

So on this Veterans Day, I come to you with absolutely zero military service whatsoever. The closest I ever got was this recruiter, who setup a display by the side wall of our high school cafeteria. I honestly can't remember if he represented the Army or the Marines, but I felt, as a grandson of veterans, myself, that I owed him the most basic respect of, at least, hearing him out. He even came to our house soon after that. Nevertheless, I just couldn't do it. I don't know if I just didn't have enough courage, mental or bodily strength, physical stamina, determination, patriotism, or whatever else...I just didn't have *it*.

Instead, the next closest I can get to any personal connection on this Veterans Day is a collection of three hundred-some pages of a genealogy report that was put together for my mom a couple years ago, going back however many centuries for both sides of our family. In the charts and graphs galore, I see relatives who served in both World Wars, the Civil War, even the Revolutionary War. I won't tell you too much about the one ancestor, who was born in Prussia and ended up fighting on the British side of things as a mercenary before joining the Continental Army a few years later. Except for that one detail, I know next to nothing about the several others who served their nation, some even before it became a recognized national entity.

I could tell you years they lived, where they lived, what regiment they served in; other than that, they're just names on a page. Their story isn't known to my family's generation. They're just eerily sketched into gravestones scattered throughout Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, just like those in Arlington or on walls in Washington, D.C. I don't know their motivation. I don't know what drove them into service. I don't know how they embodied a sacrifice, an eerily personal connection to understanding what drove a man half-way around the globe to not die for a country but die for the world. And yet, I wonder, if my ancestors were perfectly fine with their story not being known for the generations to come. It's quite possible that wasn't their motivation anyway. They just felt this abundance of...something to give for others.

The only personal story I do know about those names on a pages is with my grandfather and grandmother, both of whom served in World War II. When my grandfather finished his time in the Army and my grandmother in an administrative position with the US Army Air Corps, they were both discharged to California, where they met, where they fell in love, where they got married at St. Monica's Catholic Church, and where my mom was born in Santa Monica. Maybe that's what drove them into service: not simply wanting

to positively impact the future of their own children and grandchildren yet to be born and who knows what after that. Maybe there's something to be said about the relationships made, not just on battlefields and recounted as years of service on pieces of paper or massive walls. Maybe there's something about the moments shared in basic training and long sleepless nights, when you have absolutely nothing and no one else besides each other. Because in each of those women and men committed to something greater than themselves lies an abundance of...something, that, quite honestly, many of the rest of us cannot fully understand.

Who knows? Maybe that's the closest we can get to understanding about a descendent of a king and prophets, and a son of a carpenter, about an abundance of...something that drove him all the way to giving up his own life not just for his own family and friends close by in Nazareth, but for people who never trusted Him, religious elite who manipulated for their own power the very faith he was raised in, even kings and protectorates who tried to kill him. What could possibly drive someone to die for such people? And not only that, even after going to a cross and rising from a grave with such undeniable love for all humanity; still that humanity would use His name of peace and new life as a justification for ending life, seizing property, and on and on we

could go. What could possibly drive someone to want to shape a Kingdom of peace and everlasting life for them too? He must have an abundance of a holy...something.

In the end, out of God's abundant love for the entire world in Jesus Christ, even in the face of the absolute worst our humanity could unleash against the carpenter's son, came a Resurrection for all the unworthy, setting the stage for the abundance to emerge in each of us, an abundance of the Risen Christ alive and well in our hearts: ready to continue fighting for all those we deem unworthy; because, that's just where our Lord yearns to go each and every time, including to us. Of course, in the meantime, we give thanks to God for the precious glimpse we are privileged to witness with such an abundance of service in our veterans among us. But we also hope beyond hope for the day when war is no more, no more reason for women and men to fight at all, no more violence, no more lust for power: when the Kingdom of the most peaceful serenity becomes an unstoppable reality for all of God's children. Nevertheless, thanks be to God that it has already more than begun in Jesus Christ, still our Risen Lord and Savior. Thanks be to God indeed!

Amen.