



Unity Church of Christianity
The Sense of Freedom
July 4, 2010

Howard Caesar

We want to be with the idea of freedom, today. We're celebrating the Fourth of July, Independence, the idea of freedom. We want to enter, really, into the energies of freedom, what it is, what it stands for, what it feels like. It's a very, very powerful energy. And first I'd like us all to grasp the idea that freedom is universal. We all want it. We all long for it. Part of our spiritual growth is about finding that internal freedom. It is universally desired, and to experience and achieve it is really through spiritual channels and through the integration of universal truths. You will recall that famous statement that Jesus stated, which is, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." The key words there are "know the truth." To know the truth means to live that truth; to integrate it into your life, to know the truth, rather than that which is false, rather than that which is untrue. That certainly will take away your freedom. So there's a sense of choice and there's a sense of opening up to what is the truth and then living it. So we have to do our part in order to really move in the direction of experiencing the energies of freedom. That's part of our spiritual path.

Unity Church of Christianity
The Sense of Freedom
July 4, 2010
Page 2

Now, one verse prior to Jesus saying, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”—one verse prior, Jesus gave us an ‘if’. He set up an ‘if’ before that. What he said was, “If you abide in my word,” and, “you are my disciples and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” So, basically, if you abide in my word—and by abiding in my word, the ‘if’ is to abide it in my teachings, and to be a disciple is to be disciplined in those teachings, so there is really something that we must do. He’s saying that’s the ‘if’. You have to abide in certain teachings and you have to align with them, you have to be living from them, you have to be conscious of them, you have to know this is who you are, and to show up in them. And as a result, you will come to know freedom. So the truth that Jesus was talking about was universal truth, a truth that was for all. It wasn’t for any sect or particular religion or body of people, it was for all people. That got categorized into Christianity, but he was a prophet and a teacher for all the world, for all people, on universal teachings that bring all people together in the spirit of oneness. So he knew that all humanity was one family. No matter where you live, no matter what you look like, no matter what your religion, we’re all one. And he was coming from that place.

I think one of the reasons—at least one of the reasons—that the United States has been recognized as the land of the free is that—I think—it has been rooted in that spiritual principle of the idea of freedom and that we’re all one family and kind of reaching out and opening our arms to all people in that recognition—that we are one universal family under God. It embraces all people whatever the color, the culture, the nationality. It is a melting pot, as it’s been spoken of, and so it embraces all because it recognizes that all are a child of God. Most people—not all people—but that is the dominant space from which this nation was born and recognized by its founders.

Now, there is a newspaper ad that came out about 8 years ago in the year 2002. It was some months after 9/11 took place. It was reported that someone in Pakistan had published in a newspaper an offer of a reward to anyone who killed an American—anyone who killed any American. So the interesting side story to this is that there was an Australian dentist that found out about this or saw it or whatever, and he took it upon himself to write a piece to be published about what an American is, so they would know when they found one. It is interesting, this Australian dentist, his perception of America, being reflected to us as he speaks about it. And I read to you, now, what he wrote. He wrote, “An American is English or French, Irish, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian, or Greek. An American may also be Canadian, Mexican, African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Australian, Iranian, Asian, or Arab or Pakistani or Afghan. An American may also be Cherokee, Blackfoot, Navaho, Apache, or one of the many other tribes known as Native Americans. An American is Christian, or he could be Jewish or Buddhist or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is

Unity Church of Christianity
The Sense of Freedom
July 4, 2010
Page 3

that in America they're free to worship as each of them chooses. An American is also free to believe in no religion. For that, he will answer only to God, not to the government or to armed thugs claiming to speak for the government and for God. An American is from the most prosperous land in the history of the world. The root of that prosperity can be found in the Declaration of Independence which recognizes the God-given right in each man and woman to the pursuit of happiness. An American is generous. Americans have helped out just about every other nation in the world in their time of need. When Afghanistan was overrun by the Soviet army years ago, Americans came with arms and supplies to enable the people to win back their country. As of the morning of September 11, Americans had given more than any other nation to the poor in Afghanistan. Americans welcome the best—the best products, the best books, the best music, the best food, the best athletes, but they also welcome the least. The national symbol of America, the Statue of Liberty, welcomes your tired and your poor, the retched refuse of your teaming shores, the homeless tempest tossed. These, in fact, are the people who built America. Some of them were working in the Twin Towers the morning of September 11, earning a better life for their families. I've been told that the World Trade Center victims were from at least 30 countries, cultures, and first languages, including those that aided and abetted the terrorists. So you can try to kill an American if you must. Hitler did, so did Stalin and Mao Zedong and every blood-thirsty tyrant in the history of the world, but in doing so you would just be killing yourself, because Americans are not a particular people from a particular place. They are the embodiment of the human spirit of freedom. Everyone who holds to that spirit everywhere is an American." Isn't that beautifully written? By somebody outside of our shores.

(applause)

So today, yes, we are celebrating our country's independence and freedom, but I hope that we're also celebrating freedom and what freedom really is and the energies of freedom. It's something that is a gift of God that we basically channel, we accept as a gift, and we extend to one another. We didn't create freedom. Freedom was created. We were created to come into this life and offer it up and move in a direction of it for ourselves and for all people. The last line of what was said there, "Everyone who holds to that spirit everywhere is an American." Well, we can also say that everyone who holds to that spirit everywhere is really a child of God, a child of God that is honoring the spirit of truth that lives within them. Everyone at their core is a child of God, whether they're awake and aware of that or not, they are. And at their core, therefore, we're really all part of one family. Whether they know it or not, they may not have awakened to it, but that is the truth. One day in their progression, they will. So we are all one. As the apostle Paul said, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." If you let the spirit of the Lord in, if you allow this energy, this truth, this message, this divine intelligence to move in you and have its

way in you, the only thing you can know is freedom. You'll want it for yourself and you'll want it for everyone else because that is its nature.

So one of these freedoms is the freedom of religion, the freedom of worship, and it's not for us to judge where the spirit of the Lord is or is not or as to which religion has the spirit of God in it or does not. The founding fathers had a deep respect for the spiritual urges that were in every man and woman, and they believed that religious experience was a personal one and that each person should have the freedom to seek out that which fulfilled them—that a person's choice of religion should not separate us. So they didn't take kindly to many of the denominations earlier, or historically, that had been competitive and had often even moved toward monopolies and that that was indicative to them and they had realized that. They felt that the best way to serve the spiritual needs of all was to guarantee the religious freedom of all. So they felt that a person's religious beliefs were a private concern and it was a natural right that everyone has. So they had seen, interestingly enough, in the colonial period, when there was colonies, there was a law, or an act, passed in 1700 whereby all citizens were required to attend church every Sunday, and that if they weren't in church they had to somehow prove that they were at home reading scriptures. To fail to do so would require fines. That actually existed. They were aware of that, and they were aware that prejudice against Catholics in many states was strong. They were aware that anti Catholic pamphlets had been distributed at time. So in the minds of our founding fathers there would be no state church. They were aware of the persecution and the discrimination that had existed in the colonies wherever the state had sponsored its own church. They had seen that. And the right of the individual to worship in his own way, or not to worship even at all, was part of the protection of a free society. If worship, they felt, became compulsory, then it would be only a matter of time before the state could decide what the form of that worship was and what the place of that worship was.

So because of this stand, many of our founding fathers were falsely accused of being agnostic, or even atheists. And nothing could be further from the truth because all of them, at their core, were very spiritual individuals and very connected to God in their own unique way and had very strong beliefs, particularly George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. They had very highly-developed spiritual beliefs. They had thought things through. They had studied many things. Thomas Jefferson wrote his own bible, for gosh sakes. How can you say he wasn't spiritual? But they resisted some of the formal doctrines and dogmas of the hierarchical church, which they had the right and freedom to do. Most of them were coming from more of a universal approach and understanding. They were said to be Christian, but not traditional Christian, if you know what I mean. They followed the teachings of Jesus, but they didn't accept all of the doctrine that was created and shared. It was said by one author they were truly the first

nondenominational Christians. John Adams was quoted as saying, “Ask me not, then, whether I am a Catholic or Protestant, Calvinist or Armenian. As far as them being Christians, I wish to be fellow disciples with them all.” You see that opening of arms and accepting all people and not drawing lines between what choice one has versus another, in terms of worship? That’s where they were coming from. And that’s something very, very beautiful and wonderful. We thank God for them. All the great leaders through time have come from that space of more of a universal, as opposed to a narrow, rigid, have to do it my way, our way, only way. There is a sense of freedom whoever and however a person is fulfilled and moves closer to God. I honor that. As long as you’re more loving and as long as you move toward the energies of oneness, those are universal truths contained within them. So it’s about oneness, about love and connectedness. Martin Luther King, Jr., we all know. In his famous speech called *I Have a Dream*, which was given before a million and a half people at Lincoln Memorial. He spoke about freedom’s ring. It’s a ring that rings through all of us. It was about embracing all in oneness. Just to state that one little paragraph, or that little passage, that we’re all familiar with, because they’re worth repeating, where he stated, “When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will hasten the day when all God’s children”—I can hear him saying that—“all God’s children, whether black men or white men, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of that old negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we’re free at last. And we’ll only be free out of holding hands and knowing that we’re all God’s children. That is the truth. And that is what humanity must come to know.”

Another great man, Nelson Mandela, he stated, “For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. It’s about respecting everyone’s freedom. It’s about helping everyone to be free.” That’s a very powerful thing, and that’s what our nation has stood for. I think that’s what has allowed it to prosper. May we always continue down that path.

Freedom is a paradox. It really is. When it comes to our own lives and our own spiritual paths, it’s a paradox in that to have it, to have freedom, you must know its boundaries. You must know its restrictions. Freedom calls for that whether you realize it or not, in some ways. This was explained beautifully by James Dillet Freeman, a wonderful Unity author—the late James Dillet Freeman—in an article that he wrote some 25 or 30 years ago in the daily devotional—the Unity daily devotional called *Unity Daily Word*. I read that, and it’s a beautiful article because he explains this paradox and he used it with the metaphor of his dog. He had a dog, which was a Saluki. A Saluki is a very active dog; a lot of life in it. James said he had a large yard. He lived in the Midwest, and it was almost 2 acres. His dog had free access to that whole big 2 acres of land,

Unity Church of Christianity

The Sense of Freedom

July 4, 2010

Page 6

and it had a doggie door so it could come and go. Very little was demanded of this dog. It had freedom, and it could romp and play and chase squirrels and rabbits and anything else that it wanted. It was happy. James' yard was fenced, but he said not much of it was all that high of a fence. A lot of it was ornamental and that it was more mental than a physical obstacle to the dog and that anytime that she wanted to leap over the fence and head out into the city or the town, she truly could. James said that it was not the fence, but only her acceptance of the fence, that kept her in the yard. And he makes an interesting point here that is really a metaphor for all of us in many ways. He said he realized—James Dillet Freeman did—that the fence does not keep her in bondage. Actually, it keeps her free. He says, “Suppose she did jump the fence and headed on out. Would she be free? Freer than she already is?” Outside of that fence there are lots of worldly obstacles and there are laws about unleashed dogs and there are potential angry neighbors and there are potential other unfriendly dogs and there are dog catchers and there are speeding cars, and so forth. So in the world that lies beyond that fence, there is little, or not much of anything, that would cause her to be anymore free than she was inside of that fence. So the fence does not limit her freedom as much as guarantee it; interesting thought. It does not keep her from her freedom, it marks how far she can go and not lose her freedom. Now stay with me, because freedom is relative. You and I—and he points out—we'd like to have wings, but we don't have wings. We have to walk, but a person may be free to step out of a 5-story window and to do so you will lose your freedom. You will have gone outside the fence. James Freeman built a fence. Human beings have built fences. You see, some of the fences have been built by wise and loving people that have gone before us and they have examined the world and they've realized where fences are needed if they were to preserve their liberty and lose it.

Our founding fathers were as aware of the need for fences as they were aware of the need to preserve freedom. They were aware of both when they wrote the Declaration of Independence, because it's a bit of a fenced in freedom, whether you realize it or not. It's a good thing. Some people believe that freedom means no fences—that a person should be able to say whatever he says anywhere, think whatever he thinks, do whatever he wants to do, and so forth. To some extent, taken beyond certain boundaries, that's chaos. So there are two kinds of freedom. There is to be free from and there is to be free to. Here's the paradox: sometimes what we want to be free to say, do, and think is what we need to be free from. Some of the things we say, we need to be free from saying. Some of the things that we think, we need to be free from thinking. Some of the things that we do, we need to be free from doing. We need fences, because to be free from some of those things we say, think, and do will actually preserve our freedom. God built a fence for Adam and Eve and said, “Hey, don't go beyond the fence into the orchard over there.” They did, and it cost them. God doesn't punish us; we simply go outside the fences.

We can take our freedom and use it to lose it. We can take our freedom and use it to lose it. Jesus came into the world and he built a fence. He gave us a yard to play in. And the yard was that body of teachings that he called the word, or the truth. He called, also, the yard the kingdom. He said, “Seek ye first to stay in the yard. Seek ye first to stay within the containment of the teachings I’m teaching. Go outside those teachings and you’re freedom is gone. You’ll experience something totally different. You’ll be in the land of fear.” The parable of the prodigal son is really a story about a young man who went outside the fences and went and played in some other yards and woke up and came back inside the fences and found his freedom there.

God’s freedom is not an easy freedom. It comes only with growth. It only comes with strength, internal strength, wisdom, and the power to stand firm in the truth of God. Everyone has to master their yard. Jesus defined the yard, set the boundaries, and set us free to stay inside or to go outside, but then we’re going to experience something else. And Jesus said—if you remember—“If you abide in my word, if you abide and hang out inside the fences and the fence posts that I have put up, then you will have freedom. You will have a kind of life that is amazing and that you are called to have.” The undisciplined, really, are the imprisoned by their lack of strength and their own lack of mastery. So Jesus said, “Here’s the yard. Here’s the kingdom. It’s within you.” Spiritual growth and awakening is learning to be on the right side of the fence, the side of truth. So staying inside the yard involves discipline. You will be a disciple if you are a disciplined person. Many people are on the fence in life. Many people are jumping back and forth. That’s not to blame or judge or make them wrong, but it’s just to say, “Hey, that’s me. That’s me.” So here are the fence posts that make up the yard that you want to stay inside. This is what keeps you inside the yard. It is love, not hate. It is faith, not fear. It is forgiveness, not resentment. It is oneness, not separation. It is giving, not hoarding. It is serving, not being selfish. It is peace, not anger. It is light, not darkness. It is respecting others, not judging others. Those are just a few. But Jesus gave us some teachings that stood out and if you live them you will experience a dimension of freedom that has been your heritage as a spiritual being. But you have to learn where the fences are.

Today, as we leave, I want to leave you with four fence posts—four freedoms that we celebrate and that you can take with you and I hope is at the forefront of your own mind are God-given freedoms. They’re universal. They’re available to everybody. And that is, number one, we have the freedom to create. Every one of us came into this world, and we’re thinking beings. Thought is creative. We have the opportunity to join our minds with the mind of God and be taken to new heights, to think the highest thoughts and reach the highest dimensions of ideation. The freedom to create is a very, very powerful and important one, and we celebrate that.

Unity Church of Christianity
The Sense of Freedom
July 4, 2010
Page 8

Another is the freedom to begin again. Wow! How powerful and important that is. At any moment you can begin again. You can lay down your past and simply make the decision. God calls you to a whole new experience every day, really, and if you open up you can begin again. It's a great gift, a great freedom, at any time. How many people have exercised that freedom and took off in a new direction in their life?

Another fence post is the freedom to love. The most powerful energy in all the universe that binds and bonds people together is love. God is love. You are love. That's our heritage, and we need to get off the fence and step into love.

And lastly is the freedom to forgive. It's a lot like love, but still, the whole course of miracles is devoted to forgiveness alone. It's basically moving aside and releasing everything that stands in the way of being love. So forgiveness is very important. Jesus taught it. Certainly all the great prophets and teachers did. So it is forgiving your past, forgiving anything and anyone that has simply seemingly kept you from your good in your own mind. So forgive your parents, forgive your siblings, forgive your boss, forgive your coworkers, forgive the economy, cease blaming anyone or anything for any situation in your life and you will have forgiveness and another something that moves you forward.

I just invite you to take those four fence posts with you. Celebrate them, give thanks for them, and remember them. There are others, but as we continue to explore and understand, we just need to know that freedom is like a yard and Jesus gave us all the teachings that will keep us inside of freedom. Play in the yard of that spiritual truth and be free. God bless you all.