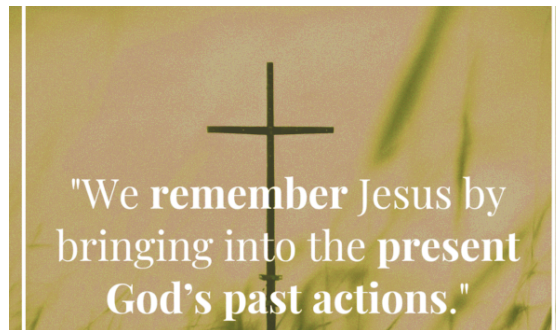




SERMON - MESSAGE – MAY 29, 2022

Title: “Who To Memorialize?”

Selected Scriptures

Rev. Ted Althouse, Pastor - The Chapel of Cypress Cove

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:7-8) ‘in THY presence is fullness of joy; at THY right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’ (Psalm 16:11b) “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. ⁴Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:1-4)

Today, it’s a great honor that we all memorialize Memorial Day in our church. The word “memorialize” means to preserve the memory of someone or something.

Memorial Day is a day that our great nation has set aside for all Americans to preserve the memory of individuals who have served our country and lost their lives protecting us. These people have been and will continue to be our nation’s greatest defenders of peace. Memorial Day, is a day that America memorializes those who made the greatest sacrifice possible...giving one’s own life to protect our freedom. Far too often, the nation as a whole takes for granted the freedoms we enjoy. Freedoms that are paid for by the lives of others. So, today, we collectively remember/memorialize all those individuals who gave their all for the United States of America.

There is a passage of scripture from the Gospel of John chapter 15 verse 13, that I want you to listen closely to the words that Jesus said, *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”* In this verse our Lord spoke of the greatest expression of love: sacrificial love, which includes giving up one’s life for others. This is exactly why we celebrate Memorial Day. Because many individuals have done just that: *laid down his or her life for his or her friends* (friends in this context also means our country). I don’t think too many individuals enter into the service of this country with that expectation of laying down their life...but it is a reality and we need to recognize these individuals who have a sacrificial love for the freedom of the United States of America. But there are other brave individuals who are not in the armed services that *lay down their life for friends/country* so that we may continue to have our freedom. Think about men and women in police work and firefighters as well as other professions providing dangerous services to humankind.

Now, allow me to point your mind to the spiritual realm. Can you think of a person who laid down his life for his friends which includes you, me and everyone? Hopefully, Jesus Christ immediately came into our mind? Actually, Jesus Christ led a total life of sacrificial love. John 1:14 tells us that *“the Word (word here meaning Almighty God)...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* From the expression, meaning God’s *Word became flesh*, came Jesus Christ and he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of his death on the cross. This is the ultimate sacrificial love and often taken for granted. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 5:7-8 these words to us, *“For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Paul describes a human perspective of sacrificing one's life for the sake of others. It's no small thing to suffer physical or mental pain and death, intentionally or voluntarily, for the sake of someone else. Paul makes a common-sense point that maybe some people, depending on the situation, might be willing to give their lives for the sake of some other good and righteous person...even though that situation is rare. Paul's point is that we'd be hesitant to die

for the sake of someone we found morally lacking, sinful, corrupt. And yet Christ—God in human form—died for everyone; the ungodly, the weak, the reprobate...individuals who we might think deserve harsh judgment for their sins. There is a reason Christ sacrificed his life and it is because he demonstrated Gods love for all humankind and Jesus has proved it through his own death on the cross.

So, here we are celebrating another Memorial Day where many people go about the day having a good time. Maybe some individuals will pause to honor those who have sacrificed their life for our freedom (like we're doing right now). Then there are many others who will consider this just a day off from work and have a day of fun and leisure. Actually, nothing is wrong with having days of fun and leisure. I enjoy days like that and would venture a guess that 99% of Americans enjoy having a good time once in a while. I came across an article stating that in the U.S.A., our citizens are spending over 646 billion dollars a year on what is known as the leisure industry (pleasure things... Disney world, movies, sports events, etc.). It is a known fact that most individuals need some diversion from the doldrums of everyday life and so we turn to fun activities...which, I quickly admit, can be therapeutic if experienced properly. Billy Graham said years ago; *"How unwise we are when we major our fleeting, illusory pleasures on abiding, satisfying man created pleasures"*.

The Psalmist in 16:11b said; *'In THY presence is fullness of joy; at THY right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'* In other words, God provides wholesome pleasures to enjoy that are moral, healthy and good for our mind, body and spirit. Healthy God-inspired pleasures can and should be enjoyed. We need good healthy and positive diversions from our daily routine of living. And if only we, as Christians, would find our-self-giving activities more to God's teachings, we would surely find more joy and pleasure in our own personal life. God will always provide us with HIS guided pleasures and fun in life. And another powerful point to realize is that if we would turn more of our attention to the scriptures...God's guiding words...we will see and feel the real sincere joy and "fun" in our life, which can and will bring total satisfaction and enjoyment to our life. Isn't it interesting to know that the greatest stumbling block that

humans have in trying to understand God's joy and happiness...is self...our own self-imposed hang ups? Often, we become our own worst enemy for the God provided goodness of life.

Now I am about to make a statement that I do not wish you to take out of context...so hear me well; *"I say to you that we must take away our self-center pompous shroud of humanism (which many people hide behind) and allow the unobstructed beauty of Jesus Christ's Holy Spirit to be revealed in and through each of us. It is then and only then can we personally find God's real joy and happiness revealed."* (Repeat!) God's Holy Word...his scriptures...combined with sincere prayer, can bring us real joy and happiness and best of all this joy and happiness in God's Word and prayer is free.

Paul, in speaking to the Romans, also realized this truth. Listen to what he says; *"brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved...I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge."* (v1,2) That last part is worth repeating: *"they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based only on knowledge."* True knowledge comes from the hearing and reading of the Word of God. Did you hear me? (Repeat) And then through the hearing and reading of the Word of God comes salvation....the saving grace received through knowing and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These God-given experiences with God can add greatly to our personal systematic belief form. This is what I do each Sunday morning. I attempt to bring you spiritual knowledge through God's Word to add to your personal belief system.

Paul goes on to say; *"since they (he was speaking about the Israelites) did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."* (v3) Righteousness is a word that we hear more often now than in years prior. Righteousness in terms that you can understand, simply means being upright or morally right or justifiable/correct. Righteousness is when you are acting in a truthful, moral manner, displaying good conduct that is usually associated with positive religious and moral behavior. So, Paul was concerned with the

Israelites and the manner they were living their lives...not being morally correct in the eyes of God. Not too much has changed, has it? It seems like the world has had, and always will have, a part of it that lives in an unrighteous manner. My own theological research and training allows me to believe that God allows this world to freely act as it is, so that the world can see the difference between that unhealthy way of living and God's way of living. I further believe that if we see the evil actions in and of the world, then we who are attempting to live a Godly life, can make better decisions in our own life and deny those evil actions. Remember, God wants us to see both good and evil in the world and make choices that will lead to a better life...with him. When we do this, then we can have a more peaceful understanding of the world around us.

Paul attempted to live a life that was an example of Godly living...but he also realized he was living in the world surrounding him. He saw what was happening around him and he became stronger because of it. He did not hide in some cave far away and only pray for correction. No, he was right there in the world and demonstrated that he could live in any worldly condition according to God's direction. So, it is today...we are living in the world which surrounds us. We see and experience the good and bad around us daily and for the Christian, these experiences should make us stronger in our faith and belief in the power and direction of Almighty God. Yes, there are times when we may bend to temptation, but we, who are strong in God's faith and rely on his word, can and will overcome temptation and quickly correct our shortcomings. This is the process that the founder of Methodism John Wesley calls "moving toward perfection." But be it known that we never attain spiritual or human perfection in this earthly life, but we must set our mind on striving toward it. And as we strive toward perfection, we become more and more aware of the person which God wants us to be.

Paul says in verse 4: "*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*" God's laws were manifested and demonstrated in the perfect human form of the person Jesus Christ. Christ was and remains the human personification of Almighty God. Christ is what we must try to emulate to the best of our ability and we should mold our self after him. Paul ends his message to us with

these words; “so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” (v4)
There is the word righteousness again, which I said means: acting morally right and be justifiable to God. This righteousness is for everyone who believes. If we truly believe in God and want to be with him in heaven...then we need to be acting in a righteous manner today and every day.

I hope I have helped you with answers as to whom we should memorialize this Memorial Day? If you haven't gotten the answers completely sorted out in your mind, I encourage to pick up a copy of my message on the table as you leave. Enjoy your Memorialization Day, first memorializing Jesus Christ and all other individuals who have given their life for others. Oh, and wear your flag pin proudly today in honor of our fallen heroes and Jesus Christ.

