

Memorial Day

We solemnly drove through the battlefield of Vicksburg. In that tranquil setting, it was hard to imagine the scene of death and dying recorded on the memorials listing the names of the casualties. It was only one campaign of the Civil War.

We have walked the hills of Little Bighorn and looked at the crosses scattered around the battlefield, and then our own Meeker massacre.

Over the beautiful calm waters of Pearl Harbor rises the memorial of the great battleship Arizona. Our tour boat drifted silently toward the memorial as thousands before us had done. So many tears of the living unpretentiously joined the commemorative flowers cast into the sea, in memory of the dead.

At Arlington National Cemetery we saw the tomb of the unknown soldier and endless rows of white crosses, each marking the final resting place of men and women who defended this nation.

In Washington D.C. we joined many others pausing at the Vietnam Memorial wall. On that wall is the name of Bill Adams, a young man who left a grieving young widow Sandra, they were in school with Jean and I. Bill was a helicopter pilot who died trying to save others and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and part of highway 13 North of Craig is dedicated in His honor.

Your memories hold the same or similar pictures of the manifest results of evil advocated, instigated and propagated between adversaries that actually had been created to love and care for each other and the earth upon which we live and by which we are sustained.

It is altogether right that we should pause and remember those souls who have gone before us to provide for us the freedoms we cherish and that are being compromised and eroding away again.

That is the reason Memorial Day was established. That we might remember and that they may not have served and died in vain.

But let us not forget even for a moment those mental pictures are not just of our recent heritage, but have been a reality revealing just how much satan reviles any source or action of righteousness for all of mankind on earth. The greatest seemingly defeat by death in human history was turned around and used by God as the greatest potential victory for the human species ever possible! I remind you of Calvary and Jesus conquering sin and eternal death.

As we reflect upon this Memorial Day there seem to be only two choices for us to consider:
1. We may accept the historical record as interesting and then just continue letting life lead where it will. i.e. deferring to those who are richer, stronger, more powerful or more cunning. "live and let live"..."react" to life circumstances.

2. OR the second way is to gain understanding of the values for which those who gave their lives that we may enjoy freedom and the pursuit of happiness. We should then commit ourselves to the continuation of that dream wherein it emanates from the throne of heaven.

The prospect of armed conflict in our country may be unavoidable in the eternal plan of God. If that is so, the armor of a soldier metaphor used by Paul in Ephesians 6 teaches us the preparation necessary. The rash of senseless shooting against unarmed innocents is proof text enough of the need to keep and bear arms. We as a church body need to carefully review our own security.

When we think about it, being a Christian Soldier is very descriptive of life on earth. Life is a battleground not a paradise! That paradise on earth was violated in Genesis chapter 3 and will not be available again until revelation chapter 21! When we claim the benefits of being a Christian and serving under the banner of Christ WE ARE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS and bear the earthly consequences to gain the heavenly inheritance.

Let's see what insights we might gain at this time of Memorial commemoration by looking at how the apostle Paul describes it in Ephesians 6 starting with verse 10: *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in HIS mighty power.*

--- A Christian Soldiers strength is from the LORD, not government or earthly forces, but from the Spiritual power on high. God can do anything, but He almost always uses people who are being impacted to be the instruments of His divine retribution against the deployment and advances of evil.

EPH 6:11 *Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*

---the full armor of GOD means complete commitment to the revealed word. A soldier only partially trained, equipped or committed is extremely vulnerable in combat and risks the life of others as well as themselves. Let me tell you a little of my basic training in the army: We were taught and took a vow to respond to the commands of those over us without question or reservation. In a combat situation it may mean our life, but it was necessary for ultimately saving the lives of others. In fact each person in a squad was given a number and if your number was called, you stepped forward to fulfill your duty without having to consider or debate. You my Christian brothers and sisters are in a squad of god's army!

EPH 6:12 *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

---The mindset for a Christian Soldier is that of a combat soldier. Life is a spiritual battle; we must be equipped mentally and physically if we are to gain the victory of eternal life and provide opportunity for others to do likewise. Our great distress comes when we allow evil to convince us we are fighting only a physical enemy – that is satans most effective weapon in a conflict – the enemy is evil possession of physical proportions!!!

EPH 6:13 *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

The full armor start with being a Christian, continues with growing in faith through education

and practice, practice, practice. In the army we called it drill, drill, drill. Somewhere along the line in our nation we gradually became complacent and responsible adults were so relieved that a war was over, they failed to continue teaching, training, inspiring next generations in the strategies of the enemy and drill into each ensuing generation the necessity of defending themselves! That includes we adults present as well. One little measure of that is to check our individual equipment and communication capability with the Holy Spirit, and our willingness to ignore personal safety and comfort and perform our duty.

EPH 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

---For thee Christian soldier, there is specific knowledge to gain, specific action to take... My fellow Christian combat soldiers, we are a squad in the great army of the Lord. Our attitude needs to be constantly examined and adjusted during the sojourn of our lives accordingly.

EPH 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

---Our greatest weapon is taught and is modeled by Jesus. Modeled by what HE has done for each of us and promised to us, love – love for the soul of the enemy, not love for the protagonist of that soul!

EPH 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. The 6 Day war of Israel in June 1967 is a classic example of this verse, “the best defense is a good offense” we were taught by our football coaches, and by our army sergeants. The Israeli against all odds was victorious because God inspired them to use their defenses by attacking the surprised enemy! Sure Christian soldier our faith is the great defense of our righteousness – but it is used offensively to extinguish the evil one!

EPH 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

---Our study, inspiration, determination, with the goal of heaven in sight tied with our training will give us weapons to attack - not just always being on the defensive.

EPH 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

---We give too much lip service to the need and power of prayer. I have changed my mind about next week’s sermon topic noted in the bulletin: *FYI next Sunday we are going to examine the inheritance of all who die:* “Heaven Or That Other Place Luke 16:19-31” Rather I am going to spend this week studying and praying for help in illuminating and electrifying our praying. For without that under girding action of faith the rest of this is little more than a pep rally on a fishing trip. Pray for me as I prepare for you a message on prayer under the guidance and direction of the indwelling HOLY SPIRIT...

Application for today:

First I would call on all Christians to adjust their mindset that the goal on earth is not paradise during our life times, but a battleground for ourselves and the eternal sake of others.

Do you remember from last weeks message on faith from Hebrews 11:6 NASB: *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him.*

Today we have learned another way of pleasing the Heavenly father – to be a Christian soldier in the Lord’s army...

Those whom we remember on this Memorial Day weekend 2022 carried the banner of love to their grave. We who survive are honor bound, scripture bound, righteousness bound to pick up the banner of love and carry it, perhaps also with our very lives until others retrieve it from our lifeless hands. Then and only then will be ready for MAT 16:27 *For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.* and REV 22:12 *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*

Perhaps then Vicksburg, Little Big Horn, Thornburg, Pearl Harbor, Viet Nam and our personal engagement along with all the rest will make some sense.

A final thought from Solomon in PRO 10:7 *The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.*

I Salute the memory of the righteous, and I salute you memory makers for righteousness.

Our invitation hymn for this Memorial day 2022 is if you are being directed by the Holy Spirit, read the inside cover of your bulletin – then step forward and speak to me.

Gen 4:8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Since the time Cain deliberately and maliciously murdered his brother Abel there have been wars on the earth, a result of the introduction of sin of Eve and Adam in the garden of Eden. The uniquely created earth was violated. This beautiful earth that was created for peace and righteousness became a place of carnage and killing and remains so today and will continue until the New Heaven and New Earth are established ...

It began with satan's corruption of humanity.

It continues with man's inhumanity to each other.

It will end with GOD'S final judgement and eternal destination for humanity.

The only possible cessation of war is when the earth's population share a common value system revealed by CREATOR GOD. The only possible cessation of war on earth could have been if Israel had been obedient to GOD before JESUS and if the Christian world of the church age were totally obedient to GOD since JESUS.

The earth teeters on the precipice of another conflagration which is inevitable in a world whose prince is the devil himself whose goal is exactly opposite of GOD'S goals of peace and righteousness. We are told what the results are going to be in terms of war:

Rev 9:13-21 13 The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. 14 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. 17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. 18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. 19 The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. 20 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood-idols that cannot see or hear or walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

This Memorial Day weekend celebration was established to honor the veterans of the civil war and has been expanded to all wars of the U.S. For years our homeland has enjoyed unprecedented security and freedom. But now we are starting to once again experienced the terrible violation of that freedom we have grown to cherish.

CHRISTIANS do not despair, lose hope or agonize over what may have been: There are wonderful messages of encouragement, strength, reassurance, guidance, and hope for the Christian recorded in 2 Cor 10:3-6 *3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary,*

they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Col 3:12-17: 12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

1 Tim 6:12-16

12 *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which God will bring about in his own time-God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*

Invitation

Words to live by: 1 Peter 2:11-12 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*