

Remembering who you are

Memorial Day Sermon

May 24, 2009

Memorial day is a day to remember those who have fallen in the service of our country. This is something that we can and all should do, however we feel about the present politic and wars. We can and should recognize and honor the tremendous sacrifices made by those who volunteer to serve our country and especially by those who pay the ultimate price. Their families are impacted forever, and their sacrifice never ends.

We used to be able to say it was young men and women, but last week the oldest member of the National Guard who was called up was serving in Iraq was killed. He was 60 years old.

We acknowledge and honor their sacrifice. The bible says that greater love has no one than to lay down their lives for another.

And it is good that we have a holiday to help us remember. We are that kind of people. Without Memorial Day, we would soon forget to acknowledge their sacrifices. Without a special day, it is easy to let things sort of slide by. For many, even with a holiday, they have no idea why we celebrate. For them, it is just the three day holiday that begins the Summer season and there are a lot of furniture sales.

We need touch stones and special things and dates to help us remember significant events, and it has always been like that. From the very early days, people have built monuments. Throughout the old testament they were always building Altars and Monuments to mark special occasions. As the Israelites came across the Jordan river into the promised land (led by Joshua), each of the 12 tribes were to stop in the middle of the dry river and pick up large stones...and they build a large

stone pillar on the other side...called an Ebenezer. The idea was that in the future when people came to this ford of the river to cross, wash, or get water they would ask...why are the rocks piled up like this? And others would tell them of God's faithful deliverance of the people from Egypt into the promised land.

We all need reminders, don't we? As we get older, we seem to need more and more of them. Well, at least I do. I used to use not use a calendar at all, but kept things in my head. Then I carried a small paper calendar. Then I had to move to a PDA, a personal digital assistant...it would beep 15minutes before I was supposed to be somewhere! Then I had to move to one that could talk to my computer...and then I had to move to one that was louder... It works really well, if I remember to up things into it or my computer. I also continue to use the old post it note system...writing notes to remind me to put things into it...hoping that I won't loose them! And if things get really busy, I fall back upon my oldest and truest system...the palm system. The original palm pilot...I write it on my palm...it's handy. As long as I don't wash my hands too much.

Obviously, some things are very important to remember, and some things are not. There are some things that God wants you to remember. God wants you to write them on your palm, and on your heart and on your mind. In our Tuesday night Bible study we are joyfully working our way through Paul's beautiful letter to the Ephesians. The letter begins with the Apostle reminding the Ephesians and us what God has already done for us in Christ.

How he has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

How he has already adopted us as sons and daughters through Jesus and we have a wonderful inheritance with the saints

How he has already completely forgiven us in Christ Jesus—in accordance with the riches of God’s grace the he lavished upon us with all wisdom and understanding.

I love the language used here...God does just have grace, it is the riches of his grace. And he does not just give it to us...he lavished it upon us out of his great love for us!

And he wants us to remember that we have been saved by grace through faith—it is not the result of what we have done or any work that we have done...it is the free gift of God’s love.

God wants us to remember that we are loved, that we are forgiven, that we are his beloved child, that there is a place for us... and all of what is said in this chapter is in the past tense...it has been done and is still done...

How important is it that God does not wait to judge you? That God does not condemn you? Or seek to punish you? You are able to live in the freedom and joy that only true love can bring.

What a touchstone do you need to remind you? Well, here is one...coming to church reminds us of these things. We remember who we are, and who’s we are. We remember what is important and that we belong to a community of faith. It’s easy to forget. The chorus of the world is full of voices and other messages. Messages that tell you your worth depends upon what you do, how much you make, what you accomplish, what others think of you, what you look like...how young and fresh and cool...I’m in trouble.

And what of the voices in our own heads? That tell us we are guilty? That remind us again and again of what we have done wrong? Repeat the lies that were told to us over and over by those who would tear us down rather than build us up?

Here is peace...you are loved beyond what you can ever know. Be a peace. I am reminded of Martin Luther, the great reformer. It is reported that during his darkest days he began each day in his devotions by touching his forehead and saying aloud "I am baptized", reminding himself that he is a child of God.

We need to be reminded we are loved. We need to remember who we are.

So today, I pray with the Apostle Paul,

"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3: 18-20)