

122.1 It is Time – Peter Muhlenberg

John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg is one of my favorite American War for Independence heroes. Maybe it is because, as a Minister for so many years, I did not realize how much the Pastors of the eighteenth century influenced our fight for Liberty. Muhlenberg was a Lutheran Pastor who preached about independence to his congregation. Like many today, his fellow ministers and some of his church criticized him for his stance. As a few patriot pastors today, Pastor Muhlenberg held that his actions were patriotic and scriptural, not treasonous. He believed God gave him the inspiration to preach the message of freedom from tyranny.

Peter Muhlenberg became a respected delegate in the Virginia House of Burgesses. The more he became involved in political issues, the more his Lutheran Church superiors criticized him. Even his brother Frederick condemned his patriotic spirit. Peter wrote in response:

I am a clergyman, it is true, but I am a member of society as well as the poorest layman, and my liberty is as dear to me as to any man. Shall I then sit still, and enjoy myself at home, when the best blood of the continent is spilling? Heaven forbid it! I am called by my country to its defense. The cause is just and noble. I am convinced it is my duty to do so, a duty I owe to God and my country.

As General Washington engaged the British in the north, Peter knew that war in Virginia would be inevitable if the Americans could not stop them. After hearing Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech, he wanted to help Washington and the Continental Army with recruiting, believing they could drive the British from Boston and break their will to continue the fight. They needed combat volunteers. He preached sermons that inspired volunteers to join the cause but realized more was needed. The Bible teaches us to be "**doers of the word, and not hearers only**" (**James 1:22**). He believed God was calling him to action, not only preaching.

The last Sunday Muhlenberg preached to his Woodstock, VA congregation he chose **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8** as his text. He climbed into his pulpit and began reading:

To everything <i>there is</i> a season,	And a time to laugh;
A time for every purpose under heaven:	A time to mourn,
² A time to be born,	And a time to dance;
And a time to die;	⁵ A time to cast away stones,
A time to plant,	And a time to gather stones;
And a time to pluck <i>what is</i> planted;	A time to embrace,
³ A time to kill,	And a time to refrain from embracing;
And a time to heal;	⁶ A time to gain,
A time to break down,	And a time to lose;
And a time to build up;	A time to keep,
⁴ A time to weep,	

That day he preached for an hour and a half about duty, responsibility, and obedience to God's calling. He then read **verse 7**:

⁷ A time to tear,	A time to keep silence,
And a time to sew;	And a time to speak;

While many remained silent, he determined it was time to speak about the King's tyranny and oppression. He paused, looking into the eyes of his fellow believers and read the final verse:

⁸ A time to love,	A time of war,
And a time to hate;	And a time of peace.

Surprising everyone, he removed his black clerical robe and revealed his Continental Army Colonel's uniform. He marched down the center aisle to the back of the church and opened the door as a drummer in

full uniform began playing the *Call to Recruits*. Muhlenberg asked his congregants, “Who will join me in this fight?” Three hundred men responded and established the Continental Army’s Eighth Virginia Regiment.

Pastor Muhlenberg never returned to preach for his congregation. He believed he was unworthy of that calling once he had spilled blood in battle. He sacrificed his life’s ambition of church ministry to serve his country, believing God led him in the decision.

He served well and attained the rank of Major General. During the dreadful winter of 1777, he and his troops spent the winter with General Washington at Valley Forge. General Washington called on his chaplains and other minister, including Muhlenberg, to keep up the morale of their freezing and starving army. Muhlenberg’s father, Henry, a Lutheran pastor, visited their camp and commented that Washington rode around the camp encouraging the soldiers to repent and pray (a good suggestion for today).

General Muhlenberg served with Washington to the end of the War and was crucial to the British defeat at Yorktown. After the War, he served as Vice President of Pennsylvania under Benjamin Franklin and was a delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention. He later served in the US Congress and Senate. His statue is one of two from Pennsylvania in Statuary Hall at the US Capitol. He was born on October 1, 1746, and became an American hero.

His father, one of the founders of the Lutheran Church in America, and his brother Frederick had opposed Peter’s involvement in the War effort. However, Henry aided the American cause at Valley Forge. Frederick joined the cause and eventually became our first *Speaker of the House* in our new capital. Peter obviously influenced his family and those of the Woodstock Church and community.

I am not in the same league as Peter Muhlenberg, but I know what it is like to preach against tyranny and evil only to hear criticism and condemnation from church leaders and congregants. I know the loneliness of doing what you believe God has called you to do and going alone. I admire Pastor Muhlenberg and his willingness to stand up for God-ordained Liberty. I appreciate his willingness to speak and act.

We need Patriot Pastors today as well as Patriots from the Pews who are willing to be vigilant for Liberty. The way to obtain our inalienable right to freedom is to obey God and resist the tyranny of evil. The cost is high. Jesus promised we would pay a high price whenever we follow Him instead of men. He said, “⁵¹ **Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.** ⁵² **For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.** ⁵³ **Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law**” (Luke 12:51-53, NKJV).

Keep The Light of *Hearing God’s Call for Liberty* Burning!

GodNAmerica.com

GodNAmerica@gmail.com

405.361.3123