

Daily Devotion for June 20, 2022

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8:36

Today is our nation's recognition of Juneteenth. Last year, President Joe Biden signed a law making Juneteenth a Federal Holiday.

Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day or Freedom Day, commemorates the announcement of slavery's end in the state of Texas on June 19, 1865. In 1863, President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, declaring freedom for those enslaved in Confederate states. But it took two more years of hard-fought battles before General Lee's surrender on April 9, 1865. During those two years, many slaveholders moved to Texas since the “border state” was protected from the fighting and yet the law still could not yet be enforced there. By 1865, there were about 250,000 enslaved people in Texas.

Since television, Twitter, or texting wasn't a thing in those days, news traveled slowly. It took a month for the news of Lee's surrender to reach Texas, and another month for the final surrender of the Army of Trans-Mississippi on June 2. It was not until June 19, 1865, Texans got the life-changing message as it was finally announced by General Gordon Granger, of the Union Army, with the support of 2,000 federal troops with him: “All slaves are free.”

As you can imagine, the streets of Galveston, Texas were filled with joy as the formerly enslaved celebrated their glorious new freedom. That celebration continues each year on June 19 as local communities gather and remember the message, value, and challenging journey of freedom and equality for African Americans since that time.

Today, we are hearing more about Juneteenth. It started with a message declaring what was already true before it was heard on June 19, 1865. It was true on June 2, when the last army surrendered. It was true on April 9, when General Lee first surrendered. It was true two years earlier on January 1, 1863 when the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. But it took some hard battles and long journeys to deliver that life-changing message until all were able to hear it and experience it.

Thought For Today: Thank God that we are free in Christ. Before we met Christ we were slaves to sin, but as John 8:38 says, “If the Son has set you free, you are free indeed. Have we really heard and believed that we are free? Is this experience of life-giving freedom evident to you?”

Today's Prayer Focus: Thank God that Jesus set us free from the power of sin and death. Thank God for the freedom we have in Christ. Deo Volente.