

## MEMORIAL DAY - SACRIFICE

For most Americans **Memorial Day weekend** is the great three-day weekend that kicks off the summer. It is a time for sitting on the porch and grilling out, perhaps a time for that first trip to the beach, but **that is not** what **Memorial Day** is about at all.

**Originally**, Memorial Day was known as Decoration Day because it was a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on **May 30, 1868**. During that first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

**After World War I**, Memorial Day observances began to honor not only Civil War veterans, but those who had died in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared **Memorial Day a national holiday** to be celebrated the last Monday in May. ***On this day we honor every soldier every civilian who died to make us free.***

***Because men and women have died for this country, we have the right to preach God's word freely;*** We have the right to live at peace in our own homes; We have the right to pursue peace, prosperity, and happiness. ***Thank God for those who died to make us free.*** We ought to have a day in which we remember their sacrifice. ***We ought to offer a memorial for them.***

By the same token, we also ought to remember the one who has set us free from spiritual tyranny.

In Jesus, God entered the world. In Jesus, God expressed his love for us.

- Through Jesus, we are made acceptable to God.
- We celebrate our Memorial Day once a year to remember those who died for freedom, but every day is a celebration of the Memorial of Christ.
- **For the Christian**, every day is a Memorial Day.
- On our national Memorial Day, we mourn the loss, remember the lives, and are thankful for the sacrifice.
- **Considering what Jesus means to us**, let's examine the memorial we offer to him in conjunction this National Memorial Day!

## I. On Memorial Day We Mourn the Loss

We remember the loved ones who died, we wish they were here; we wish that we could hold them, talk to them, see them, but we cannot. When people die, we tend to dwell on the **“If Only’s”**

- **“If only I had gone to see them.”**
- **“If only I had told them I loved them.”**
- **“If only I had kissed them one last time.”**
- **“If only I hadn’t spoken so harshly.”**

***Part of dealing with death is dealing with the guilt we feel because of the “If Only’s.”***

On the Lord’s Memorial Day, we need to deal with our guilt in **the death of Jesus.**

- We were responsible for His death.
- We could say, **“If only we had not sinned he would not have had to die.”**
- We are to blame.
- We are the sinners Jesus died for.
- The movie *“the Passion”* depicted in agonizing detail the sufferings of Jesus.
- It showed the hours of his agony on the cross.

**It all happened because of me. It was for me. I am the one to blame.**

- **Jesus was treated as the worst of sinners because I am a sinner.**

I read an article by Millie Wilson in which she described all day camp meetings or brush arbor meetings in Kentucky in the 1920s when she was a small child. The meetings were held outdoors in late summer when the crops had been planted.

It was blazing hot, so they build brush arbors for some shade. **Everyone went.** The meetings were non-denominational. They had relays of preachers that would start after breakfast and go to sunset. They did not have pews obviously. People sat on rough hand-hewn benches. **Millie says** she hated those benches. As she put it, after a while, they hurt both your back and your bottom. In front of the pulpit, there was one long bench, which was called **“the mourner’s bench.”** At the end of the mourner’s bench, there was a bucket of water and a dipper.

In the summer heat, I imagine that would be a motive to go to **the mourner's bench**—to get a drink of water, but **that was not the purpose** of that bench.

***The purpose was***, as you might guess from the name, ***to mourn for your sins*** and to ***mourn for the price Jesus had to pay for our sins***. Now the mourner's bench has disappeared in our day, but **it made a valid point**.

***The point is that I need to realize how ugly my sins are to God, and I need to realize how great a price Jesus paid for my sins.***

**The penalty Jesus paid** is remembered *in the memorial he gave us*. ***That memorial is the Lord's Supper.***

**Our scripture today**, from **I Corinthians 11**, is frequently read when we do the Lord's Supper. At that Supper, we break the bread, and we say the words of the Lord.

**1 Corinthians 11:24-26** - And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ***"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ***"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

**What to remember: *The body of Christ was broken on the cross for my sin.***

## **II. On Memorial Day We Remember the Lives**

**On Memorial Day we also remember the lives.** In the death of a loved one, part of our healing is to *remember the lives of the dead*.

- It used to be that tombstones were a part of this process.
- **Now** we mostly just put name and date on a burial marker.
- **In generations past**, people tried to say something about the dead.
- If it was only "Beloved Daughter," or "Blessed Mother," or "Dear Parents," those families were trying, however briefly, to articulate their grief in stone.
- But even these messages tell us something about the one who is buried there.

Likewise, the memory Jesus left us tells us something about him. ***The words of I Corinthians 11:24*** are inscribed on many communion tables. ***"Do this in remembrance of me."***

What must we remember about Jesus? *That is simple.*

***We remember how he lived and what he said. Jesus taught us that life is about love. He summarized that in two commandments: love God and love each other.***

**1 John 4:21** - And this commandment we have from him: ***whoever loves God must also love his brother.***

- He went about doing good, helping people, healing people.
- **Even his death, his broken body on the cross was about doing good.**
- **We remember Jesus by remembering people.**

At a commuter train station, a policeman noticed a woman driver with her head bowed over the steering wheel. The police officer asked her, "Is there anything wrong?" Half crying and half laughing, she said, "For ten years I have been driving my husband to this station every morning to catch this train. ***This morning I forgot him.***" I wonder how that situation worked out.

**The worst forgetfulness of all is to forget people!** *Our purpose, our mission, our task in life, is always linked to people.*

**II Corinthians 1:3-4** - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ***who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.***

**He says that God comforts us so that we can comfort others.**

- **God ministers to us so we can minister to others.**
- **God loves us so we can love others.**
- People are always asking, ***"Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?"***
- Paul says ***if God put us here for other people.***
- We have a great verse like this: -

**Philippians 2:4 - Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.**

**We remember Jesus by remembering others.**

- Often **our worst sin** is that *we just don't pay attention* to other people.
- We are just *not listening* to what they *say* or *seeing where they are*.

**A preacher was in his study**, preparing his sermon, when his little girl toddled into the room. Holding up her pinched finger, she said, with an expression of suffering, "Look, Daddy, it hurts really bad." That preacher/father glanced at her and with a tone of impatience, said, "**I can't help it.**" As the little girl turned to leave, she muttered, "***You could have said, 'I'm sorry!'***" That was all the girl wanted—*some sympathy*, but her *daddy was not listening*.

**A man put up a sign in his yard that read:** "Puppies for Sale." *A young boy* asked how much one of the puppies would cost. "Twenty-five dollars," replied the man.

The boy looked crushed. He said, "I've only got two dollars and a quarter." After a moment he asked, "Could I see them anyway?" "Of course," said the man. "Maybe we can work something out."

The boy's eyes danced at the sight of those five little balls of fur. ***He noticed one had a bad leg.*** He said, "That's the puppy I want. Could I pay for her a little at a time?" The man responded, "**I am not trying to sell that one.** She will always be crippled. She will always walk with a limp."

**Smiling bravely**, the boy pulled up one pant leg, revealing a brace. "***I don't walk good either.***" Then, looking at the puppy sympathetically, he continued, "I guess she'll need a lot of love and help. **I sure did.** It's not so easy being crippled."

At that point, the man, with tears in his eyes, said, "Take that puppy. Forget the money."

**When we get to the point in our lives that we realize we too are crippled human beings then we can demonstrate sympathy and compassion for others in their pain and suffering.**

**That is what Jesus did. That is the way to remember Jesus.**

### III. On Memorial Day We Are Thankful for The Sacrifice

A few weeks before Christmas 1917, World War I raged in Europe. In one place along the lines, Americans were entrenched against the Germans. The fighting was bitter. ***Separating the trenches was a narrow strip called no-man's-land.*** The Germans had recently attacked across no-man's land and retreated. *A young German soldier severely wounded* lay out there entangled in barbed wire. ***He cried out in anguish, he cried out in pain.***

***Both sides lay in the trenches*** and listened to his sobbing cries. ***Finally, one American could stand it no longer.*** He crawled out to that German soldier, disentangled him from the wire, slung him across his shoulder, stood up with him and started walking toward the German trenches. The astonished Germans did not shoot him, and *the American walked right up to their trenches and gave the wounded soldier into the arms of his comrades.* Having done so, he turned and started back to the American side.

***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.* The officer took off the iron cross and *placed it on the American.* They both then *returned to their trenches and resumed the insanity of war.*

**That German soldier was thankful for that American soldier's courageous act.**

**We should be grateful for the courageous act of Jesus that brought salvation to us.**

**1 Corinthians 11:25** - He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

**Close:**

**Jesus by his shed blood established a new covenant by which we are made acceptable to God.**

**Our response is to be thankful for his sacrifice.**

**Hebrews 9:13-14** - For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, **how much more will the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, *purify our conscience from dead works* **to worship the living God!**

- These verses, in Hebrews refers to **the sacrificial system** of the Old Testament.
- **It was the custom** to offer animal sacrifices in atonement for sin.
- **Hebrews says** that *if there was any purification at all found* in that system,
- **How much more is found in Christ who was the perfect sacrifice to purify our conscience, bring forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God.**
- Now that is something to be thankful for. Amen.

### **1 Corinthians 11 - Correcting an Abuse of the Lord's Supper**

<sup>27</sup> So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

<sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

<sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. <sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, ***we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.***

#### **PRAY:**

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "***This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.***"

<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "***This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.***" <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.