

Least to Greatest: Loving our Country

Intro

- Celebrated Independence Day this week, honor the founding and history of our country as well as its values.
- Day of celebration and pride in the country
- Loving our country can be complicated though
 - Does loving our country mean loving our country's government? All of its policies?
 - Do I have to love people and representatives who view things differently than me, or whose views I see as being harmful to the country?
 - Is criticizing our government, protesting, or speaking out a way of loving our country?
- Loving our country isn't as simple as just doing it. So how can we love this country, honor it, and serve it in our lives, especially at a time of year like this?

Jeremiah

- Give background on captivity
- What can we do when we feel powerless to the issues around us?
 - Build houses, live in them—plant gardens, eat their produce—give sons and daughters—pray for the peace of the city you are in
- Natural meaning — do what you can where you can. Make it your home and make the best out of it for you and your loved ones and the people around you
- **Spiritual Meaning — AE**
 - "To build houses and to inhabit them" = fill the interiors of the mind with the goods of heaven and the church
 - Houses = interiors of the mind — Inhabiting = heavenly life
 - Plant gardens = enrich with spiritual truths — eat = appropriate, receive — fruit = goods
- Individually, the message is look inward and do our best to apply the Lord's truths in our lives and do good around us
 - This inevitably makes a difference to the people around us
- **But what if we feel powerless because the country is so big and we are so small?**

Matthew 25

- Prophesying the last judgment
- Separating sheep from goats
 - **Hungry — food**
 - **Thirsty — drink**
 - **Stranger — took me in**
 - **Naked — clothed**
 - **Sick — visit**
 - **Prison — came to me**
- ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’
- The big message is that there is power in small actions
- If we fall into the trap of thinking we are too small and it makes no difference we can make the mistake of becoming like the goats
- We are given a teaching about how exactly this works and why there is power in these small actions

AC 6819

- Degrees of the neighbor
 - Individual
 - Community
 - Country
 - Church
 - Lord’s Kingdom
 - Lord
- Like steps on a ladder, you can’t just jump to what you think is important, but each step leads you to something smaller
- **If we all did this**
 - It would make individuals lives better
 - Make our community better, which makes the country better, which makes the church better, which makes Lord’s kingdom stronger, which brings the Lord more present into this world.