

NEVER FLINCHED

Psalm 44

May 20 Memorial Day →

What does Memorial Day mean to you. To some it is just a Holiday, as we approach the summer. For others, Memorial Day brings memories from the past. Flag, parades, flowers for the graves or some loved one who has marched off to war.

The blessing of memory is something that is wonderful. It is found in this Psalm that we have chosen today. A failing memory is one of the saddest infirmities that we can have. And yet, there is often compensation in it, because some things need to be forgotten. *a man said there were 2 things that went along with old age - 1st - The loss of memory + 2nd - well - it's been forgotten what it was -*

The old man forgets what the weather was like yesterday. But his sunny Birthdays and snowy Christmas Days of childhood live in his memory. The old house, the old places, the voices, the old joys and lessons that he learned as a child. Now suppose this should be reversed. That one had a clear memory, even the last occurrence last week and last month. But had no memory of the things that happened five minutes ago. There is great benefit in memory. And no doubt, some young people today ask their parents - what is Memorial Day. Why do we have Declaration Day? Declaration Day emerged in 1867 when some sensitive women in Columbus, Mississippi decorated not only the graves of their own dead, who had given their lives in the Civil War, which had just ended. But also the graves of Northern soldiers who were buried there. The noble deed inspired others to do the same. And the annual custom eventually became nation wide - (Memorial Day.) It has become a beautiful tribute celebrated with music, parades, speeches, decorating the graves of those that have died in the wars and in the nation. It is an effective way of helping us to remember

those that have made it possible for us to have what we have today. Those who paid the supreme sacrifice. Those who were expendible.

In 1868, on May 30th, the date was set aside for placing flowers on the graves of soldiers throughout the United States of America. It was not long before this day was observed to include other fallen dead in the wars which we have been involved in. And more than 500 thousand military personnel have died during Americas wars. Yorktown, Flanders Field, Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor, Korea, etc. In Arlington Cemetery and similar places, in the State of Virginia, we find many silent graves of upwards of over 1/2 million Americans who give testimony that everything has a cost to it. Freedom costs greatly.

And we know that other people have paid prices. And it would due well for parents, perhaps to take their children some time to one of these cemeteries. One of these old Civil War Cemeteries in Virginia. And make sure the children understand that here was some people that gave their lives in sacrifice, that we might have a great heritage.

How quickly we forget. We men, in military uniforms, who have marched on. And of course, what America is and what America offers, did not just happen. God moved in a mighty way and had a hand in the history. As Kepling said, "Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet. Lest we forget, lest we forget."

What is a memorial. Well, the dictionary says it is something that preserves remembrance. It brings to mind. It is a special day, a building, a statue. God has some memorials - like the rainbow. Like the memorial that Jacob set up at Bethel.

Like the memorial set up at the Jordan River when they crossed it and entered the promised land.

Now, I want us to look here at a Psalm which I think has something to say to us on this Memorial Day. It has a real message to us. It says three things - something about the tokens, the conquest, V. 1-8. Trampled and complaining. V. 9-16. And Triumph and confirmation of the faithful. V. 17-28.

I. TOKENS OF CONQUEST - V. 1-8

V. 1 - He begins ["]we have heard with our ears, oh God, our Fathers have told us what work thou did in their days. In the times of old! It is wonderful that the parents had told the children about the memorials of the past. And then the Psalmist recounts some of those things - how they were delivered. And how they won the land where they dwelt in.

For they got ~~not the land~~ in possession of their own sword, neither by the strength of their own arm. But by the strength of thy right hand. And the light of thy countenance.

I think that if we could see this, the general idea is that God in his providence, worked in behalf of Israel. That went before them. And he mentions the work of God among them. And the parents still remember these. And how that God planted them in the land of Canaan and caused them to prosper. The same is true when we begin to think about the blessings of God upon America. The greatness and the glory of God that worked in behalf of our nation. And this concept we ought to pass on to those that come after us. We hear so much about a generation gap and other kinds of gaps. But we need maybe

to remember that there is the creator gap. There is a wide gap between man and his creator. We are made in his image and likeness. And he gives us life. And the point is, if you know God, you are going to reverence him and honor him. And you are going to obey and he will conquer for you. So the message here is - they remembered the tokens. And how we need to remember the mighty dead in our nation. We need to remember those who conquered and went to conquest. It was not in their own strength. God apparently was with them. And we think of the mighty dead and we carry them in our memories. Thomas Carlisle once said, when I want a definition of salvation, that comes by faith, I think of Thomas Chalmers. Carlisle carried him with him. How does one know what courage is. When one has seen courage a brother. How does one know what patience is. When it has become incarnate before his eyes.

In the Old Testament, we find in Ex. 13:19 and Moses took the bones of Joseph with him. Was this a mighty burden, the bones of Joseph. Was it hard to carry them. It increased their powers. A man is poor indeed who does not know some spot where there is a grave where he can stand and say - here was one who had high ideals. And go away feeling that he wants to achieve the same. Did it mean nothing to Moses in the desert sun, when they marched. The water failed. The food was scarce. The people were restless. That he carried the bones of Joseph. No, here was a silent reminder. That they were going. In this wilderness, they took heart. And they had a clear vision of what the ideals were in the future. Now the life of Joseph, he lived 110 years. His children and his children's children are by his bedside. And these were his words - I die, but God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land into the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Joseph touched the bones of his fathers. And saw the vision. And he carried them in his own heart. And I commission you, to lay my bones in a resting place in the land of Israel. That was his right.

But we do not think of these in our memories as dead. They are our living saints. If the bones are mighty. How much more the might of them as we see them with the light of life upon their face. As we mourn them, we summons them to serve us.

II. TRAMPLED - V. 9-16

Here is a complaint that they had been trampled and cast off. And he says, V. 11 - we have been just like sheep appointed for meat. Scattered abroad.

We have come like slaves V. 12. Thou sellest thy people for naught.

V. 13 - We have become a reproach to our neighbors. They make fun of us.

V. 15 - We have been brought to confusion.

The Psalmist here is counting up the tokens in his memory. He now thinks about - we have been faithful, we have been true, but now we are being trampled. He says we are not being abused.

Our armies go forth but they are defeated. We gain no ground. We went before

the enemies but we had to flea. And so we are just like sheep who are bought and sold. And so reproach has come to us. And he is recounting these memories which he has.

As you think about those who have sacrificed their lives - and yet, freedom seems to be trampled. The country seems to be having problems, still. It is very much like with the emperorist of Ireland went down, with 130 Salvation Army officers on board. 130 officers were drown. One body that was picked up had on the life belt. The few survivors told how the salvationists - ^{upon} how finding there were not enough life preservers for all - took off their own belts and strapped them even upon strong men saying, "I can die better than you can". And from the depth of that sinking ship flung the battle cry around the world . . . others.

Oh what a great challenge, when those men in the Civil War days went off for others. Gave their lives for other people. And that has been the theme. And how can we today let this be trampled.

III. TRIUMPH CONFIRMED - V. 17-28

Now in these verse, the Psalmist deals with something that is really marvelous as he thinks about the tokens of how they won victories. And how they had been trampled. And his memory brings him back to confirm a real triumph. In V. 17, he says, all of this has come upon us. Yet have we not forgotten thee. How marvelous. God is never forgotten. Here is a witness to God. They have suffered hard things but they have still maintained their love for God.

V. 18 - It says, our heart is not turned back. Neither have our steps declined from the way.

Here is the venture and the truth for this sermon today. Moffett translates this 18th verse, our heart has never flinched. Now this is sort of a common expression among people. The word flinched. It means to shrink back or to recoil from fear or danger. Now everyone knows from his own experience, that there is a certain automatic panic and jump back. It is far common with us in the time of shock. We just swiftly bump into something and back up.

Joshua - As for me & my house, we will serve the Lord - flinched not!
Devi - seat of customs - Follow Me & he left all & followed -
Job - though he slay me yet will I trust him

Now the Psalmist uses this figure of speech here and sometimes this recoil may come because of our lack of spiritual reserves. We may turn a corner of a new experience. We remember Peter in the court yard of the judgement hall of Jesus, when the trial was going on, flinched at that time.

And it means - let us go back. But when I think about the American Revolution that was a trying time for those soldiers. And I think about the Civil War and the struggle for a fair future. And everyone working. This word sounds like music to me today. Our hearts never flinched.

Can't you just see Stonewall as he stood there. He flinched not.

Think about Mason North's noble hymn where crossed the crowded ways of life, and there is one line that expresses his aspect of Jesus - thy heart has never known recoil.

Read on & you will see we Lutherans don't fool around.

Sunday Supplements

Members of Northend Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Seattle received a special announcement in the mail listing the many things that will be done for them at church on the following "~~no-excuse-to-stay-home~~ Sunday."

According to Pastor Olin Nordsletten, cots will be available for those who say Sunday is their only day to sleep. Eye drops will be supplied for those who have red eyes from watching late Saturday night TV shows. There will be steel helmets for those who say the roof would cave in if they ever went to church, blankets for persons who think the church is too cold, fans for those who say it is too hot, score cards for those wishing to list all the hypocrites present, TV dinners for those who can't go to church and cook dinner also.

And finally, the sanctuary will be decorated with Christmas poinsettias and Easter lillies for those who have never seen the church without them.

The real art of life is like a stonewall - to be anchored.

Look at that noble tree standing, towering up in the air for years. Tested by storms, and you think of those roots that are down in the ground that are unmoveable. How amazing. The heart has never flinched. Never felt a recoil. Perhaps swaying at the top, but eternally fixed, rooted and grounded. And that's what brings a challenge on Memorial Day to us. I wonder if we have as great a dedication as those wonderful soldiers, and common ordinary men, who went off to take their places in the trenches those days. To pay a price.

A Spanish proverb goes like this -

["Take what you want, says God

Take it and pay for it. "]

Now this is a commercial figure but this does beat the suggestion of Jesus of course, in the Gospel. But it does talk and say something about the matter of sacrifice which the person ought to have. We know that Hitler choses to be Hitler and he pays the price, for that kind of life.

We know that moreover, Kreisler flinched for years. And finally he made up his mind to be a musician. But as a small boy, he began to play the violin with lack of success and discouragement. He tried medicine, painting, military life. And then he came back to his first love and decided what he might do as a violinist. He started with 8 weeks of solid devotion to exercise his fingers. And ever since his practice - he has practiced with discipline. For what he wanted, he had to pay first. The result, as in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. "What is the use, your learning

to do right. Said Huckleberry. When it is troublesome to do right and it ain't no trouble to do wrong. That idea is shared by millions and multitudes. To do wrong, and they think it costs them nothing in advance. We get what we want at once and pay for it afterwards. It means paying in advance. It means decision, discipline, and there are young people who think that it ain't no trouble to do wrong. It is a plenty in the end when the bills begin coming in. And worst of it, is they are not all presented to you at one time. In God's name, we ought not to run up such bills. And this is where nations have problems, and we think about this on Memorial Day. Jesus, himself, applied this to personal life. He talked about people first sitting down and counting the cost. And they began to build a tower. And who of us can escape this question. We have to make choices.

Christian homes, faithful marriages, religious training for our children, integrity and character, public usefulness. All of these are choices but the cost - we sit down and count it. Are we paying the price for what we say we want. What good does it do to chose the end and then not chose the means by reaching it. Many a family knows that it cannot have even a good garden without fulfilling the conditions and yet they still fool around about having Christian homes, without sitting down and counting the cost. This is part of our thinking - we make a decision and then we decline to pay for it.

I think what we are talking about this morning leads us to the cross of Christ. Here, the free gift of life. How does he bestow it. There must be a price paid for it. Here is our Sunday School. In a class of 14 year olds - the question comes up - why Christ had desire. And one of the boys said, Jesus saw a lot of good in the world and he didn't like the way it was being pushed around. And somebody had to take the rap and he took it.

Now that boy in his own speech described what the New Testament says about Christ's sacrifice. The New Testament writers, thinking of Christ's sacrifice, went into the marketplace and said that Christ had bought us for a price. He went to the slave market and paid a ransom for us.

Somebody had to take the rap and he took it. Indeed he did, his cross represents the fact that should make every decent man and woman pause. Free gifts are ours. So we chose them. Lord, thou did suffer more for me than all the hosts of land and sea. So let me render back again, this millioneth of thy gift.

I remember well reading a story where they never applauded. Now we are thinking this morning of Memorial Day and those who never flinched. When we compare what those who have given life, when we have given so little, it was a audience of 2,000 people. They were requested not to applaud. The secretary of Navy, Frank Knock was giving out diplomas to 547 new Naval graduates, Dec. 19, 1941. When the Secretary came to one of the midshipman and said, "remember your father did not lose his life. He gave it." The midshipman thus addressed was I. Campbell Kidd, of Long Beach, Calif. Whose father, Rear Admiral Isaac C. Kidd was killed at Pearl Harbor 12 days earlier by an attack of the Japanese.

Young Kidd, pale and composed, listened to this brief tribute to his father. And shook the hand of Secretary Knock, returned to his seat, and requested that he be assigned to submarine duty.

Flinched not!

A boy of only 23 years was killed in France - his body was found, a letter of

comfort to his parents. "We shall live forever in the results of our efforts." We shall live who by those of sacrifice won the great war. Console yourself in thought that I am happy. The measure of life is not its span, but the use made of it. This is the fine spirit of the true soldier. We can never close our account with those who died on the field of honor. The measure of life is not its span but the use made of it. When we think of those who never flinched. How is it with your life.

That bit of poetry -

Oh you who sleep in Flander's Fields
 Sleep sweet, to rise anew
 We caught the torch you threw
 And holding high, we keep the faith.
 With those who died.

I make no apology for calling these things to your remembrance. Of the men who went across to fight our battles for us. And for those who have given life for this nation. Those who around the campfires, planned and dreamed of better days.

Adoniran Jackson - 1813 *Burma, Great Difficulties - 6 yrs - no converts -*
Demon of Discouragement *scattered him - Fervent Not -*
abundant harvest - translated Holy Script. in Burmese lang. -
Ordered a petitionary - Broken health

If they have gone through bloody seas to save the republic, and if they have died for caught a vision of freedom, surely it ought to call us to not only remember, but to see become champions in our own lives for peace today. 1850

As we think of how unworthy we are, of all who have gone before, remember this

unseen cloud is something that truly humbles us. Yes, we go one step further, and we see the price paid by Christ on the cross. His was a self-giving sacrifice. Supremely with his life. He has brought to you the opportunity of life everlasting. He laid down his life that you might have a more abundant life. Will it be said of you - your heart has never flinched.