in today’s world.

Paul Revere’s Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

***So through the night rode Paul Revere;***

***And so through the night went his cry of alarm***

***To every Middlesex village and farm, —***

***A cry of defiance and not of fear,***

***A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,***

***And a word that shall echo forevermore!***

***For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,***

***Through all our history, to the last,***

***In the hour of darkness and peril and need,***

***The people will waken and listen to hear***

***The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,***

***And the midnight message of Paul Revere.***

Let Freedom Ring!

Pastor Tim