**Democracy is Being Tested**

Democracy survives not only by protecting speech, but by tempering it with laughter and forgiveness.

Free speech is democracy’s lifeblood. Without it, citizens lose the power to question, resist, and imagine change. Yet speech alone is not enough. A society that cannot laugh or forgive risks turning every misstep into permanent exile. Humor, as Jimmy Kimmel shows, softens truth and makes it bearable. Forgiveness, as Erica Kirk reminds us, offers resurrection and renewal. Together, they prevent free speech from hardening into a weapon of division.

Contrarians argue that forgiveness and humor are luxuries, not essentials. Power, they say, is preserved by control, not by laughter. For those unsettled by dissent, satire is dangerous, forgiveness is weakness, and tolerance is too thin-skinned to protect. From this view, democracy endures only by limiting speech, not liberating it.

Democracy survives not just by protecting words but by tempering them with laughter and forgiveness. The test is daily: ours, we the people—each of us—defending free speech as the safeguard of democracy.