

**- Saint John's Pulpit (July 4, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost)
- "David's Independence Day" 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10**

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. ² For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵ At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

⁹ David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. ¹⁰ And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.

July, in between joy and sadness

Happy 4th of July! I know that all Americans celebrate this special day today. Independence Day in the pandemic! But it is not like what we experienced a year ago. We now experience heavy traffic whenever we drive, see lots of people everywhere, and feel energy to recover.

For our in-person worship, we begin to sing hymns today. Plus, we do the Holy Communion on the spot today. In many ways, Independence Day this year makes us liberate from the pandemic carefully, although it remains to be seen.

The month of July makes me struggle with two feelings; it is mostly from my personal status. July 4th is Independence Day when I celebrate and honor. On the other hand, July 27th is a Day of Armistice in Korea. On July 27, 1953, the Korean War had to be stopped temporarily and has been an obstacle for the peace in Korean Peninsula. The war is still ongoing.

This should be a big irony. One country is celebrating its independence this month with lots of fireworks, but another country is stressed because of the possibility to fire war again without independence from the past. So, July is my joy and my concern!

David's Independence Day

2 Samuel 5 presents a couple of important meanings in the history of Israel. One is David became king of Israel which means reigning two kingdoms- Israel (Northern) and Judah (Southern). The other is David conquered Jerusalem 'finally'. Do you know why I used the word 'finally'? To know this, we should go back to the moment when Joshua and the Israelites entered the Promised Land and subdued all other foreign tribes there.

The first and foremost mission for the Israelites in the Promised Land was to remove idols and all other gods except God, Yahweh. This can be understood as an effort to resist 'Syncretism' in Canaan culture. Thus, upon their entrance, they had to fight against many other foreign people to keep their Yahweh faith. However, there was one tough exception. It was the Jebusites!

The Jebusites reigned Jerusalem at that time. Although they had to be kicked out by the Israelites, their military power was so strong, and their place was known as an impregnable stronghold, Joshua and the Israelites had to live with them in the Promised Land.

⁶³ But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day. Joshua 15:63 NRSV

If we describe the Promised Land as a community of theocracy, the Jebusites had been a big risk to prevent the Promised Land from experiencing God's reign until David conquered.

So, we easily understand that how arrogant the Jebusites were when David tried to subdue which puts in 2 Samuel 5:6.

⁶ The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." 2 Samuel 5:6 NRSV

However, the Jebusites were defeated, and Jerusalem got a new owner, so now David begins to pay a property tax! The point is this. To take Jerusalem by David is more than registering it under his name. It means that the Promised Land became independent from foreign tribes finally. It took a long time, but David consecrated Jerusalem as a holy city by defeating the Jebusites. It is another Independence Day for David!

Lessons from David's Independence Day

Here is why I call today's sermon title David's Independence Day. From 2 Samuel 5, David begins to reign both Israel and Judah as one nation. It was very meaningful but was not stable as there were ensuing conflicts between Israel and Judah later. However, the story today makes us see the unification was from a genuine heart, not from bloody wars.

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. 2 Samuel 5:1 NRSV

“Look, we are your bone and flesh...” On the day of David’s Independence Day, he experienced one spirit and one family regardless of where he was, or where they were.

Don’t you think that this is what we really need now as we celebrate Independence Day this year? Independence Day needs to feel we are one family and one spirit in America. The pandemic has brought lots of issues to our community and country. Mostly they are separating one another, and make us blame one another nationwide and even worldwide.

Just like David’s Independence Day from the story today, I hope and pray that all Americans could experience a sense of unification. I also believe that all United Methodists need this too. The real one we should fight is not in us, but another Jebusites who prevents us from being one body.

Before speaking about unification as metadiscourse, I believe that it is more important to remove everything that prevents us from being one. If so, what is our common mission today? Overcoming the pandemic? Yes, it could be. But what’s the point of overcoming the pandemic if we are not unified?

When David became King of Israel, the first action he took was to expel the Jebusites from Jerusalem. By doing this, he let the Promised Land real Promised Land. He completed the Exodus finally! Moreover, he could build up Israel without threatens to separate.

As we celebrate Independence Day this year, we pray that we can overcome all things separate from one another. Like David, let’s finish this pandemic Exodus with safety, maturity, and spirituality. Happy 4th of July!