



281.890.1900
TheMETonline.org

Jones Road Campus
13000 Jones Road | Houston, TX 77070

Fry Road Campus | Hopper Middle School
7811 Fry Road | Houston, TX 77433

Good morning. Welcome to The MET. My name is Bryan Rose. I am the *Campus Pastor* of our Cypress Campus out on Fry Road. I'm not usually here. In fact, I was supposed to speak out there with you guys today [who] are out there in this little world right there [gesturing to the live-feed camera for our *Fry Road Campus*]—hey, what's up? Hey, baby (my wife's out there; I know she's smiling at me too because I can just feel it). You know, I was supposed to be speaking out there today. We were supposed to have a guest speaker here [at the *Jones Road Campus*]. He had some health issues with a family member and couldn't make it, so you get me today. (That's where you clap. That's where you cheer. No, I'm just kidding.)

Hey listen, I just want to say thank you for being here, especially if you're—

- Listening on a podcast
- Watching on an *iPhone*
- Hanging out there at our *Fry [Road] Campus*
- Sitting in here in this Jones auditorium

Thank you guys so much for being here. Thank you for celebrating God's blessings on our land here with us this morning. I heard (last time I was up here too) that the Fry camera angle makes me look skinny-er...skinnier. I just hate that I'm not going to be out there with you guys this morning—missing the services out there—but it's great to be here.

I have some good news: my fever broke. Right? My fever broke last Saturday. I don't know if any of you guys had this fever for the last few weeks. But last Saturday, this raging fever that I had broke. My symptoms were this:

- My ears were ringing, just (kind of) this buzzing sound in my head.
- I had this fever.
- My ears were ringing and my head was swollen because of national pride.
- My eyes were even watering as I saw the camera pan down our soccer players as they were going to take the match last Saturday. Right-right?

Were you guys excited about that? My fever broke. I don't care about soccer anymore. Right? Because I'm American—right?—we care about the sports we are in. If we're out—I mean—I don't know what cricket is. But if America had a cricket team, I'd be pulling for them. Cricket kind of sounds like something Dr. Seuss invented: the cricket with the wicket and all those things.

But there was something about that moment when *The Star Spangled Banner* was playing and I was watching our team, hand over their heart, imagining being on that stage:

- Being there on the field in South Africa (and)
- The pride (the national pride) they were playing for (and)
- Knowing that millions of us back home were rooting for them—wanting to see them do well.

Man, there is something powerful in that song (in that national anthem). There's something powerful when people stand and sing that.

We have other national anthems too. I mean, in my lifetime, there [are] two big national anthems I can think of other than *The Star Spangled Banner*:

- One of them is in *Rocky IV* when James Brown sings *Living in America*. Right? How fired up did that get you back in the day? Right? It's like: Right, we live in America. Until we lost, and then we won; but it was all good.

- Then there is another one that's just a recent one. And you just cannot help but admit that this is a national anthem. Right? *Party in the USA* by Miley Cyrus. Right? [Singing lyrics from the song's chorus:] "And I throw my hands up, they're playing—" Right? It is in your head now. Right?

That is a national anthem, guys. We hear that—that's right—we hear that and it moves us.

But our *Star Spangled Banner*—there's something about seeing a team, seeing people (man!) standing at the beginning of a ball game and singing our *Star Spangled Banner*, our national anthem. (Man!) We stand up and we are fervent in what that means, because we're America. Right? We're America and in America, you even get excited about just saying America. We're an amazing place.

But I've got to own something here (I've got to own something) because today is America's birthday and I don't think I'd get America a card this year. I'm just going to be honest. I think over the past few years, something's been happening as I sit and watch what's happening in our country. As I sit and watch the landscape of politics, I'm like: Man, I love America—don't get me wrong—but I'm not real infatuated with American politics right now. I'm not real infatuated with what's going on. You know what? Hey listen! [In response to applause:] Listen, I don't like that though. I don't think that's a good thing. I don't like feeling that way.

It is kind of like when I was in junior high and high school—right?—and you're on a team or you're in a group or you're in a club. Back then (for me) it's like not so much me being a part of that group. It was like me being a part of that group and what it had to say about the other group—right?—how much better we were than this other group because we were smarter and knew more about space than the football team...and how much better they are—you know?—how much better we were in that.

Unfortunately, it is kind of what it feels like in American politics today. (You know?) It feels like we choose a side and it is not so much about what we believe on our side as much as what we believe about the other people on the other side. Right? It's about how wrong they are. Unfortunately, man—Christians—we're some of the worst. We're some of the worst at drawing our line in the sand and not just believing what we believe, but believing a lot of stuff about people [who] believe different than we do. And that's tough; I don't like that.

That's what's funny about our political climate right now too. (You know) right now, you don't have to have all the information to have the right opinion. Right? You just have an opinion. Everybody has an opinion. You don't have to have very many facts to have all the right answers either, do you? You know, it's just like that. (You'll catch onto that one in a minute.) Really, all we need right now is a talk show on the right TV network and we're good to go.

I don't like having these jaded, cynical thoughts. I don't like sitting back and saying: Man, this just is not right. And honestly, I hate that today I feel that way:

- The day we celebrate freedom
- The day we celebrate what God has done in this country
- The day we celebrate that we live in a land that God has blessed and that people have given their lives for

Thousands and hundreds of thousands of people—even right now—people are out giving their lives for the freedom that I'm kind of jaded and skeptical over (right now). It doesn't sit well with me, I've got to confess. We have too many people out fighting for me to dishonor by being skeptical.

Here is what happens: **Skepticism leads to inaction.** Skepticism makes me just stop and take my hands off and say: You know what? I don't care; I'm just not going to do anything about it. Here's what Edmund Burke—this guy was [Irish] but he's still smart—he said this. [In response to congregational laughter:] It's the Fourth of July, I can say that. Edmund Burke said this [paraphrasing]: All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. [Repeated for clarity] And that's what my skepticism does, it leads me to inactivity and I do nothing.

Do you know who is going to pay for that?—my kids [and] their kids. My inactivity and skepticism now is going to be paid for there. So I started asking these questions (and probably some of you are asking the same questions):

- What can I do?
- What am I supposed to do about it?
- Can I really make a difference?
- Is there really something that I can do?

It's overwhelming to think about that. But here's a belief I hold: I believe we're called to live (and sometimes die) for God and for country. It's a belief I have. Maybe it's not for her actions right now; but for America's ideals, for America's people, no matter their political party—

WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE FOR GOD & COUNTRY

Living for God and country isn't talking about what's wrong. It's not forwarding emails and those kinds of things. It's about seeking what's right. Living for God and country is living out my responsibility as a follower of Christ. Here's a thought I had:

Living for God and country is not just making sure people hear my point of view, but that they see my point of reference.

It's not about me having a point of view—because everybody has a point of view—it's about Who my point of reference is. Because [you] see—

- I can debate issues
- I can get in arguments
- For every point I can make, somebody else has a counterpoint

But when I'm living from a point of reference—from a hope that comes inside from trusting a Savior—it doesn't matter what my point of view is when people can see my point of reference. If my life demonstrates a source of life and direction and calling in a time when people are looking for meaning [and] looking for hope, I can offer more than an opinion. I begin to share my point of reference in my faith in Christ.

That's what I want to do this morning. I want to give us a point of reference for this Fourth of July—for this Independence Day. And I hope that some of what is very foundational to our nation and foundational to our relationship in Christ can cause us to have an impact.

If you've got your Bibles, open it up to *Romans, chapter 10*. [Repeated for clarity] There [are] Bibles in the pews here. (Out at Fry Road there [are] Bibles back at the back [of the room]. If you'll just raise up your hand someone will bring it to you. Is this weird?—I know it is.) *Romans, chapter 10*: the verses are going to be on the screen. If you don't have a Bible, read along with me. We're going to start in *verse 9*. *Romans, chapter 10, verse 9*, says this:

⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. {*Verse 11* says this:} ¹¹ As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-13 (NIV)

[Prayer:]

Father, we thank You for freedom. We thank You that You paid for freedom for us with the blood of Your Son. God, we thank You—

- For those who have paid for our freedoms with the blood of their family members, God
- For those who are out right now in harm's way
- For those families [who] are sitting here this morning and having a hard time with the Fourth of July

Lord, I just lift them up, God.

- For those [who] would rather have family members—not out fighting for freedom but—home

Lord, I pray for protection. Thank You for their valor, God. And I pray that You'd speak to us this morning. In Your name I pray. Amen.

First thing: to live for God and country takes a public faith.

LIVING FOR GOD & COUNTRY TAKES: A PUBLIC FAITH

(All right?) To live for God and country—if that's what we are called to do, if that's the answer [to] what we need to do—it takes a public faith. You see, following Christ—living for God—affects everything we do and there's really no such thing as a private faith. (All right?)

Think about this for a second: **Our faith is personal, not private.** There's a difference and a lot of people get that confused. We have a personal faith; we have a faith—

- In Jesus Christ
 - To God the Father through Jesus
 - By the power of the Holy Spirit
- that is personal.

It's a choice we make.

- It's not something somebody can wish on us
- It's not something we can inherit

It's a choice we have to make to follow Christ with our life and, therefore, it is personal.

But nowhere in the Scripture will you find that our faith is to be private. Our faith is personal—it's important to us—but there is nothing in [the Bible] that says this faith is private and not to be shared. In fact—

- The Bible says we are to "go and make disciples" [*Matthew 28:19 (NIV)*]
- The Bible says you are to "be my witnesses" [*Acts 1:8 (NIV)*]

The clear pattern and calling in the Scripture is that our faith—while very personal—is something that only we can deal with and choose. It's not in any way private; it's a very public faith. And that's (kind of) what gets confusing. But right there in *verses 9 and 10* it says,

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9 (NIV)

It's easy. It's—

- Confess
- Believe
- Saved

It's one of those three (kind of) power words there: confess, believe and saved. Faith in Christ—man!—those are my favorite verses. It reveals how this faith is a public faith.

Because confession isn't just (kind of) owning up to what I've done wrong. Right? It is not just: You caught me—all right—I've got to confess this. Or (you know) kind of making a list and reading it. Confession is agreeing with God on sin and its consequences. Confession is saying: You know what, God? You view this as wrong, so I view this as wrong; therefore, I'm going to make a change. It affects our life. [Repeated for emphasis] When God convicts us of sin and we confess and we see things as He sees them, it affects our life.

And then belief, well that's (kind of) the same way. Paul says right here. He says when you "believe in your heart"—when you "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead" [*Romans 10:9 (NIV)*]*—that's a powerful image. Man, when you believe something with all your heart, you're going to do something about it. Right? You don't just believe something with your heart and just say: Well, you know, it was okay [pantomimes a noncommittal shrug]. (You know) there comes a point when we believe something with all our heart, there's (kind of) this point when we follow through.*

In the heart—man!—think about what the heart is to our body. The heart to our body is the source of life. It drives blood. It drives oxygen to every extremity of our body—the tips of our fingers [and] the tips of our toes. The heart affects our entire body.

When we believe something with our heart—when we have a faith in Christ that we believe with all our heart—it affects our life the same way. From the very edge of our life—

- To our grocery shopping
- To *Starbucks*

- To our relationships
- To our job

(Man!) Faith in Christ with all your heart affects your whole life. And so when we believe something with all of our heart, it is a very public thing. It is public; it is not a private thing.

There comes a point in belief where you (kind of) realize: I'm really (kind of) committed to something here—or—this is just (kind of) a good idea. (Right?) There's that point where—

- You say you believe (and)
- You (kind of) attend church and you hang out
- You may be in a Bible study, a *Life Group*
- You're out there meeting in someone's home during the week or you're circling up here in a classroom on this campus

There comes a point when—maybe it's a neighbor [who] says: Hey, you go to church, don't you? Or it is a family member [who] says: Hey, listen, I've got something going on in my life. Or a friend is diagnosed (right?) and there is that line of commitment. There is that line of belief when if I don't believe it with my whole heart—all of a sudden—it's (kind of) challenging me because there's that line.

The best way I can illustrate it is: I was hiking a couple weeks ago. (Right?) I was hiking with Zach King, who is our *Student Pastor*, and is (I think) probably around three-eighths my size. (I never was really good with fractions, but I'm pretty sure the math works out there.) He's about three-eighths my size and he's like a little spider monkey out on the rocks. (Okay?) He's just going all over the place, man. I'm a big guy and I was following him and I was keeping up. (I mean) I had to drink twice as much water and was breathing really heavy and those things; but I was hanging.

And there came a point where there was (kind of) this place where there was a big—the stream had formed—a big bowl of water. There was (kind of) this rock slope on [both sides], really smooth and slick. And then there was like (kind of) cliff walls and we wanted to know what was beyond—what was up the stream. And so, Zach—man!—he just jumps up like the little spider monkey he is and starts (you know) scooting over there. And I was like: I can do this.

So I took my shoes and socks off because I didn't want to slip. There was this point—and Zach still laughs about it—where I realized that it was dangerous. I looked down and I was (you know) 20-something feet up there. I was barefoot and my feet were hurting. And Zach was having to tell me where to put my feet. And there was this moment of panic when (you know) I'm so far that going back is just as dangerous as going forward. (Right?) And so I'm looking and Zach says there was just this brief moment of—gasp!—oh my gosh am I going to do this or not?

And that's what it is sometimes. (Man) we say we have faith in Christ. (By the way, I did go through with it, but I swam out.) But there is this moment when we have this faith in Christ and it's okay to sit in here and it is okay to do these things; but when we come to that moment where—

- There is a real need (and)
- There is really an opportunity to step in (and)

It's a time to make our faith public and we freeze. And it is kind of like that moment: Do I have all the right words? Do I know what I am going to do? (You know—those kinds of things.) I think that's very real. And I think that we need to embrace that and realize that to live for God and country means that we've got to work on having a public faith.

You see, too many times faith is just words or a good idea, a building we go to or a service we attend. But listen to this: **Salvation that doesn't affect your entire being isn't salvation; it's just a nice way to think about yourself.** Salvation that doesn't affect your entire being—

- Who you are
- What you do
- How you act

—is just good ideas if it doesn't affect your whole being.

And so living for God and country drives us to a public faith—a faith:

- That agrees with God on sin
- That confesses: Man, this is wrong and I'm not going to do it
- That agrees with God and His Lordship in your life
- That lets the actions of your life reflect it

There's one place where the lordship in our life—God's lordship—is really revealed the most. And so I need some help—I need some audience participation here. Does anybody have any cash? (Right?) Anybody have any cash—large denomination preferred—anybody got cash down here? Does anybody carry cash anymore? Okay, right here; I'm going to come right down here [into the congregation]. (This is really going to freak them out at Fry Road.) [Bryan walks straight up to the live-feed camera for our *Fry Road Campus*:] Hey, what's going on? Good to see you. [Then turns and addresses the one who offered the cash:] All right, give me cash—\$20 is that the best you've got? All right, somebody help her out; take her to lunch or something. Single men? Okay, sorry.

You know what? Our lordship is most revealed right here [indicating the \$20 bill he's holding], isn't it? Who or what is lord of our life sometimes is shown right here; because it's what we trust. Right? Man, some of us trust this green thing more than we trust the words on the back of this that say, "IN GOD WE TRUST." That is one of those things about those power phrases, man.

- Where is God in the lordship of your life?
- Is it here in the front where it represents the money?
- Or is it the back [where it says "IN GOD WE TRUST"]?

I just think it's funny sometimes that our money says "IN GOD WE TRUST" but our lives say: in money we trust. Right? Because Melissa is sweating right now that I've got her \$20 up here. But it's true (it's true). The lordship of our life: so many times we don't have a plan for our money and it drives us versus us driving it. For many people, money is the lord.

Do you guys know how "IN GOD WE TRUST" got on the back of this? It's (kind of) a little interesting that in 1956, Congress and President Eisenhower declared that "IN GOD WE TRUST" was going to be written on all of our currency. Check this quote out (check this out):

In these days when imperialistic and materialistic Communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom, it is proper {to} remind all of us of this self-evident truth {that} as long as this country trusts in God, it will prevail.

84th US Congress, 1956

“As long as this country trusts in God...” So at that moment, they said: You know what? There’s no better place to put this motto. It’s been hanging around for years, but officially make it the motto of the United States—putting it on the back of every currency (or on some [part] of the currency). But the problem is it reveals our lordship, because we trust in money quite a bit.

You don’t hear people talk of self-evident-truths anymore: things that you’d be ridiculous to try to prove them false. That’s what that means. A self-evident truth means it just is true. You can’t prove it false. You don’t even have to try. They said that basically this is a no-brainer. We’re only as strong—as a nation—as our trust in God.

So living for God and country takes:

- A public faith (but it takes)
- In God we trust

LIVING FOR GOD & COUNTRY TAKES: IN GOD WE TRUST

It really does. Look at *verse 11*. *Verse 11* says this:

As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

Romans 10:11 (NIV)

[Repeated for emphasis] Now the readers and listeners from [the time of] Paul would have known that’s a quote from *Isaiah*. They would have known and recognized that (just) probably as much as we recognize “IN GOD WE TRUST” as a phrase.

Trust is a tough thing. Because trust is one of those things where it’s really based on what you hope will happen. (Right?) You trust someone because you hope that they’ll do what you expect or agree to do. You hope that they will do what they promised. And broken trust is hard to recover from. Broken trust is hard to overcome because (really) it relies on that hope and that belief being rebuilt again. And our memories are powerful.

That’s why these words of Paul are important to our own lives and important to our national lives too. Because the scripture says that “Anyone who puts their trust in him will never be put to shame.” “Never be put to shame” literally means: never be deceived by false hope. That’s what happens to us when we put our trust here [in money].

- When we don’t live in-God-we-trust and we live in-money-we-trust, we have a false hope.
- We have a false hope sometimes in our neighborhoods. (Right?) If we move to the right neighborhood, if we’re in the right house, everything will be fine.

- We have a false hope in our jobs.
- We have a false hope in success.

But what God is saying here is that confidence and faith in Christ is not a false hope. [Repeated for emphasis] To live for God and country means that we have to live for in-God-we-trust. We have to have the true hope, the one and only hope that is in Christ Jesus.

Job 15:31 [NIV] says this:

Let him not deceive himself by trusting what is worthless, for he will get nothing in return.

Psalm 9:9 says:

⁹ The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. { *Verse 10* says: } ¹⁰ Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 9:9-10 (NIV)

This is really cool. Jesus just wraps it up in *John 14*. He's talking to the disciples and He says:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.

John 14:1 (NIV)

See, trusting in someone or something apart from the work of Christ is a false hope. When we trust in something other than God, when our life is reflecting (of) something other than in-God-we-trust, it's false trust. But when we live in-God-we-trust, our hope is secure. As *Hebrews* [6:19 (NIV)] says, "an anchor for the soul," no matter who you are. No matter who you are, no matter where you are (man!) to trust in God, to live in-God-we-trust is not a false hope that will let you down. Everything else is going to let you down.

Living for God and country takes:

- A public faith (it takes)
- In God we trust (but you know what else it takes?—it also takes)
- One nation under God

LIVING FOR GOD & COUNTRY TAKES: ONE NATION UNDER GOD

Verse 12 in *Romans, chapter 10*, says this: "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all..." [Repeated for emphasis] One Nation under God: pretty controversial words. (Right?)

You guys remember a few years ago they were trying to get "under God" taken out of the Pledge of Allegiance? Some guy has been suing the United States for like 20 years. He keeps losing. I guess he's got a lot of money (but whatever, you know). They wanted to take "under God" out. But does anyone know how "under God" got in to the Pledge? It was first used by Lincoln in his

Gettysburg Address. (The phrase “under God” was first used by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address.) He said “*that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom*”. He was talking about our country and he said: Under God we’re going to have a new birth of freedom.

One Sunday, President Eisenhower was sitting in a church service on Lincoln’s birthday. The Pastor was talking about Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and he was tying it back to being under God. He used that phrase. The Pastor said (you know what?): Our Pledge of Allegiance could be the pledge of allegiance of any country, but what makes America great is that we are under God as Lincoln said. [Paraphrasing George MacPherson Dougherty’s sermon honoring Lincoln’s birthday in February of 1954]

Eisenhower and Congress, that year on Flag Day in [June of] 1954, inspired by a sermon, put “under God” into the Pledge and officialized it. There were people who had been trying to do it, but it became official that day.

Listen to what Ronald Reagan said (Ronald Reagan said this):

America needs God more than God needs America...If we ever forget that we are “One Nation Under God,” then we will be a Nation gone under.

Ronald Reagan
40th US President (1981-1989)

That’s powerful stuff, isn’t it? But what if God’s desire isn’t for us to be one nation? What if He wants more for us to be under God? What if all this trying to see each other’s opinions and make everybody agree on everything isn’t working—and it’s not—right? What if God’s biggest desire is for us to be under God? What if His biggest desire isn’t for us to try and agree on issues but to try and agree that He is Lord of all?

What would happen in our nation if we stopped pushing for ideological conformity (right?) and started pushing for theological unity? What if we started pushing that? (You know what?) We may not always agree. I don’t believe—you read the Founding Fathers, they never agreed on every issue. But you know what they did agree on? They were going to pursue an ideal that was founded in faith, the common bond in God, in freedom from tyranny.

As just (kind of) as I look and I wrestle with my skepticism and I think: Wouldn’t we be a better nation if everyone were working hard to be under God? If everyone were working hard to follow Him, we’ll probably not get everyone to agree, but—

- We can follow God if we are focused, as individuals
- If I need to focus my life on living for God’s approval rather than man’s agreement

See I think being under God is an issue of lordship, not citizenship, not partisanship. And lordship is really an issue of control. The other thing we’re good at as Americans is controlling. (Right?) We like our control. (Right?) I like my control. So we don’t have any problem [in] thinking of God as a loving Father, but we have a problem [in] thinking [of] Him [as] controlling. We don’t like that control, so we fear God. That lordship issue:

- What if we were under God, well what would God ask me to do?

- If I place myself under God, and I try a little bit more tomorrow to be under God than I was today, what's He going to ask me to do?

It's pretty scary. Because we have all these [fears]: He's going to make me sell everything and move to some country where nobody speaks English. And (you know) we (kind of) have those fears. (Right?) Man, if God controls me then He's going to make me go talk to that person I don't like—(you know, I mean)—all those things.

But here's what Jesus said—*John 13:13 [NIV]* says this:

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

So Jesus is addressing the disciples and He's like: Okay, you know who I am; you got this right. But now you need to understand what I've done. In *verse 14*:

¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, {this is right after Jesus washed the disciples feet—He said:} you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you go and do them.

John 13:14-17 (NIV)

So what it means to be under control of God—seeking [to be] under God, under His lordship—the thing we fear the most Jesus illustrates there. Here's what you're going to do: you're going to go serve others. Because being under God means you can't separate the lordship of Christ pursued in your life—from—the servanthood of Christ displayed in your life. We can't try to do this—separate: I want to live *for* Christ without living *like* Christ.

Jesus said: I "...did not come to be served, but to serve..." [*Matthew 20:28 (NIV)*] That's what living under God means. Living under God means that what I have is not mine. What I have is for a greater purpose. Jesus said: "Go and do likewise." [*Luke 10:37b (NIV)*]

You're not growing in Christ if you're not serving like Christ. I hate to burst any bubbles. You're not growing like Christ. How can you grow *in* Christ if you're not going to live *like* Christ? You can't separate being blessed by God and serving others in His name. Jesus said, "If you know these things, you [are] blessed if you do them." [*John 13:17 (HCSB, NRSV)*] That's what it means to be blessed. What it means to be blessed is not to have a bunch of stuff, but to be able to give a bunch of stuff away. In America we tend to think we're blessed because we have a bunch of stuff. (Right?)

I was in Uganda a few weeks ago (man). You guys saw some pictures maybe. The majority of those people live for a month on less than what most of us will spend on lunch today. Most of us will spend as we have family and friends over—if we go out to eat—they live for a month on less than what we'll spend today. They literally have next to nothing. But (you know what?)

they're blessed. They're blessed not because of what they have but because of what they do with what they have.

So we—Christ says when we follow Him, we are blessed not because of what we have but because of what we do.

In living for God and country it takes:

- A public faith (it takes)
- One nation under God (but it also takes a little)
- God bless America

LIVING FOR GOD & COUNTRY TAKES: GOD BLESS AMERICA

God-bless-America isn't giving us a bunch of stuff. God-bless-America happens when we serve and we give a bunch of stuff. Listen to this in *verse 12*—Paul continues:

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord
is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,
Romans 10:12 (NIV)

Right now it's (kind of) a song, *God Bless America*. (Right?) It's also (kind of) become a presidential sign-off in some ways. I'm not sure when that happened. I think that's just for us in the Bible Belt. I think there [are] other versions of the end of presidential addresses. (We'll have to wait for the DVD to come out to see those.)

I think we mistakenly think that God-bless-America is a call for prosperity and it's not. God-bless-America is a call for servanthood; because—

- We're blessed when we live like Christ (and)
- We're blessed when we serve like Christ served

(You know) I was questioning—What can I do?—I was overwhelmed. I still sometimes get there. I think:

- What can I do?
- What can one person do?

I can't get on TV and do this; but I can share my faith and I can serve other people. All of us can do something. So if you're anything like me and you're overwhelmed with the state of politics and say those things; we can do something about it. We can live God-bless-America when we serve—not when we seek to receive and prosper, but when we seek to serve and give.

One month ago—Sunday, June 6—I was with a group of people in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. I showed some of you guys those pictures. It's a slum in Nairobi. There was a group of ten of us and we spoke in some ways and we shared challenges. During the church service that day, there were 567 people there. Pastor Simon was elated. We moved everything outside. We hung out. It was the most people he'd ever seen; the most people that had ever attended church there. It was amazing.

I got an email from Pastor Simon this past Friday: Last Sunday 745 people were at New Hope Bible Baptist Church in Kibera.

By my math, that's almost 200 people in 3 weeks—Pastor Sal's math: it doubled it 3 weeks. [Shrugging in response to congregational laughter:] He's not here—what?—it's pretty easy when all you're doing is talking to a camera.

It's pretty amazing what God is doing. You would look at that place and you would think—wow!

- They have barn tin on the walls
- They have dirt floors
- They don't even have anything on the windows, it's just openings

You would look and from our perspective you'd think: Man, they are not a blessed people. But they're blessed. God is pouring out His blessings on them as they serve. As a group of people who has nothing literally reaches out with their nothing and invites others who have nothing to come and experience that something that matters the most and; that is, Jesus Christ.

- Next Sunday we're going to baptize here in this room [gesturing to the upper baptistry] up there.
- Out at Fry Road (we're going to inflate the courtyard) we're going to inflate a swimming pool out there in the courtyard and we're going to baptize people.
- Next Sunday they're going to baptize in Kibera too at Pastor Simon's church. They are going to baptize 64 people next Sunday.

It's pretty amazing—60 of them have given their lives to Christ in the past month alone in one of the poorest places there. It's clear that God blessing America is not based on what we have. God pours out His blessings when what we do with what we have impacts other people. God measures blessings differently.

So here's my closing question (my closing question is this):

- What would happen here if we had that kind of God-bless-Kibera and God-bless-America, God-bless-The MET, God-bless-Houston, God-bless-Cypress?
- What would happen if we [were to] give in to indifference and sit by and watch our country become even more divided? What would happen?
- If we don't share our faith or invite anyone to experience a life-changing relationship with Christ here, what would happen?
- If we forget that God has given us what we have to impact Northwest Houston here, to impact Cypress and bless the world; if we forget that and just hold onto it, what would happen?
- If we forget that we care for kids and teach them about Christ for a reason and just all stop showing up to serve, what would happen?

- If we forget that we launched this campus on Fry Road to reach people, not to relax on a Sunday, what would happen?
- If we forget that discipleship isn't measured by input and what classes I attend and what Bible studies I go to; but discipleship is measured by output and what I do with what I learn—if we forget that, what would happen?

So here's your Fourth of July challenge as you go and celebrate by blowing stuff up (very American), think about this: What if the same fervor and intensity that you put into your fireworks display—and I'm calling you out Fairfield [subdivision], because there is fervor and intensity out there. What if the fervor and intensity you—

- Put into your fireworks display (or)
- Preparing an all-American meal today (or)
- Cleaning the house for guests and parties

—what if you focused that much intensity and fervor on seeing God ignite your family? Or seeing God move in your street or in your office, in your school or in your world?

What if that fervor and intensity you celebrate the freedom of America [with] went into (kind of) letting people see the freedom of a relationship with Christ? What would happen if people see you live with confidence of in-God-we-trust; not something else? What would happen if you submitted your life under God's lordship and we really began to become, not just one nation, but one nation under God? What would happen? What would happen if God-bless-America was something we sang, but it was also something we served? What would happen?

For me, I believe chances are we'd see a lot of this *verse 13*. *Romans 10:13* [NIV] says this:

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

That's what I want to live for—for God and country—I want to live for that. I want to live for that verse to see everyone who calls on the name of the Lord be saved. Let's pray:

God, I just I thank You. Here at Jones Road and at Cypress on Fry Road,
God, I pray that you would strike a fear in what would happen if I stay
indifferent, if I stay inactive, if I stay jaded, if I stay cynical.

If you're here at [the] *Jones [Road Campus]* or online listening or out at the *Fry Road Campus* and your hope and trust is in something other than Christ—if your life is not under the lordship of God, if something else is ruling and reigning—I want to challenge you that your life should reflect the blessing of God upon it; not by what you [have] but by how you serve and how you give. Maybe you're sitting in here and you've never followed through on a full-commitment faith. Maybe you've heard Pastor Sal talk about it as he illustrated before, but you've never made it a part of your life.

I pray that God would change hearts this morning; that people would stop and confess that You are Lord. That they would believe in their hearts with everything they have that You rose from the dead (and) to give them a new life. Right now I pray that you would ask Christ to save you; that

you would confess your sin, and you'd commit to follow Him with your entire life.

God I pray that You would find us, a group of people, not content with things the way they are and not content to sit and watch it happen, God; but You would find us a people who are living a faith that shows that in-God-we-trust, that shows we are a part of one nation, but we are striving to be under God. [I pray] that, God, You would truly bless America, not because of what we have, but because of how we give and how we serve this community and how we serve this world.

Father God, I thank You for this time. I thank You for all You're doing in our lives. I thank You for what You're doing around the world because of what we do here. Thank you for that...in Your name I pray. Amen.

Fry Road Campus Pastor: Bryan Rose

The MET
Metropolitan Baptist Church
13000 Jones Rd
Houston, TX 77070

Sermon Transcript Ministry
resource@TheMETonline.org

**Then if my people who are called by my name will
humble themselves and pray and seek my face and
turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven
and will forgive their sins and restore their land.**

2 Chronicles 7:14

(New Living Translation, 2004 edition)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*