

GOD SMILES ON AMERICA
4th of July Sunday –July 3, 2011 – Psalm 33:12
The Church of the Covenant

Did you know there is a sermon on the dollar bill? If we were to take out a dollar bill and look at what is written on it, we would see the familiar *"In God We Trust"* engraved as it is above the "One" on the backside of a one dollar bill. But also we would see some phrases in Latin. For example, at the top of the Great Seal of the United States there is the phrase *"Annuit Coeptis"*, meaning *"He has smiled at our undertakings"*. God has granted favor to the United States. **God Smiles on America**. The mini sermon is this –We are one nation only when we are *"one nation under God"*, as the Pledge of Allegiance declares. But we are one nation under God when *"In God We Trust"*. We do not trust in the almighty dollar; we trust in the Lord God Almighty. But we are not *"one nation under God"* nor can we trust in the Almighty unless God smiles upon us; unless God first grants us favor and blessing; unless the hand of providence from the Lord sustains us.

It is clear that the Lord God has smiled on America in its past. I love the author, David McCullough, who has given us some of the best books on the time of the birth of America ever written. I love his *"Adams"* on the life of John Adams and really also his wife, the equally amazing Abigail; where it is clear that these are people of faith and it is clear it is this faith which underpinned their part in the birth of a nation. Why was someone as gifted as Adams present at the birth of the nation. Mere circumstance? Mere coincidence? Or was it the purposeful *"hand of providence"*; the work of the Lord God Almighty? I love McCullough's book *"1776"*, which traces the fateful and decisive year 1776 and how at every turn the fate of the new nation is but a hairbreadths away from extinction. How time after time the tiniest of change could have erased freedom from America at its beginning. Why was it at the battle of Long Island in New York, where the Continental Army is stuck on the island of Long Island, about to be blockaded by the British fleet, that just the right number of boats is assembled, to ferry the army across to safety? How is it that there is a dense fog that descends over Long Island Sound at just the right moment to cover the escape? A fog described as so thick *"one could scarcely discern a man at six yards distance."* (1776, McCullough, p. 191) How is it that the fog remained in place just exactly long enough for the entire army to escape and quite literally as the last boat has landed on the safe shore that the fog dissipates and just in time for the British to see the last of the Continentals escape to fight on another day? As McCullough wrote, *"In a single night, 9,000 troops had escaped across the river. Not a life was lost..."* (ibid.) In August, within two months of the signing of the Declaration of Independence disaster had been averted. Coincidence? Or the hand of Providence? There at the beginning *"God has smiled at our undertakings."* God's plan is to unfurl freedom through the United States, to give it as gift to the nations. Not even the might of the British Empire can stop the Sovereign plan of a Sovereign God.

I could go on and on. On almost every page McCullough recounts how by the thinnest of margins, time after time, George Washington and the Continental Army are saved. Basically, Washington lost almost every battle he had with the British, perhaps with the exception of Trenton where he crossed the Delaware River under the cloak of night. But he won the last battle at Yorktown; when the French at the very last moment decided to intervene and send its fleet to blockade the British from the sea. Coincidence? Or the Hand of Providence? How many times did the Lord God need to demonstrate His favor to America? How many times did God need to show us beyond a shadow of a doubt that *"He has smiled at our undertakings."*? It is good to remember on the 4th of July how it was the hand of providence at the very beginning that saved us as a nation; it is good to remember that it is the hand of providence that can sustain us today as a nation...Without God's favor and blessing as a nation we are in

deep trouble. Nothing will go right if the Lord God fails to smile upon us. May He smile and not frown today...

Our scripture for this 4th of July weekend comes from the Book of the Psalms, Psalm 33 verse 12, where the Psalmist writes –*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...” (Psalm 33: 12)* Psalm 33 verse 10 notes –*“The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought; he frustrates the plans of the people.”* The plans and counsel of the nation apart from God will come to nothing. A plan that is not the Sovereign plan of the Sovereign God will not happen. We may work hard, we may plan even harder, but if God does not ordain it, if it is not part and parcel of a plan from the Almighty, it will not happen and it will not prevail. The Psalmist goes on to declare –*“A king is not saved by his great army...” (Psalm 33: 16)* It is not worldly might that makes right. It is not bare worldly power that prevails. No, *“It is not by might and not by power but by my holy Spirit”*, sayeth the Lord. It is God’s working in the world that brings the mighty to nothing but brings the humble to victory. The Psalmist goes on to declare –*“Behold the eye of the Lord is on those who fear HIM, on those who hope in HIS steadfast love.” (Psalm 33: 18)* When we reverence and love and worship and hope in HIM it is then His eye beholds us. Take out the dollar bill again and there it is. *Annuit Coeptis*, “He smiles at our undertakings”, etched immediately above the all-seeing eye of God. O that His eye might be upon us! O that He might smile upon us! O that His mercy and His providence might continue to intervene on our behalf! And then there is our scripture for today. The Psalmist notes the truest truth ere noted –*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom HE has chosen...” (Psalm 33: 12)* When the hand of providence intercedes for us on our behalf; when things look dark and bleak and hopeless but God’s smile brings the light of a new dawn fraught with possibility and hope; when our own plans have all come to nought; when our own strength has not by itself prevailed; when our plans are not the plans of God and we are out of synch with the will of the Almighty, it is then we MUST return to Him. It is then we profess our abject poverty, our utter neediness, and HIS absolute provision. It is then we re-remember that indeed it is from the hand of God that ALL BLESSINGS FLOW. We sing it every Sunday “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” but do we believe it? It is then we re-remember that as a nation we would not even be here, we would have been snuffed out in 2 months of our birth as a nation, but for the hand of providence and the smiling radiance of the glory of God.

But I must also tell you --There is a dark side to providence. The light and the smile giveth and that is good. But the dark side is that that which the Lord provideth He can also take away. *“The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh –blessed be the name of the Lord.”* The Lord declares: *“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” (Exodus 33: 19)* We ought never to TEST the favor of God; we ought never to *presume upon His providence*; we ought never to be so full of ourselves as a nation to assume that because the Lord God has blessed us in the past that whatever we do, however badly we treat Him and His Son Jesus Christ, that He will continue to smile upon our undertakings. PRESUMPTION is always the sure and certain sign of the erosion of PROVIDENCE.

Today is the 4th of July weekend. Take out a dollar bill. Do we want God to smile upon our undertakings as a nation? Or do we trust in our own might? Do we trust just in the almighty dollar and our own abilities to get us out of whatever plight we might be in today? Or do we trust in the Almighty? Do we trust in God? **In God we trust.** And in no one and in nothing else. May God bless America. May His mercy smile upon our undertakings today. *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...”* And Amen.

By: *The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA*
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!