

"Canada 150: Prepared for a Purpose"

Text: Psalm 72:1-8, 16-19

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on July 2, 2017 by Pastor Kevin Thiessen

SLIDE 1 - *Special Note: I am very grateful to the authors of "One Dominion: Celebrating Canada – Prepared for Purpose" Paul Richardson and Bob Beasley for the insights on Canada's history and especially the role of Christian men and women who helped shape our nation. I am also indebted to a sermon from Charles Spurgeon on Psalm 72 which served as a significant commentary for me on this passage. – Kevin Thiessen

Some Canadian Problems:

- Prairies
 - o **SLIDE 2** The fateful decision between fashion or freezing to death.
 - o Almost winter, Winter, Almost winter, construction
- In General
 - o Lovely people those Canadians – gentle, civilized, beautiful people ... until you give them hockey sticks!
 - o Seeing the American price first and getting excited
 - o Your international friends visit the other side of the country but still expect to see you
 - o **SLIDE 3** The Tim's bag stealing your precious donuts icing
- Since we're in Victoria ... "How many Torontonians does it take to change a lightbulb?" One, they hold the bulb to the socket and wait while the world revolves around them.

It's good to have some fun together, but on this special day when we celebrate a significant milestone in our nations history, we also want to take some time to dig into God's Word, to hear what He has to say to us regarding his purposes for his people, including specifically within our own nation and then our nations role within His world.

Psalm 72 is an excellent passage from which to draw God's purposes for His people's king, and of the King to come, Jesus Christ – God's own Son. Interestingly, in some translations, you may read a subtitle for this Psalm as *for* Solomon, though linguists affirm that it should be *of* or *by* Solomon. As you heard the Psalm read, it is most certainly David's words that are being recorded – his last in fact. David was dying, and so to make clear sense of this – Psalm 72 is a prayer of David for his son Solomon, but a Psalm of Solomon as he records his fathers final song. As Charles Spurgeon said, "Jesus is here – beyond all doubt – in the glory of his reign – both as he now is, and as he shall be revealed in the latter day glory."

SLIDE 4 – The insights I'll share about Canada are from a book that Chrisaleen Ciro made me aware of called: One Dominion – Celebrating Canada: Prepared for Purpose. This was produced by Bible League Canada and written by authors Paul Richardson and Bob Beasley.

Prepared for Purpose

At different milestones in our lives, it is appropriate and natural for us to stop, pause, reflect, and evaluate. We do this when we attend weddings and funerals, as well as birthday and anniversary celebrations. As a nation, when we reach a significant milestone, we also take time to pause and reflect about who we are, how we arrived here, and where we are going.

Canada is one of the worlds' wealthiest nations – we're known as a peacekeeping nation – and we're near or at the top of world rankings in areas like healthcare, housing, policing and personal rights. The air we breathe is the 3rd cleanest in the world behind only Estonia and Mauritius.

This is where Canada is in 2017. All these blessings have not only made Canada a great place to live, but also have formed within us a sense of who we are as a people. While we are a multicultural country, often called a mosaic, together we deeply value and guard the accomplishments listed. This mosaic fabric is considered a source of pride. Ours is not a nation of one story alone, but of many stories, from ordinary people, and often ordinary people of faith, who helped form the foundations of our wonderful country. Let us not just celebrate the blessings we enjoy today, but let us learn from those who have gone before us, and perhaps be inspired to action as well.

In 1864, our Fathers of Confederation gathered to name our new nation. Though they were determined to call it Canada, they debated how it would be designated. Republic represented cutting ties with the British Monarchy, while Kingdom could enflame the Americans who held residual resentment toward the British Crown from the time of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Sir Leonard Tilley was one of the 33 delegates of this gathering, and a man devoted to God. On the morning after the conference, as he was doing his daily morning devotions, he read Psalm 72:8, which read "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth." He was so moved by this

that he brought a recommendation to the other delegates, convinced that Canada should be one Dominion under God, that the nation should be named, "The Dominion of Canada."

The authors of One Dominion believe that in the naming of Canada - that day we received both our national mandate as well as our international mandate: our national mandate seeing God have dominion "from sea to sea" (Psalm 72:8a) and our international mandate seeing God have dominion "to the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8b).

Consistently throughout early Canadian history, and even more recently, the leaders of our nation and the architects of our society have recognized the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word. Scripture has been etched in stone in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill, formed in glass in the windows, inscribed in metal in the bells, written in ink in our constitution and Charter of Rights and sung in the words of our national anthem. All of these aspects of Canadian history recognize the supremacy of God and the importance of His Word.

In 1982, Canada "patriated" the constitution, a political process that led to Canadian sovereignty, allowing Canadians to amend our Constitution without requiring Britain's approval. This, the Constitution Act of 1982, was a landmark event and enacted our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Yes, this declaration of independence took place in the '80s, and it was in 1982 that "Dominion Day," aka July 1, was renamed in Parliament to "Canada Day." When Canada's constitution was patriated in 1982, there was an addition to the new constitution that was not found in the original British North America Act, now called the Constitution Act (1867). The first statement of The Canada Act (1982) is "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law..." While the new constitution no longer contains "Dominion" it does still acknowledge the supremacy of God ... and all else in the Constitution follows that initial and critical statement.

That same foundation is currently recognized by the Government of Canada and the Supreme Court. God was not mentioned in the former Constitution Act, but the supremacy of God was placed in the first statement in the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is no doubt the constitutional documents of any nation are meant to provide a good foundation to that nation, not only for the generation that made them, but for the generations that are to follow.

This weekend we celebrate the 150th birthday of our blessed nation. Most of us will sing our national anthem at least once this week. O Canada is one of the few national anthems in the world that was written as a hymn. From 1927 to 1980 the first verse of the National Anthem was based on a poem by Robert Stanley Weir. "O Canada" was proclaimed Canada's national anthem on July 1, 1980, one hundred years after it was first sung on June 24, 1880. When it was introduced to the Canadian population words had been added that we sing today: "God keep our land glorious and free!"

However, most of us never get a chance to sing one of our anthem's less familiar stanzas. The fourth stanza is quite moving:

"Ruler Supreme, who hears our humble prayer,
Hold our Dominion in thy loving care.
Help us to find, O God, in Thee,
A lasting rich reward.
As waiting for the better day,
We ever stand on guard.
God keep our land, glorious and free.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee."

National Mandate – Psalm 72:8a (Matt 7:24-27)

"We stand on guard for thee." An individual's response to God's call is critical ... the Bible broadens this principle (Psalm 33:10-12) – The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

This principle of needing a strong foundation and an active and ongoing response to follow God's call has been understood in Western Civilizations for many centuries, and was certainly the case with Canada's own Fathers of Confederation.

Psalm 72: 1-8

¹ Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ² May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! ³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor! ⁵ May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!

The first eight verses of Psalm 72 outline a foundation for godly leadership.

1. LEADERSHIP THAT IS RIGHTEOUS AND JUST The right for Solomon to reign over Israel was being passed on from his father David. Israel's kings were appointed by God – yet they were like governors – representative of the greater King to come. Solomon is charged to judge the people with righteousness and justice. He's tasked with defending the cause of the poor, and giving deliverance to the children of the needy. He will also crush the oppressor.

How fantastic is it for us to be under the rule of God's King – his Son Jesus Christ. We who call ourselves Christians, have given our allegiance first and foremost to our Lord – Jesus – and how wonderful it is to know that He sits on His throne ruling in righteousness and justice. **SLIDES 5-7** Again Charles Spurgeon comments, "he sits upon the great throne, unspotted by a single deed of injustice, or even mistake of judgment ... true wisdom is manifest in all the decisions of Zion's King. We do not always understand his doings, but they are always right. Partiality has been too often shown to rich and great men, but the King of the last and best of monarchies deals out even handed justice, to the delight of the poor and despised. Here we have the poor mentioned side by side with the king. The sovereignty of God is a delightful theme to the poor in spirit; they love to see the Lord exalted, and have no quarrel with him for exercising the prerogatives of his crown ... a deep sense of spiritual need prepares the heart loyally to worship the Redeemer King."

2. LEADERSHIP THAT BRINGS PEACE – Where Jesus is there is peace – lasting, deep and eternal. Death loses its sting. Trials and suffering – when Jesus is with us – can actually bring an increase rather than a diminishing of peace.

3. LEADERSHIP THAT CRUSHES THE OPPRESSORS and BRINGS DELIVERANCE – Where Jesus reigns in power, the poor and righteous rejoice, but the unrighteous oppressors are dismayed. Again I draw from Spurgeon's insights, "Humanity shall not wear out the religion of the Incarnate God. No infidelity shall wither it away, nor superstition smother it. As long as there are men on earth Christ shall have a throne among them. We see on the shore of time the wrecks of the Caesars, the relics of the Moguls, and the last remnants of the Ottomans, Charlemagne, Maximilian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us! **They were and are not; but Jesus forever is.**

4. LEADERSHIP THAT HEALS AND RESTORES – Like rain on mown grass Jesus' rule and reign is like a balm on all wounds. Jesus is grace ... He is love ... and his gospel meets the case of fallen humanity with grace and power – with hope, healing, renewal, and salvation.

5. LEADERSHIP THAT HAS DOMINION – From Pacific to Atlantic and Atlantic to Pacific – Jesus shall be Lord. All other power will be subordinate to his ... he has no rival. We have rulers of nations and cities, but Jesus shall be the ruler of all mankind. Jesus delivers ... Jesus saves ... Jesus lives ... and Jesus will be praised.

The Word of God and prayer have been a key part of the foundation upon which this nation was built. While not all of our leaders, historic or present, have been Christian, ordinary followers of Christ have had a direct impact on our national values. They have been instrumental in forming our society and nation, by God's grace and for His glory, as one Dominion under God.

Egerton Ryerson –

- Methodist minister for 20 years.
- In 1846 – wrote the Act for the Establishment and Maintenance of Common Schools in Upper Canada which later became the Education Act of Ontario.
- Universally accessible elementary education for children, standardized curriculum and textbooks, education rooted in Biblical and godly principles, standardized training and certification of teachers, creation of a *normal school* for the training of teachers and systematic inspection of schools to ensure that consistent high standards were met.
- This remained foundational for almost a century and in 1944 – the Minister of Education for Ontario says, "the schools of Ontario exist for the purpose of preparing children to live in a democratic society which bases its way of life upon the Christian ideal."

SLIDE 8 A life transformed by God has the potential to transform a nation.

Healthcare – Tommy Douglas (2004 – greatest Canadian of all time) – Douglas – 17 years the Premier of Saskatchewan – entered politics but never gave up his faith. In fact, it was his faith that drove him. Canadians have the medical care we have today because the heart of a pastor was broken by the overwhelming needs of his congregants during some of the most challenging economic times this nation has ever faced.

In Canada, the systems and benefits we enjoy are largely the result of the work of people who were transformed by Jesus. Together we can make a difference in our community and in our nation. We don't need to be a politician or a member of the clergy.

Bishop Edward and Mary Cridge – read directly from the book One Dominion

Ephesians 5:15-17 “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

QUOTE: “All that is necessary for evil to prosper is that enough good men do nothing.” (Edmund Burke).

International Mandate – Psalm 72:8b

Just as many of the founders and builders of Canada were men and women committed to the truth of the Word of God, so the ongoing hope of our nation is that God's Word will continue to guide and impact our leaders as well as our citizens. Not only is it the foundation of our nation, but it is our desire that it be the foundation for other nations around the world.

Scripture is full of people who had only their own perspective as they went through life. Yet the God of the Bible has an eternal perspective. He sees the whole story when we often only see in part – relative to our current circumstances.

- Joseph was a man who said to his own brothers that sold him into slavery, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”
- In the Apostle Paul – we see how God strategically invested in him for decades, even before he became a follower of Christ.
- Throughout history, God prepares people and nations for roles. People like Joseph and Paul did not stumble across their life path, it was prepared in advance for them. They have been a part of God's greater plan.

In Canada, we have a bilingual culture, and we are one of the most multi-cultural nations on the planet. Canadians can also travel almost anywhere in the world.

What is the purpose for all these freedoms, blessings and opportunities? Luke 12:48 says very clearly, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” We have not been blessed just so that we can enjoy being blessed; we have not been blessed just so that we can become insular and hold these blessings for ourselves. We are called to be a blessing to others and to reflect God to our nation and unto the ends of the earth.

The important thing is not just our final destination, but the journey that takes us there. If we ignore the lessons we have learned from our nation's journey so far, or if we abandon the foundation upon which we are formed, you will weaken the reality that is Canada. There is great danger that we would cease to be the nation that God has prepared us to be and that the world needs us to be.

In a speech in 2012, Cabinet Minister John Baird spoke about religious freedom and quoted from the speech given by former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker on the day he introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights: “I am Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.” Baird went on to say, “Today the great challenge, that awesome responsibility is shared by my cabinet colleagues and me, and it is important work that we take seriously. **SLIDE 9** The words of William Wilberforce still ring true today: “You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.” We are not called to stand idly by – we are a people called to action.

Our forefathers etched God's Word in stone, on glass, on paper and in song. They also implied that if we lose the vision of this foundation, we perish. So – as citizens and servants under the dominion of God – and through Jesus and His Holy Spirit gifted to and living in us – let us become and be a people that are righteous and just – that bring peace – that work against oppression and for the poor and needy – that offer healing and mercy and grace and love wherever and whenever possible.

Our foundation and journey led to the nation we are today. Our vision needs to reflect this continued pursuit and effort. This is why at Central we chose “Renewing our community through the gospel.” This renewal needs to happen in our own heart – in our city – and in the areas around the world where we have been given influence.

Benediction: **Psalm 72:17-19**

¹⁷ **May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!**

¹⁸ **Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.** ¹⁹ **Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!**