

Pastor Brian's  
Mid Week Message  
July 4, 2020

**"STAR SPANGLED BANNER"**

*"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."* Song of Solomon 2:4

This 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend you don't need me to tell you that there is a great controversy in our land over how we treat our national flag and anthem. This goes back well before the current unrest brought on by the outrage over young black men being killed by police. The underlying issue is what that flag and anthem means. More than ever today they stand for different things to different people and groups. I believe that the vast majority of Americans still see these symbols as supremely positive, a point of national pride. They represent this great nation and all of our people, a nation that most of the rest of the world looks up to, or at least has looked up to until very recently. For millions of our citizens they have been well worth fighting and dying for. On the other hand, there are many who see the flag and anthem as symbolic of oppression and injustice. There is a viewpoint that sees the history of our nation as racist and corrupt, that the privileged have enriched and empowered themselves on the backs of those that they have used and abused for that purpose. In "The Pledge of Allegiance" there is the line, "One nation, under God, indivisible." We are still one nation, and even though many won't admit it and certainly don't like it...we remain under God. He is still on the throne! It's that indivisible part that seems to have changed. We are a country that is becoming more and more polarized every day. There are forces at work both within the nation and in other parts of the world trying to pull us even farther apart. This concept of national banners or flags goes back a few hundred years. Military banners date back several thousand years. Solomon was the king of Israel roughly 950 years before the birth of Jesus, so nearly 3,000 years ago. In his Old Testament book, "The Song of Solomon" he speaks of God's banner that flies over His people as depicting "love". The theme of Song of Solomon is that of a young man and woman deeply in love and their beautiful relationship with one another. This points to the relationship that we, the Church...the Bride of Christ...have with our Lord Jesus, our Bridegroom. By faith in Christ, God brings us to the ultimate banquet; "The Marriage Feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom". (Revelation 19:6-9) Not only are we invited as guests, but in fact we together, the Church, are the eternal bride, joined forever with our Bridegroom in everlasting perfect love. The banner that God places above us is one of love, which makes sense as the essence of God Himself is pure love. (1 John 4:8). You are probably familiar with the Christian flag.

If indeed this flag truly represents us as Christians, as the children of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, then it too is a banner of love. The red cross represents the cross of Christ and His innocent blood shed there for our forgiveness and salvation. The blue represents the waters of our baptism, and the white the purity/holiness of Jesus that is given to us as a gift of God's grace and received through faith. When we look upon this flag we are reminded of the unconditional and amazing love that God lavishes on us in Jesus, and the love that we are called to reflect back to Him and to extend outward to all those around us. As the essence of God is love so must it be that of His children in Christ. As we look outward into our divided nation and world, we ask God to empower us to do so with His love in our heart. Our goal is not to have our way and say in matters of culture, society, and government, but to point people to God's ways and His Word. We pray that our Lord would use us to bring Jesus into the chaos and conflict that is growing, and that through us He might bring about unity and peace.