

July 4th Daily Devotional:

Psalm 47:7-9

For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm.

God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.

The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.

Last night, my family watched the movie version of *Hamilton*. (I'm pretty sure we were not alone!) The musical's refrain of "Rise Up!" captures the revolutionary spirit that drives every resistance against tyranny, including our founding Declaration of Independence.

Even as we celebrate our nation's independence, Psalm 47 reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to the liberating God, the sovereign over every nation. One of my favorite hymns, *God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand* (which is definitely made for the organ!), reflects this theological understanding of God's relationship to the nations, and casts a vision where it is *God's* paths and *God's* goodness that leads us. Listen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucTAAUyyi4c&t=4s>

And then perhaps some of you have seen this video from NPR, in which young descendants of Frederick Douglass read excerpts from and reflect upon his famous 1852 speech about the Fourth of July, when he pointedly asked: "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" Please, take time today to listen:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/07/03/884832594/video-frederick-douglass-descendants-read-his-fourth-of-july-speech>.

In one section of the full speech, Douglass indicts the church for prioritizing unjust laws of humans above the justice of God (at that time, the injustice of slavery, but no less relevant today):

"From what quarter, I beg to know, has proceeded a fire so deadly upon our ranks, during the last two years, as from the Northern pulpit? As the champions of oppressors, the chosen men of American theology have appeared — men, honored for their so-called piety, and their real learning. The Lords of Buffalo, the Springs of New York, the Lathrops of Auburn, the Coxes and

Spencers of Brooklyn, the Gannets and Sharps of Boston, the Deweys of Washington, and other great religious lights of the land have, in utter denial of the authority of Him by whom they professed to be called to the ministry, deliberately taught us, against the example of the Hebrews and against the remonstrance of the Apostles, they teach that we ought to obey man's law before the law of God." God have mercy.

Today, I'm holding all of these things together: the assurance of God's reign, the prayer for God's guiding hand upon our nation and every nation, and our first accountability as the church to the God of liberation who calls us to rise up and fulfill the promise of liberty and equity yet unrealized for all people.

As Douglass said: "The fiat of the Almighty, 'Let there be Light,' has not yet spent its force!

God of the ages, whose almighty hand
leads forth in beauty all the starry band
of shining worlds in splendor through the skies,
our grateful songs before thy throne arise.
Thy love divine hath led us in the past.
In this free land by thee our lot is cast.
Be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay:
thy word our law, thy paths our chosen way.
From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,
be thy strong arm our ever sure defense.
Thy true religion in our hearts increase.
Thy bounteous goodness nourish us in peace.
Refresh thy people on their toilsome way.
Lead us from night to neverending day.

Fill all our lives with love and grace divine,
and glory, laud, and praise be ever thine.