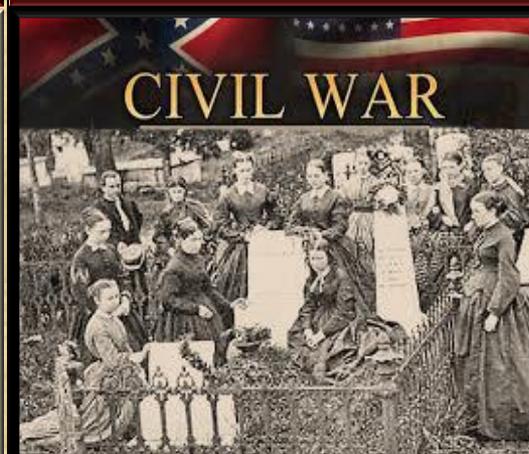


Because Jesus left heaven and came into this world, He knew pain, suffering, rejection, hunger, thirst, loneliness, and many other of the problems that are part of the human condition. He suffered all that He did so that He might feel our pain and know how to comfort us when our trials come, (Hebrews 4:14-16) **"Since, then, we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** When Jesus came into this world as a man, He lived His life as a man. He died on the cross as a man. He rose again from the dead as a man. He ascended back into Heaven as a man. And, when He comes again, He will return as a man. He willingly and forever laid aside His omnipresence and limited Himself to a human body for all eternity because He loved us.

"Remember The Wonderful Works That God Has Done"

A quick scanning of the Biblical documents makes apparent the importance that is placed upon remembering. Throughout the scriptures we find references to monuments, memorial feasts, and ritually repeated stories, all of which serve to reinforce the sacred memory of the people of God. In various ways the great saving acts of God were rehearsed and re-presented so that the people would not forget what God had done for their sake. The Passover feast which Moses instituted was to serve a similar purpose; it was to remind the people that it was God and not they themselves who brought about their liberation from slavery in Egypt. With pounding insistence the call to remember is repeated throughout scripture. Remember that God called your father Abraham in his old age and promised him many children. Remember that you were in bondage in a foreign land and were freed by divine power. Remember that God brought Israel to greatness, though she was weak. Remember the commands of the Lord. The Psalmist summed up the message well when he wrote: "Remember the wonderful works that God has done God's great deed and the judgments the Lord utter, O offspring of Abraham God's servant." (Psalms 105:5) Those who forgot the past fell into thanklessness. It is unlikely that we will do any better. If we forget the value of our heritage and the source of our blessings, it will become very easy for us to take for granted all that we have and all that we are. It will be very easy for us to begin believing that we can make our own way without God. With the blindness of pride we will very likely begin trusting in our own wisdom and power rather than relying upon the guidance and might of our Maker. Then in our wrong-headed self-confidence we will lose our way. For this reason it is crucial that we remember, "EVERY DAY IS MEMORIAL DAY!"



In April 1863, in Columbus, Mississippi, after decorating graves of her two sons who died representing their beloved southland, an elderly woman walked to two mounds of dirt at the corner of the cemetery to place memorial flowers there also. **"What are you doing?"** friends shouted, **"Those are the graves of two union soldiers."** Softly that compassionate mother said, **"I know. I also know that**

somewhere in the North, a mother or a young wife mourns for them as we do for ours." Many believe it was this loving deed set in motion our celebration which has become known as Memorial Day. We honor the war dead once a year, but their sacrifice is evident every single day of the year! Today, we want to honor the memory of all those who have sacrificed their lives on the altar of freedom. Those thousands of sacrificed lives were not given in vain! Because of their sacrifice, we are free today and have the right to assemble ourselves together and worship our God.

"It Is Crucial That We Remember"

If we forget the value of our heritage and the source of our blessings, it will become very easy for us to take for granted all that we have and all that we are. It will be very easy for us to begin believing that we can make our own way without God. With the blindness of pride we will very likely begin trusting in our own wisdom and power rather than relying upon the guidance and might of our Maker. Then in our wrong-headed self-confidence we will lose our way. For this reason it is crucial that we remember. I suppose that every culture and country has its memorials. The best memorials lift our sights above the mundane affairs of the moment in order to focus our attention upon the highest aspirations and accomplishments of those who have preceded us. When we visit the Lincoln Memorial or Washington Monument, it is natural to begin meditating upon the impressive deeds and high values of these forebears. Visits to such places can help stimulate us to embrace more noble and exalted goals.

"The Golden Age Syndrome"

I suppose we all know people who seem to continually talk about how great things used to be. Life was simpler, friendships were closer, motives were more pure, morals were higher and so on. This is the **"Golden Age Syndrome."**

For some people the Golden Age was the 1920s; for others it was the 1960s. No matter what our favorite period may be, the problem with looking back to a Golden Age is that we distort the past and we come to believe that the best days of life have already gone by. Everything else that follows is anticlimactic. Consequently some people, who are disappointed with the present and distressed over the future, tend to live in the past. Their memories are highly important to them but they do not have hopeful memories. You see, hopeful memory does not drag us into the past and lock us there. Hopeful memory does not tell us that the best of life has already come and gone. Rather it thrusts us into the future.



"The Lord's Supper Is A Hopeful Memorial"

When the prophets of old called upon God's people and told them to remember the works that the Lord had done in the past, this was to prepare them for the future. They were not called upon to remember the past for its own sake. The practice was not a self-indulgent diversion. Rather they were to remember the wonders of the past so that their lives would be open to the even greater wonders God would do for them in the future. The Lord's Supper is a hopeful memorial. It does not falsely glorify the past. When we partake of the bread and cup we

remember the broken body and blood of the Lord. Images of deceit, betrayal and cruelty impose themselves upon us. The memorial feast confronts us with the disquieting fact that we humans are all too capable of striking out against true holiness and supreme goodness. But the Lord's Supper does more. It reminds us of the sacrificial love of God. It speaks to us of a love that will not let us go but which reaches out to us, despite our evil. Yet in the Lord's Supper we see even more than that. We also see the promise of Jesus Christ that He will come again and that we will eat and drink anew with our Lord in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). The Lord's Supper points us not only to the past but toward the promised future as well. The past and the future are made into vital contemporary realities for us by the presence of Christ. The meal is a memorial that reinforces a hopeful memory. With Memorial Day upon us it is proper to think of the past and of those who have gone from this world. But for those of us who are Christians, this is not exclusively an exercise in looking behind and dwelling upon what has been. For we believe that more wondrous things are yet to come for those people of faith who have already died. We live in light of the resurrection and we believe that death will not be the end.

"The Prayer Of Two Soldiers"

There is another story that came out of the War between the States in which a couple of young soldiers were overheard praying that if there were those in their company that must die in the coming battle, that it would be them for they knew the Lord and were prepared for eternity, and that God would be merciful to spare their comrades in arms that they might yet repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the heart of a true Christian. In Romans 5:7 the apostle Paul stated **"For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die."** This would seem to be a slightly higher level of sacrifice and love, and yet something humans have demonstrated in rare incidents of being capable of doing. May each Christian here live with a similar sacrificial mind-set and may God be merciful to grant repentance to those who have not yet believed to be redeemed from their sins and reconciled to Him.

"A Great Soldier"



Today, I do not want to diminish the sacrifice and service of those men and women who have served our nation so faithfully and so valiantly, but I want to talk about one great Soldier. This great Soldier stepped onto a harsh battlefield one day. He took up arms and entered the fight knowing that it

would cost Him everything. This Soldier bravely entered that battlefield and won a great victory, but at a terrible price. This Great Soldier gave His life, not for a nation, but for all humanity. His was not a life given in vain, but the sacrifice of His life served to set free the captives of sin. A good soldier out of love for his buddies might put his life on the line for their benefit, but would he do so for the benefit of his enemy? Yet, that is what Jesus did. His death was not just on behalf of His friends. He willingly made Himself the sacrifice needed to redeem, cleanse and reconcile sinners with God.

"Jesus Laid Aside His Heavenly Address"

Like every soldier who has ever served in the armed forces, when Jesus came to this earth, He also left His home. He had existed in a place of perfection, free from sin, pain, suffering and sorrow. He originated in a land where He was exalted, honored and worshiped. Yet, He willingly left all that behind to enter this sin cursed, hate filled world. He came to a world where even those who had longed for his appearing would reject Him, (John 1:11) "He came to what was His own, and his own people did not accept Him." He came to a land where He would be ridiculed, hated and killed. Yet, He came anyway! God came to the earth and He robed Himself in human flesh. He lived as a man among men and died as a man to redeem man from his sins! May we never forget that our Savior is no ordinary man, but He is God in human flesh!