

# NATIONAL DAY REFLECTION ON PATRIOTISM

“Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned.” – This is a statement that speaks about the irresponsibility of an emperor who immersed himself in his private preoccupation oblivious to the crisis that was raging around him.

Whether the statement reflects a genuine fact or is a mere legend, the metaphorical truth of it is not far away from what we observe of events around the world, with some countries and peoples in dire crises of human making while their leaders and governments are self-absorbed in many things but are seemingly disengaged with the suffering on the ground.

## OUR DUTY

Singapore is well known for her great geographical location shielded from many natural disasters. We are blessed with a peaceful life. Yet, in a highly-connected world, we are not immune from the rumbling tumults elsewhere – trade feuds, currency wars, territorial hostilities, terrorism bloodshed, political chicanery, economic strife ...



As we celebrate our 53 years of nationhood this year, showing appreciation for an efficient government and an admirable progress over five decades of independence, it is well for us to be reflective on this Chinese saying, 国家兴亡·匹夫有责, which means that the rise and fall of the nation concerns everyone. Plainly, it is a reminder that everyone bears responsibility for the success or failure of society. We individually do not have to be shy to give ourselves a little pat on the back for having a part in the success.

Yet, we still must be sober about the high challenges in a new world today, putting ourselves bravely at the forefront of a struggle to continue our march and recognizing that whether we rise to greater heights or fall by the wayside is very much the responsibility of individuals to be INTERESTED instead of being INDIFFERENT to events that impact the wellness of society.

National Day to us is not just a day for celebrating the past glory and the present fortune, but also a reminder for us to keep ourselves INTERESTED in shaping the type of future life we want for our children and grandchildren and

be NOT INDIFFERENT to nicks problems in the bud. Within society, there are expectedly some people who would miss this point of importance as they are either drunk in their contented life or are self-despising of their abilities to be influencers for positive national development.

### CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Being concerned for the country (as contrast navel-gazing) is an expression of patriotism. While patriotism to us is a citizen's expected responsibility, we as Christians should also note another perspective of it – as our sacred mission to fulfil.

In the memorable OT prophecy on the advent of the Messiah, the prophet Isaiah said: "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders ..." – Isaiah 9:6

In our spiritual understanding of Isa. 9:6, Christ is the ultimate King who will have the governance of the nations under Him. (cf. Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 14:9) As citizens of the Kingdom, we know that God works through us.

In the human aspect of running the country, we elect the secular government worthy of our confidence to lead; but this is not to shirk our citizen duties by shaking our hands off all matters and saying, "I have nothing to do with the society; it's the government who has everything to do with our rise or fall as a nation!"

Our PM Lee once said to PAP Members of Parliament, "We are servants of the people, not masters."

It is not for us to be arrogant with the thought: "Ah ha ... the government works for me; I am the employer who calls the shots."

Instead, we recognize that the government does not work for herself but works for the people who elect her because the people need leadership to govern themselves. Now, good leadership is a rare commodity to be desired. Notwithstanding our inability to do the work of governing directly, we do have the ability to exercise our wisdom to elect the right people into the government and to play conscientious roles as citizens without undermining the good work of the government. Whatever we can, we should contribute to improve upon the country's achievements.

Acknowledging that Christ "has the government on His shoulders," we also recognise that God works for those who wait for Him. (Isa. 64:4) Clearly, it

does not mean that we sit back and have no work to do. God does work in many ways through us.

Accounts revealing of patriotism permeate the OT. Here, let's just look at Psalm 122 to appreciate the close connectedness of our faith and the patriotic feelings for our country.

### PSALM 122

The psalmist (David) felt joy for being invited to visit the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.” – v.3

David, upon entering the city, must be much spellbound by its splendour, with its impressive government houses, citadels, dwellings of the affluent, busy thoroughfares full of activity, etc. It was an earthly city, like we see of Singapore, neatly built up and exuding a sparkle which captivates a first-time visitor from a less developed place who would feel the sense of joy like David's for having the opportunity to set foot on.

David went up to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping God. In other words, his trip was spiritual in motivation. However, that did not obscure the physical and social reality of the city he witnessed as a blessed place that played a key role in forging a national identity to unite tribes who would usually think in terms of their tribal identities. Hence, the praise in his song did not stop at the house of worship but extended to the entire city.

*“That is where the tribes go up — the tribes of the LORD — to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.” – v.4*

David was cognizant of the close connection between the house of the Lord and the city. With the existence of the city there was the house of the Lord. With the existence of the house of the Lord where the people worshipped the LORD, the city flourished.

David loved the holy city and praised God for it. He prayed to God for peace and security *“for the sake of my family and friends”* (v.6-8); and he prayed *“For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.”* (v.9)

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people he chose for his inheritance. – Ps 33:12



Singapore today is a modern city with charming infrastructures. Here, we enjoy freedom of worship. It is a blessed place where a national identity as Singaporeans unites people of different cultures. With the existence of this city, there is the Church. With the existence of the Church where Christians go to worship the Lord freely, we envisage blessings upon the city for continuing progress! (You can visualise our blessedness in sharper focus if you look at spiritually barren places where freedom of worship is curtailed amidst a dismal panorama of life.)

We may have taken for granted our convenience of direct flights to many places in the world via Changi Airport without realising that people from many other countries in the region often must take connecting flights through Singapore. So, besides being located smack in the middle of the busy trade route between Europe and the Far East, Singapore is also an essential crossing point for many air travellers. Billy Graham prophesied in 1979 that Singapore would be the “Antioch of Asia”. As a cosmopolitan city, where massive human traffic from around the world pass through, we can sing as David sang – praying for peace, security and prosperity “for the sake of family and friends” and “for the sake of the house of the Lord, our God.”

### *NEVER TAKE THINGS FOR GRANTED*

The Hebrew nation of David’s time was in a prosperous era. King David later passed on the reign to his son Solomon.

After taking over the kingdom’s rule from his father, did Solomon take things for granted as he inherited the prosperous nation?

In the first part of 1 Kings (chapters 1-9), we read of Solomon's greatness. However, from chapter 10 onwards, we begin to read about his decline as he made bad decisions. We read about:

- His extravagant wealth
  - Solomon received yearly 666 talents of gold (1 Ki 10:14), a vast amount to the nation of Israel.
  - He "was greater in riches and wisdom than all other kings of the earth." (1 Ki 10:23)
- He married many foreign wives besides Pharaoh's daughter, and consequently descended into apostasy and idolatry (1 Ki 11:1-8)

Seemingly, the extreme wealth of Solomon led him into moral corruption, for which his purported wisdom was of no help to turn his shame around. The punishments had to come:

*"The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command.*

*"So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.*

*"Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen." – 1 Ki 11:9-13*



[FAITH AND PATRIOTISM NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE](#)

Our 53 years of nationhood has been an excellent era of progressive development and

prosperity due to our hardworking ancestors with decades of rule under a far-sighted government.

From our Christian standpoint of faith in God, and in patriotic spirit, we give thanks to God for His grace, and pray for this nation that she will continue to roar as fitting her description as “a Lion City” – “for the sake of family and friends” and “for the sake of the house of the Lord, our God.”

A spirit of faith in God and a spirit of patriotism towards the country are not mutually exclusive.

**PRAY SINGAPORE**  
 SUNDAY • 7 OCTOBER 2018 • THE NATIONAL STADIUM • 4PM - 7PM

<p><b>VISION</b></p> <p><b>DAY OF PRAYER &amp; FASTING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant moment in this Year of Prayer.</li> <li>• A spiritual act in humble obedience to God.</li> <li>• A sacred trust to shape the future of our nation, uniting all who are hungry enough to fast and desperate enough to pray.</li> <li>• A strategic step towards God's promised revival harvest in this kairos window.</li> </ul> <p>web <a href="http://prayingsingapore.sg">prayingsingapore.sg</a>          hotline 91371982</p>	<p><b>THEME</b></p> <p><b>SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY</b></p> <p>Seek the welfare of the city... and PRAY TO THE LORD ON ITS BEHALF, for in its welfare you will find your welfare... For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will CALL UPON ME and COME AND PRAY to me, and I will hear you. You will SEEK ME and find me, when you SEEK ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART. I will be found by you, declares the Lord... AMOS 9:1-4</p>	<p>Nations rise and nations fall. Studies reveal that nations decline primarily because of a weakening sense of duty and an increase in selfishness and the desire for wealth and ease. <i>THE RISE AND FALL OF GREAT POWERS</i> by JOSEPH H. LAY, Singapore is not exempt.</p> <p>True, Singapore is a miracle nation admired around the world. Yet, beneath that gleaming facade, there are signs of decline that threaten to undo her.</p> <p>We see a weakening sense of duty to stay faithful in marriage, to procreate, and to parent our children. We see the rise of secularism and youth shunning religion. We see a society fragmented along class divides.</p> <p>We are not in the pink of health. We are a nation at war with diabetes and depression. As one of the fastest ageing societies in Asia, eldercare will escalate. Dementia could become a national crisis sooner than expected.</p>	<p>We see a lack of rootedness and emotional bonding to Singapore. ESM Goh Chok Tong has warned that Singapore will decline when her people cease to value her, and begin to treat her as a stepping stone, a temporary station in life to get an excellent education, grow wings, and fly off to sink roots somewhere else to seek their own fame, fortune, and future.</p> <p>We love Singapore.</p> <p>We cannot brush these issues aside and conveniently leave them for future generations to tackle. That would be totally irresponsible. God expects us to do the right thing on our watch. Humble ourselves. Repent. Seek his face. Seek the situation of the city. God loves Singapore.</p> <p>When we seek him wholeheartedly, he promises to show up. He will show the way, turning Singapore Godward!</p>
<p><b>ONE NAME ONE HOPE</b></p>	<p><b>ONE HEART ONE VOICE</b></p>	<p><b>ONE FOUNDATION ONE FUTURE</b></p>	<p><b>ONE PEOPLE ONE DESTINY</b></p>

“皮之不存，毛將焉附？ (Without the skin, what can the hair attach to?) At the ground level of our human affairs, this Chinese saying should prompt the following reflections:

- Our faith in God and patriotism to country work together in producing outcomes that are good for the people and a glory to God.

- The government and the people are in an inseparable relationship as skin and hair; the proper functioning of the nation cannot do without the conscientious effort of either.

We must remain sober in faith – not to turn away from God as Solomon did. As we celebrate this 53<sup>rd</sup> National Day, we thank God for 53 years of blessings, and we pray for wisdom that the ship of the nation will continue to steer forward steadily with capable leaders at the helm.

May the citizens of Singapore be a patriotic people – not complacent about the contented situation they are in – guided by the National Pledge in marching on in a world with great changes taking place.

Majulah Singapura!

*John Lee*