

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE

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Joe Patterson:

As I reflect on this Memorial Day, I have come to realize that over the years of my life, it has had many different meanings. Here is what I mean.

As a young boy, I really didn't know the true meaning of Memorial Day. It was just another day in which there was no school. It was celebrated on May 30th every year, not the 4th Monday of May, and there would be the occasional family gathering with hamburgers and hot dogs on the not so fancy, round charcoal grill. It would be just another day.

At the age of 19, having been drafted into the Army, the significance of the day changed but not that much. Still being young and just starting my journey into manhood, nothing really seemed that different. It was just a holiday. Sure, I was in the Armed Forces, but it still did not register as to what the true meaning of Memorial Day was.

After serving, I went about my life again and nothing seemed to change when Memorial Day arrived. There was still the occasional family gathering, meal, and things that I enjoyed doing that day. One of those was watching the Indianapolis 500 on TV. That race had a magnificent history and seemed to be the racing highlight of the year in motorsports. Other than that, it was just another holiday.

It wasn't until the mid 1980's that the significance of Memorial Day would come alive in my mind. I was starting to reunite with guys that I served with in Viet Nam, and we would reflect upon our experiences when we were there. We would always talk about the guys we lost to the war or had been hurt. One day we decided to reach out to the families of the men who were killed during our time in country. They had no idea as to how their loved one was lost and were very appreciative that we were able to fill them in with the details as to what had happened as they had no idea. It helped to give them some closure.

Cable TV also helped to awaken me on this holiday. There would be Memorial Day marathons, showing movies of important events and battles during wartime, mostly WWII. Now we can see movies and documentaries depicting all wars and the brave men who fought during those times.

Today, I am the Commander of the Army Navy Union in National Park. The Army Navy Union is the oldest veteran's organization in the USA, having been established in 1886, to honor those who fought in the Civil War. Because I now associate with veterans of other wars, I believe I now have a greater appreciation as to what Memorial Day represents. However, this Memorial Day is going to be very different. There will be no parades, no services, and no gatherings to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Our country today is not what it was when they were alive. Say a prayer for the brave men and women who gave, and especially for those brave men and women serving today. We should never have our freedoms limited to the

point that we cannot honor those who lost their lives in the manner that they deserve.

May God keep his hand upon our great country and “God Bless America!”

Heather Medina:

Hi, my name is Heather Medina. I have been attending G triple C now for about 10 years and I have the honor and privilege to serve on several great ministries: the Spanish Interpretation Ministry, Usher Team, Creative Arts Ministry, and I lead what is known now as a Virtual COF. My Circle of Friends has been a tremendous blessing in my life. It provides me with a safe space where I can further expand our church’s mission of Sharing Christ, Connecting people and Serving others alongside my fellow believers.

When asked, “What does Memorial Day mean to you?” Naturally one would respond that we remember those who have served in our military that have fought so hard for our freedom.

Freedoms that we very much take for granted, which have only been magnified in light of COVID 19. I am reminded during this time of ***Isaiah 41:10: Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*** This scripture holds particularly true for the families of service men & women. Have you ever

asked someone who's love one has served their thoughts about military life? You may be surprised to learn that they sacrifice just as much as the love one serving.

The reason I know this is because I am an Army brat! My father, Jose R. Valcarcel, served in the US Army for over 20 years. My father not only did 1 tour, but 4 tours in Vietnam. When we asked Dad why he kept going back, he would say, "I did it for my country. I did it for our freedom. I did it for you.

My sister and I didn't realize because of our young age what it meant to serve our country. We moved around so much that we have lived all nearly 50 states; and Germany for several years.

My sister and I hated it. We just knew that we were sacrificing holidays with family, missing out on friendships formed only to be uprooted again to attend a new school and meet a whole new set of friends. Each time my father received new orders, we would relocate back to Jersey and stay with my grandmother until my father was able to establish housing for us. We moved back and forth several times. This probably was the hardest time in my childhood. I vividly recall the year my father was stationed in Germany. It took him months to get adequate housing and when he was finally assigned it was right before Christmas. My sister and I were so upset. Just imagine a 10-year-old and 8 years old with my newborn sister in a foreign country right before the Holidays. My sister and I must have plead with our mother every day to let us stay with my grandmother and cousins. But just as my father sacrificed, my mother understood the importance of us

being together as a family. Being so young we really didn't understand nor did we care to. Again, we were Army brats. LOL

As my sister and I look back on our childhood, we now understand why it was so important. We now have profound appreciation of family and an understanding of what it means to really sacrifice.

So, you see, this Memorial Day when we thank our service people, thank their family and their children for their sacrifice because they do it to for our country, they do it for our freedom, and they do it for you!

I will leave you with this **Mark 10:45**, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Happy Memorial Day!

GEORGE WILSON:

GOOD MORNING FOLKS, I'M GEORGE WILSON, A CHARTER MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH AND A PROUD VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY. AND, AS SUCH, WAS ASKED TO SPEAK THIS MORNING ON MY THOUGHTS ON MEMORIAL DAY.

I WAS RAISED DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND REMEMBER WHEN ALL OF THE COUNTRY CAME TOGETHER FOR WAR EFFORTS IN SO MANY WAYS. EACH FAMILY GATHERED NEWSPAPERS AND METAL THAT WE COULD DONATE TOWARDS SUPPLIES FOR THE WAR. I RECALL WHEN WE WERE ISSUED RATION STAMPS FOR GASOLINE AND FOOD.

THINGS WERE TIGHT, WE KIDS HAD TO PUT CARDBOARD IN OUR SHOES WHEN HOLES IN THE SOLES APPEARED, AS LEATHER WAS GOING FOR THE WAR EFFORT AS WELL. YET, I REMEMBER THE PATRIOTISM THAT WENT ALONG WITH THIS. IN SCHOOL WE HAD AIR RAID DRILLS AND HAD TO GET UNDER OUR DESKS OR UP CLOSE TO A WALL, JUST IN CASE OF AN ATTACK FROM THE ENEMY. OUR HOME WINDOWS HAD TO HAVE BLACK-OUT SHADES AT NIGHT TO AVOID AERIAL ATTACK. CAR HEADLIGHTS HAD A SHIELD OVER THE TOP HALF OF THE LIGHTS. BUT ALL OF THIS DREW US CLOSER TOGETHER IN OUR FAITH; AND PATRIOTISM SOARED.

EACH DAY AT SCHOOL STARTED WITH THE PLEDGE OF ALLIGIANCE AND A BIBLE READING PRIOR TO STARTING OUR LESSONS. LATER WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL THE KOREAN WAR CONFLICT WAS IN FULL SWING. THE

BEGINNING OF MY SENIOR YEAR I WAS INVOLVED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT WHICH BROKE MY HIP WHICH LAID ME UP FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. IT GAVE ME A LOT OF TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR COUNTY AND WHAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE. AFTER GRADUATING I JOINED THE ARMY FOR 3 YEARS HOPING TO BECOME A PARATROOPER. BUT, AFTER BEING IN A WEEK THEY CALLED ME IN AND SAID THAT BECAUSE OF MY HIP I COULD NOT BE AIRBORN AND PUT ME IN THE TRANSPORTATION CORPS IN FORT EUSTIS, VIRGINIA, WHICH TURNED OUT WELL.

IN 1956, I SPENT A TOUR OF DUTY IN THULE, GREENLAND, and 700 MILES FROM THE NORTH POLE RE-SUPPLYING THE RADAR LINES THAT PROTECTED OUR NORTHERN BORDERS.

FORTUNATELY, MY 3 YEARS WAS DURING PEACE TIME. AFTER BEING DISCHARGED I JOINED WITH SEVERAL CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, AND AS PART OF THAT GOT INVOLVED BUILDING FLOATS FOR THE PITMAN FOURTH OF JULY PARADES. THIS LED TO MY BECOMING CHAIRMAN OF THE PARADE COMMITTEE HERE AT GCCC FOR 30 YEARS. I WAS ALWAYS THRILLED TO SEE OUR CONGREGATION COMING DOWN THE STREET ON THE 4TH. MOST YEARS THE GCCC FLOAT AND OVERALL PRESENTATION WON AWARDS, OFTEN

1ST PLACE. IT WARMED MY HEART, AND THAT OF OUR CONGREGATION TO SEE JESUS REPRESENTED IN THE MIDST OF A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.

MY WIFE AND I WERE PRIVILEGED TO TRAVEL AFTER RETIREMENT AND ALWAYS MADE A POINT TO VISIT AMERICAN CEMETARIES WHERE OUR COUNTRY'S BRAVE ARE BURIED AND HONORED FOR THEIR SACRIFICE IN MANY COUNTRIES. THE WEEK AFTER 911 WE HAD A WONDEFUL TRIP IN FRANCE AND A VISIT TO THE AMERICAN CEMETARY IN NORMANDY. WE WERE SO TOUCHED WITH HOW WELL THE FRENCH TOOK CARE OF IT. WE ALSO VISITED THE MEMORIAL AT PEARL HARBOR AS WELL AS THE PUNCHBOWL CEMETARY NEARBY WHERE SO MANY AMERICANS FROM THE PACIFIC FRONT ARE BURIED.

ONE OF THE UNKNOWN WAS RECENTLY RETURNED TO CLAYTON, NJ AFTER 78 YEARS. ID WAS MADE FORENSICALLY WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY. OUT OF ALL THE SITES WE VISITED, INCLUDING **VERDUN, FRANCE, THE AMERICAN CEMETARY NEAR FLORENCE, ITALY,** THE ONE THAT NEVER FAILS TO BRING A LUMP TO OUR THROATS IS **THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.** I WOULD ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO TAKE THEIR FAMILIES THERE, IF THEY HAVE NOT YET DONE SO.

MY WIFE, BONNIE, IS PROUD TO HAVE 4 REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIERS ON HER FATHER'S SIDE, INCLUDING A (5TH) GREAT GRANDFATHER WHO SERVED AS ONE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PERSONAL GUARDS. SHE ALSO HAD A FAVORITE 1ST COUSIN WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM AS AN ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON. SO, PATRIOTISM RUNS STRONG IN THE WILSON FAMILY. WE ALWAYS HAVE ATTENDED MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES IN PITMAN OR WASHINGTON TWP, AND MAKE SURE THE FLAGS ARE FLYING FOR MEMORIAL DAY.

ON MEMORIAL DAY THE FLAG IS NORMALLY FLOWN AT HALF-STAFF TIL NOON AND THEN RAISED TO ITS FULL HEIGHT, AND AT 3:00 EVERYONE IS REQUESTED TO PAUSE AND REFLECT ON THE MEANING OF THE DAY, WHICH IS TO HONOR THOSE WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES SO THAT WE CAN LIVE IN FREEDOM IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY. RIGHT NOW FLAGS ARE ALREADY AT HALF STAFF BECAUSE OF THE CORONA VIRUS VICTIMS.

WOULD YOU PRAY WITH ME?

“REMINDE US DAILY LORD THAT OUR FREEDOM IN BOTH LIFE AND ETERNITY COMES AT A PRICE SOMEONE ELSE PAID. JOHN TELLS US THAT ‘GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT ONE LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS’ (JOHN 15:13). I AM GRATEFUL TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS, AND

MY HEART TURNS TO THE FAMILIES WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND.
THIS DAY IS A REMINDER OF THEIR SACRIFICE; I PRAY,
LORD, THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WOULD COMFORT THEM.

AMEN.”