

Veterans Stories – Jesus’ Story – Nov. 8, 2023

Veterans Day is Saturday, Nov. 11. Honor those who serve. Our own. Their stories of service & sacrifice inspire us, but they also remind – Jesus.

John F. Kennedy – Navy. WW II – Kennedy: Navy Reserves, deployed to the Pacific theatre, commanded a patrol torpedo boat. One night near the Solomon Islands, their boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer and cut in half. Pieces of the boat began to sink, several men were killed, and others were flung overboard into a sea of burning oil. Kennedy dove in after them, rescuing 3 men. For 12 hours, Kennedy & the surviving crew members clung to the hull of their boat, hoping to be rescued. Didn’t happen.

Kennedy refused to let his back injury from the collision stop him from towing a badly burned crew member to safety. He placed the man in a life jacket and then swam with the life jacket strap clenched between his teeth, dragging his crew member behind him for 3 miles. They eventually reached a nearby island, bringing the man – and leading the rest of his crew – safely to shore, where they were later rescued.

Kennedy was awarded the Purple Heart, as well as the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, for his brave actions, with no thought to his personal safety.

- Jesus didn’t let the pain of the cross stop Him from saving us. Agony.
- “Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.” – **Heb. 12:2**
 - **Jesus** suffered for us, bravely... could’ve stopped it. Didn’t.

U.S. Marine Corps - Cpl. Duane E. Dewey. Deployed to Korea, Korean War Leader of a machine gun squad when his position was attacked. They were surrounded and outnumbered, and it was the middle of the night.

Dewey was wounded by a grenade, being treated by a Navy medic when 2nd grenade landed at his feet. Although in incredible pain, Dewey yanked the medic to the ground, yelled a warning to the rest of the squad, & flung himself on the grenade, shouting, “Doc, I got it in my hip pocket!”

The grenade lifted Dewey off the ground; he sustained multiple shrapnel wounds throughout the lower part of his body and was later found to have also been shot in the stomach. Miraculously, he survived – and so did all of his fellow squad members, whose lives he had saved.

Dewey was presented with the Purple Heart; the Korean Service Medal with two battle stars and the United Nations Service Medal. A few months later, he was presented the Medal of Honor by Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower

- Jesus took **our punishment**. He was perfect. No sin.
- “Because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received.” – **Isaiah 53:5 (Good News Trans)**

Air Force – Capt. Christy Wise. Paddle boarding in Destin, struck by boat on Apr. 11, 2015. Life saved, lost right leg above the knee. 8 mo. in rehab. But 9 weeks after the accident, she participated in Warrior Games for the Air Force, won 11 medals. She rep Team USA in Invictus Games, May 2016. But she still had to pass the Air Force fitness test to return to duty as Pilot.

She returned to active duty on May 20, 2016, little more than a year after her injury. She is only the 6th amputee, and the 1st female to return to flying in the Air Force after losing a limb.

Air Force - Sgt. Robin Hopkins – Air Nat’l Guard, day job – Sherrif’s Deputy. Call – officers down, suspect heading N in stolen police car. She pursued... block his car, force a crash. He began shooting. 4th shot hit her, shattering her left hip, destroying main artery & extensive damage to 2 femoral arteries, limiting circulation. She began long road to recovery. 20 months later, she took her phys fitness test w/ 100 members of her Guard family & therapists cheering her on. She remains a security force specialist w/ 150th Security Forces Squadron.

- Jesus knew His assignment would be **hard**. Multiple times they tried to stone Him... He kept coming back. Kept teaching, healing, serving.
- “For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will.” – **John 6:38 (New Living Trans)**
 - **Jesus didn’t quit.**

Army Chaplain Joseph Watters – Vietnam War. Chaplain Watters was moving with one of the companies when it engaged a heavily armed enemy battalion. As the battle raged & casualties mounted, Chaplain Watters, with complete disregard for his safety, rushed forward to the line of contact. Unarmed and completely exposed, he moved among, as well as in front of, the advancing troops, giving aid to the wounded, assisting in their evacuation, giving words of encouragement, and administering the last rites to the dying. When a wounded paratrooper was standing in shock in front of the assaulting forces, Chaplain Watters ran forward, picked the man up on his shoulders, and carried him to safety. Another time he ran thru intense enemy fire to aid a fallen soldier. A short time later, the paratroopers pulled back to prepare for a 2nd assault, Chaplain Watters exposed himself to both friendly and enemy fire between the two forces in order to recover two wounded soldiers. Later, when the battalion was forced to pull back into a perimeter, Chaplain Watters noticed that several wounded soldiers were lying outside the newly formed perimeter. Without hesitation and ignoring attempts to restrain him, Chaplain Watters left the perimeter 3 times to carry injured soldiers to safety. Satisfied that all of the wounded were inside the perimeter, he began aiding the medics --applying field bandages to open wounds, obtaining and serving food and water, giving spiritual and mental strength and comfort. While moving from position to position, distributing food & water and tending to the needs of his men, Chaplain Watters was giving aid to the wounded when he himself was mortally wounded.

- Jesus gave His life for us. He searched out the lost who needed rescuing
 - “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” – **John 15:13**
 - “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” – **1 John 3:16**

God is looking for willing hearts to serve Him. To go the distance... no matter the cost.

Song of the week: “Veterans Day Medley” – Anthem Lights