

Honor the Past

Scripture: Matthew 12:22 - 32 and Romans 12:9 – 21

Memorial Weekend 2022

It would appear fitting to borrow a line from a poem written during the course of the Civil War for today Memorial weekend service. The line is challenging – *To honor the past, O Nation, to the future be true.*

Today, my friends, we are witnessing full preparation for the destruction of a civilization! A civilization which should know of the infinite love of God. A civilization that should know that the love of God can grant us the wisdom to circumvent our demise. A civilization that should know that the love of God gives us the wisdom to make right decisions so that we might carry on the living of our lives. It could give each of us the strength and the courage to move onward and upward to new heights as a nation.

But we seem to be bent on destruction. Our leaders seem set on making fires out of sparks of disunity. It seems that if you are of one political party, the other party can do nothing right and vice-a-versa. And if we cannot find a spark make a fire, we make stuff up! We share alternative facts.

We sale military equipment to other countries for defensive needs but start no wars. We sign treaties with dictators which means that the dictators will honor those treaties, even though we know they will not. We do business as usual and the world continues to kareem out of control!

To be honest with you, I have a deep fear that a group of our citizens are actually steering us into a conflict, both internal within our nation and external in our world. Let us hope that this is not so. Let us hope that the minds of our leaders and people become more like the mind of Christ.

A mariner of the open sea knows that even in the strongest gale his compass needle will always spin around again to the north. The mariner is given assurance of direction. Each of us are equipped with an invincible power of divine direction and guidance. Each of us have a life with meaning, purpose, and direction. There is nothing on this Earth strong enough to pull us from the divinely established course. I sincerely believe that!

We, as a people of God, often rebel against God's will and put ourselves into a mess!

As we hear, read, and watch the problems of the world, we seem to say to ourselves – It cannot happen here! We are fully convinced that our nation is indestructible and our soul is indestructible. Looking at the violence and hatred shown around us, is our country, our cities, our towns, and our villages in peril? Are we being destroyed by the cancer of racism, the poison of pettiness, the look of ignorance, and the lack of empathy?

We are the best feed, best clothes, best educated, and most powerful nation in this world but we seem at times to lack compassion and love for others.

Today of Memorial Weekend Sunday, we need to think of the noble sacrifice made by our honored dead who served our country in patriotism and bravery, and gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Let us think of the bond of eternal peace so that the people of the world may work together to attain peace and unity under God.

The supreme lesson of this day is spiritual. It appeals to the depths of our nature. Life is real in proportion to its consecration to the ideals of faith. Ideas shape the destiny of nations as well as mold the character of men and women. An ideal can lift the meanest into manhood and make the weakest strong!

Personal power is conditioned upon the clearness and intensity of moral convictions. The soldiers of the ideal march to lofty music and advance to certain victory. They conquer though they die. They lay down their lives, yet live forever. Our heroes of the past are immortal in the fruitfulness of their self-sacrifice. The blood they spilled was redemptive.

On their graves we lay our garlands, our plants, and a flag. Taps are sounded and a volley is fired, but the saviors of our country are not dead. They cannot die. They live in all that is best, most hopeful, and most powerful. Their indomitable spirit survives the radiant beauty and strength of our country.

It is out of sacrifice and suffering that our greatest things in life grow. In a great cause they fought, sacrificed, and died. It is said – ‘The grave buries the dead dust, but the character wakes the world.’ Worldly rank, wealth, honors are all perishable and faulty, but zeal for right and loyalty to God and fellow man have immortality which not sword point or gun shoot can pierce or shatter.

Let us honor the past. Let us honor our history which is sometimes sad and sometimes glorious. Let us do what is right and just so that the honored dead from our past may be glorified. Sacred is the trust that we hold and care for. And let this words echo in our hearts – *Eternal honor given. A hail and farewell to those who died in that full splendor of heroic pride so that we might live!*

To end this message, let me share some words from General Omar Bradley, the GI General, just after WWII and the beginning of the atomic age.

‘Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. And we have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. And finally we have many men of science but too few men of God.’

Let us pray:

O God, may we be the messengers of peace who bring good news and announce your salvation. Today let us honor our sacred dead on this weekend but also let us hope that peace will reign in our world.
AMEN.