

Celebrating Independence Day,

There's a great poem in Ecclesiastes 3. It's all about time and the seasons of our lives.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NRSV)

3 For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:

The rock band *The Birds* made this poem into a popular song a generation ago. This song speaks to the different time—the seasons that come into our lives. They are days of building and some times of conflicts in our lives. Seems like time comes around for everything both good and bad and in between over the years.

The Fourth of July is a wonderful and particularly American holiday...it's a day to remember just one of the many seasons in our nation's past. Other nations celebrate their own days of independence, in Mexico it's Cinco de Mayo, in Norway it's Syttende Mai. Our 4th of July celebration are unique because our story as a nation—how we gained our independence is unique.

There was a season—a time of great conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Today there's a commitment of trust between our nations; but there was a time when our two nations considered themselves enemies. It's hard to imagine a season and time now when two nations that have so much in common would fight against each other.

Looking back at the history of the United States and the United Kingdom gives me a chance to see just how relationships between nations and even people can change. Yes once there was a time for war and conflict between these two great nations come but looking at the past 100 years I am reminded that there are also seasons not to tear apart but to build up, not to fight, but to defend each other. There are seasons when we should help other heal and rebuild not to destroy.

As we celebrate Independence Day this July I am ever grateful the God's promise for us is new mercies.

Lamentations 3:22-23 (NRSV)

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,

his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning;

great is your faithfulness.

May this Independence Day help us to look not just to the past—but to the future.
May we celebrate the freedom we have in Christ—the freedom to forgive, the
freedom to start over, the freedom to let go and let God.

Peace and thanks for your partnership in ministry,
Pastor John Heille