

Memorial Day 2017

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again on this Memorial Day, and as we may ask, well, what is Memorial Day? Memorial Day is an official holiday in the United States, and it was observed on May the 30th until 1971, when for the reasons for federal employees, it got changed to the last Monday in May, and so they could have a long weekend.

And it's also known as Decoration Day. There was a custom of placing flowers on the graves of the war that began on May 5, 1866 in Waterloo, New York, and also Waterloo has been recognized by Congress as the official birthplace of Memorial Day.

And it was in 1868 that General John Logan, then President of the Grand Army of the Republic, declared that May 30th would be a day to decorate the graves of comrades with flowers who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion.

And then after World War I, the day was set aside to honor all Americans who died in war. So they began opening up the recognition and the remembrance of all those who served, and also then the custom was extended to all those who had lost relatives as well during this period of time.

And there are a lot of ceremonies. I know we place flags along roadways. There are flags that are placed in cemeteries.

[1 : 40] And the most solemn ceremony that is done for Memorial Day is the placing of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns there in Arlington Cemetery. Those of you who have been able to see that or watch that, it's a very, very moving, moving ceremony that they have there.

And today, or this weekend, we are celebrating that day. And there are a lot of people who just look at Memorial Day for a three-day weekend. Again, a reason to have a day off, a reason to have a cookout, or a reason to go to the lake or do whatever.

But for those who have lost someone serving this country, it's more than just a three-day weekend. It's something that is very special, a time that's set aside.

And even for us as Americans, when we stop and think that we owe our freedoms that we enjoy today and the strength of our nation, what America is known for, a free, a strong nation that is worth fighting for.

And as we remember those men and women who have died for this country, we remember that we have the freedom today to preach God's Word.

[2 : 54] We have the freedom to read God's Word. And as long as we're able to enjoy this, I think we need to realize that it is only ours to enjoy because of those who have fought for the freedoms that we have today.

So we have the right to pursue peace. We have the right to pursue prosperity. We have the right to enjoy our families. We have the right to be here together this morning and worship our Heavenly Father.

And we thank God for those who have died to help set us free. So on Memorial Day, we see Memorial Day as a day to mourn the loss of those who have died, to remember the lives.

And we're also thankful for their sacrifices. And as we prepare to remember those who have died for our country, I think we can look and see how the one who died for us to provide our salvation is one that we can also think about today as the one who died to set us free from our sins.

And so Jesus, as we think about it, well, Memorial Day, Jesus fought the armies of hell. Literally on the cross of Calvary, Jesus died and he won the victory.

[4 : 23] He won the war. Because we know that ultimately when we come before God, we are not going to be judged for our sin because that has already been judged on the cross of Calvary.

And so as we think about our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ, as we prepare to remember those who have fought and died for our country, we look at what Jesus has accomplished on the cross of

Calvary for us.

And for the Christian, every Sunday is a Memorial Day. Because we think of what Jesus accomplished on the cross of Calvary.

And we remember what he has accomplished for us. And we worship him as the Messiah. We worship him as Lord. We worship him as Savior. And so in light of Christ's battle, let's take a closer look as in memorial of Jesus and the likeness of our celebration to the military.

So Memorial Day, first of all, we mourn the loss. We mourn the loss. And I would like for us to look at Matthew 18, verses 12 through 14.

[5 : 35] Matthew 18, and verses 12 through 14. And as we look at the mourning the loss, we look at the parable of the lost sheep.

The parable of the lost sheep. And you say, well, what does that have to do with this? Well, let's read this parable. Verse 12. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

Verse 14. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. So as we remember and as we mourn the loss of the earthly body of Jesus Christ, we've got to realize, who are the guilty ones?

We are. And isn't it interesting that Jesus gave his life for the guilty? You know, as Americans, we don't often think about how in a difficult place we are.

[7 : 01] We think, well, we deserve freedom. We think we're human beings. We deserve to be free. Well, if we think about that for a moment, what do we truly deserve?

We deserve to spend eternity in the lake of fire forever, for eternity paying for our own sin.

And that's what we deserve. We're the guilty ones. But isn't it marvelous that Jesus says, if someone has a hundred sheep and one goes astray, will he not go out and seek the one that is lost?

And who are lost? We are apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus gave his life for us. And we know that if there were only one sinner that had strayed and was lost, and we like to say, had it only been me, had it only been one of us, Jesus would have still died for the one.

But we know he died for all, and he paid our sin debt. So as we mourn the loss, what did we receive in return?

[8 : 19] And what did Jesus receive in return? Jesus got to go to be at the right hand of God, his rightful place. And what did we receive out of that bargain? Salvation.

Eternal life. Eternity with the Father. And eternity with Jesus Christ. And as we think about mourning the loss of those that have gone before us, as we think about mourning the loss of our loved ones, those who have died in Christ, the Apostle Paul says, we are not to mourn as others who have no hope.

Because while we may mourn the loss of their earthly, their physical body, we are going to be able to spend eternity with them in heaven.

So we mourn the loss, but we also, secondly, remember the lives. So on Memorial Day, we remember the lives of those that gave their life.

Let's look at Luke 24. Luke 24, and verses 13 through 25. A little bit of a long section of Scripture here.

[9 : 29] But Luke 24, beginning with verse 13. And this is where Christ appears to the guys on the road to Emmaus. Remember the lies. Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained so that they did not know him.

And he said to them, What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad? Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to him, Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem?

You can hear the sarcasm. And have you not known the things which happened there in these days? And Jesus, what things? So they said to him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who

was a prophet, mighty indeed, and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him.

So what were they recounting? What were they remembering? They were remembering. They were also remembering his life. Because when we see what they're talking about, the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, they talk about he was a prophet.

[10:57] He was mighty indeed. He did great works. And also in word. He spoke truth before God and all the people.

And how then the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him. But, verse 21, we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel.

Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women of our company who arrived at the tomb early astonished us. When they did not find his body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said he was alive.

And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it, just as the women had said. But him they did not see. Then he said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart, to believe in all that the prophets have spoken.

So what does he say to them? How foolish are you? Did you not believe what the prophets said?

And when we think of Isaiah, when we think of the other prophets who prophesied of what was going to happen to the Son of Man, what was going to take place, and how he was going to have to suffer, then they would have realized this was, Jesus is, the Messiah.

[12:22] Because they were remembering his life. They were remembering what Jesus was and what Jesus had said on earth. And part, isn't part of mourning, the emotional healing process of mourning, remembering a person's life.

and it's good for us to not dwell on the death, but remember the life. And it's amazing to see the transition in the demeanor of people who have lost a loved one when we ask them, tell me a little bit about your loved one.

And when they begin to recount the things, I've got a funeral, I have a funeral to do at one o'clock. And last night, when I was asking the family, tell me someone I don't know, I'd never met before, and I said, tell me about your mom.

And they were recounting things about that. And the stories that they were telling were precious stories and caused them to smile every once in a while.

And so this is part of the emotional healing process, is remembering the life of one who is gone. As we think about the things we remember or the things we think about individual, people put different things on headstones, do they not?

[13:48] Sometimes there are epitaphs. And what I've always enjoyed, it's a weird thing to enjoy, but I've always liked in the graveyard to look at the headstones, see the dates, and if they had pictures and also the epitaphs and the stories that they give.

Here are some of the epitaphs that I found and just looking to see what was on some graves. One was gone too soon. Another, dear parents, we will miss you much. We know you rest with God. Another, safe in the arms of Jesus, faithful unto death, gone but not forgotten. Go, spirit, go thy way, at rest, asleep in Jesus.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Life's work, well done. She rests in peace. And all these messages talk about the one who's departed.

Talk about the one whose body is lying there in the grave. But then we ask ourselves the question, what do we remember about Jesus? Well, we remember as he walked this earth, as he walked through life, the answer is, I believe he would want us to remember how he lived.

[15:00] And how did Jesus live? Jesus showed love. Jesus lived a life. And he gave us that example. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

And I think what we can remember or what we can think about as we remember the life of Jesus, he came not for himself, but he came for us. He came to save those who were lost remember the parable about the 99, the 100 sheep, one is lost.

The shepherd will go and seek after the one who is lost. And thank God that he came and seeking, came to seek after us.

Because we know the Bible tells us that there's none that seeks after God. Not a single person seeks after God. It's God who seeks after us. And it's his Holy Spirit that draws us to him.

And it's his Holy Spirit that woos us. And it's his Holy Spirit that gives us the mind to see. He takes the blinders off for us to be able to understand, as God's Word puts it, the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[16:10] So as we remember his life, we remember how he lived. As we remember the lives as well of those that we have lost.

And then thirdly, on this Memorial Day, as we think about Jesus, as we think about others, we're all so thankful for the sacrifice.

We are so thankful for the sacrifice of those soldiers who were willing to place their life on the line, to fight a battle, to fight a war for what they believed was right, in order to secure peace, in order to secure freedom.

Sometimes for our very own nation, and sometimes for securing the freedom for another country, for total strangers. And we also remember the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I'd like for us to turn to 1 Corinthians 11. 1 Corinthians 11. And we're not going to receive the Lord's Supper or communion this morning, but I want us to think about this.

[17:20] And because what we read in 1 Corinthians, these verses here, as we remember the institution of the Lord's Supper, it was instituted as a memorial.

And every time we do receive the Lord's Supper, every time we do partake in communion, it really is a memorial for us to remember the sacrifice of Jesus.

Verse 23 says, For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat.

This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same manner, he also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

And then he says, This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. How often do we really remember what Jesus has done for us?

[18:22] How many times do we go through a day and not think about Jesus' sacrifice?

Sometimes I have to repent and confess, Lord, it's four o'clock and I really haven't thought about you much today.

because I was busy. I was busy with different things. Sometimes busy doing good things. I mean, helping people or just doing what... And so sometimes we have to confess, Lord, I am so sorry.

I haven't spent time really thinking of you, remembering what you have done for me. And I've almost taken for granted throughout this day the provisions and the gifts that you have provided.

But he says, This do, in remembrance of me, for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim or you do show the Lord's death till he comes.

So when we take the Lord's Supper, we do it in remembrance of him. And I hope we are thankful for the sacrifice. And as we go back to 1 Corinthians previous to, prior to this, what we see are in the book of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul chastising the Corinthian church.

[19:34] because what were they doing when they came together for this fellowship meal? They weren't thinking about Jesus. They were thinking about themselves.

They wanted to get all the good, they wanted to get all of that, all the pies, and they wanted to get all the good desserts before the poor people came and would eat it all up.

Right? I mean, I know that's kind of modernizing it, but that's what they were doing. They were eating all the good stuff from Sister So-and-So because she brings the best casserole.

And so we want to eat it all up before the poor people come because the poor people didn't bring much food or any food. And so they were thinking about themselves rather than thinking about the one who made the fellowship possible.

So remembering the sacrifice. I've heard this illustration before, and I find it very, very moving. I was not able, I tried to, but I was not able to verify the authenticity of this story.

[20:39] But it's back from 1917 in World War I. And I'll read it for you. And it's a moving story. It was a few weeks before Christmas 1917. The beautiful snowy landscapes of Europe were blackened by war.

The trenches on one side held the Germans and on the other side the trenches were filled with Americans. It was World War I. The exchange of gunshots was intense. Separating them was a very narrow strip of no man's land.

A young German soldier attempted to cross that no man's land had been shot and had become entangled in the barbed wire. He cried out in anguish. Then in pain he continued to whimper. Between the shells all the Americans in that sector could hear him scream.

But one American soldier could stand it no longer. He crawled to that German soldier. When the Americans realized what he was doing they stopped firing but the Germans continued.

Then a German officer realized what the young American was doing and he ordered his men to cease firing. Now there was a weird silence across no man's land. On his stomach the American made his way to that German soldier and disentangled him.

[21 : 48] He stood up with the German in his arms walked straight through the German trenches and placed him in the waiting arms of his comrades. Having done so he turned and started back to the American trenches. Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder that spun him around.

There stood a German officer who had won the Iron Cross the highest German honor for bravery. He jerked it off his own uniform placed it on the American who walked back to the American trenches. Only when he was safely in the trenches did they resume the insanity of war.

That German soldier was thankful for all that American soldiers sacrificed. Now I don't know about the veracity of that story probably just a feel good story but as we stop and think about it what has Jesus accomplished for us?

Jesus literally walked through hell for us. He took on the forces of evil took on Satan himself. When he died on the cross of Calvary he spent those three hours totally separated from God in anguish for the first time in eternity past and the present did Jesus understand what it was like to be separated from God the Father.

[23 : 09] Sky turned black lightning streaks across the sky and I believe revealing the anguish that Jesus felt and also the anguish God the Father was sensing at that time and so for those three hours that Jesus hung on the cross taking upon himself him who knew no sin who became sin for us was sacrificing himself for us and as we think about all those who have given their lives in all of America's wars and even those who are continuing to give their life in service of this country they walk where few are willing to go and so we remember them just as the example that Jesus Christ gives us as we mourn the loss as we remember the lives and as we are thankful for the sacrifice and all the heroic acts that have been done on the battlefields all across the world and those feats that have made our nation great we're free and we are a wealthy nation because of those who've been willing to give their lives and I think we can be proud to be

Americans and to enjoy the luxuries that we do enjoy they're not our rights they are the privilege that we're able to enjoy because of those who have given their lives similarly the price that Jesus paid for us affords us salvation the best and greatest gift that we could ever receive you know we did nothing to we did nothing to deserve the luxury of freedom that we have it's those who've given their lives that have afforded us that freedom neither have we done anything to afford the luxury of salvation Jesus did it all he did it for us and it's for by grace through faith that we're saved not of works not our own works lest anyone should boast and I believe for this we need to be thankful and not just on the last Monday of May where we celebrate or where we remember

Memorial Day as I said earlier every Lord's Day is Memorial Day for the Believer we remember what Jesus Christ has done for us and we are a living memorial or we ought to be a living memorial to Jesus every single day because we literally were dead and we're now alive and that is what Jesus Christ has accomplished for us so on this Memorial Day I do trust that we are able to enjoy our families able to enjoy simply being together and if you grill out and enjoy the burgers or whatever it is let's always keep in mind that we do have this freedom to enjoy because of those who have given their lives and we have our eternity to look forward to because of the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ Father this morning as we remember you as we remember those who have given and who are still giving their lives in the fight for freedom throughout this world Lord God may you be with each family be with those who are still mourning the loss of loved ones we pray Father that that through others through your drawing them that they may come to know Jesus as their Savior or that their death may not be an empty death but one that would be ushering them into your arms where they may be for eternity and help us Father as well to be the mouthpiece where we are able to shine the light of your gospel into the lives of others we thank you Father for this we praise you it's in Jesus name we pray amen