

## Juneteenth

Ponder: Celebrating freedom

Scripture: "He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Lk. 4:18, NKJV).

On January 1, 1863, as the Civil War raged, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing enslaved persons in the Confederate states. Of course the Confederates ignored it until they were defeated. Texas held out for two and a half years; Union Major General Gordon Granger announced the proclamation in Galveston on June 19, 1865. Thus began what is now a federal holiday, Juneteenth.

Imagine being "free" for over two years, but not knowing it or being able to benefit from it! And even after emancipation, countless people of color were discriminated against and abused.

As bad as earthly slavery is, bondage to sin is infinitely worse. God the Father sent Jesus to this world to "proclaim liberty to the captives." "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). By His suffering and death at Calvary and the offering of His atoning blood, Jesus provided for the liberation of all of sinful humanity.

Tragically, innumerable people remain unaware that freedom in Christ is theirs for the taking. They don't have to earn it or deserve it (as if such were even possible)! Confident trust in Jesus as the Son of God and obedience to His gospel would secure the blessings of liberty for them. Let us be like Major General Granger, announcing the good news of freedom!

But make no mistake about it – Satan and his minions will continue to harass, tempt, deceive, and abuse those who seek and embrace liberty in Christ. We rightly emphasize that obedience to the gospel isn't the end, but the beginning. "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt. 20:22). "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Hymn: "Wonderful Is My Redeemer"

Prayer: Loving Father, thank You for our liberty in Christ. Help us to spread the good news. In Jesus' name, Amen.