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**“All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”**

**~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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I hope everyone had a fabulous holiday weekend as we celebrated our nation’s independence. It was that event that gave me much food for thought as I considered today’s meaning of the legacy given to us by the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed the belief “... that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

We know how far short the founders fell in applying that truth to all Americans. Enslaved persons and women were among those excluded from this guarantee, and we are still reaping the results of those injustices. Many do not know that Native Americans did not win full U.S. citizenship until 1924, and their right to vote in all 50 states was not fully secured until 1962. Jefferson’s language continues to be our true north as we continue to work to make these founding principles a reality for all of us.

So this week I thought about liberty, and happiness. It seemed to me that so many of us these days are proclaiming our individual rights to do pretty much whatever we want, no matter the impact on others. Is this emphasis helpful? What are we missing, if anything, if we continue this focus?

It also seems to me that our national psyche conflates our liberty with our happiness – if we are free, we will necessarily be happy (and prosperous, but that’s another conversation 😊) Is that proposition really true?

***What are your thoughts on this? What is your view of personal liberty? Do you think your liberty makes you happy, and in what way? What responsibilities do you have, and what is their source?***

***Do you think our nation has changed from its founding to require a more communitarian or collective structure of our civic life? Why? What has caused such a change?***

***How do we achieve this shift, if it’s even possible? Do we change individually, collectively, or structurally?***

***What are the attributes of leadership that help us create our new national structure? What are the attributes of citizenship?***