

May 24, 2020 - John 10:15-17 & John 15:13 - The Ultimate Sacrifice

I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. --- Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Introduction:

This is the Memorial Day weekend and it is a special time for reflection and consideration to those that paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Jane Horton is the Defense Department's senior advisor for Gold Star family members. When she hears someone say "Happy Memorial Day," it makes every one of her nerves stand on end. "That's not what the day is about," Yes, Memorial Day marks the traditional beginning of the summer vacation season. For many it is a three-day weekend involving picnics, barbecues and trips. However its original intentions acknowledge the debt we owe as Americans to those who died to protect the country. Ms. Horton is worried that Americans are detached from the losses suffered by those in uniform. She said, "People don't understand that people really do go to defend us so the enemy doesn't come here, and sometimes these soldiers die." *Jessy Watters interview with youth...*

I. Our Military Sacrifice their lives.

1. Nearly 1.1 million Americans made the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms that we enjoy today. Over 500,000 military personnel alone died during the U.S. Civil War. That's almost half of all Americans who have ever died during wartimes. Many of the men and women who were killed defending our country died before their natural time. Most of them were in their late teens or twenties. My father, a World War II veteran fought in every major battle in the European theater and he was only 22 in his first battle of war. To the day he died, he remembered vividly the men he served with and those who died in the prime of life far from home. They gave the ultimate sacrifice! All of their dreams never fulfilled and some never to become fathers, grandfathers or husbands, because their lives were tragically cut short defending our freedoms. We owe them this day of recognition and respect.

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

II. Our First Responders Sacrifice their lives.

1. We cannot forget those who have died to save others during this coronavirus pandemic. It has been described as an invisible war and deaths of our citizens have surpassed the fatalities of 58,000 deaths in the Vietnam War. On February 6, COVID-19 claimed its first victim on U.S. soil: a 57-year-old woman in Santa Clara County, California. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report stating that 27 health worker died in the U.S.A. Officials say they have no comprehensive way to count those who lose their lives trying to

save others. Healthcare workers are on the front lines of the global effort to care for patients with COVID-19. They did so putting themselves at risk for infection. More than 1000 have already died, from dozens of other countries. These are physicians, nurses, assistants, technicians, orderlies, administrators, volunteers, drivers, porters, EMTs, firefighters, and more. They too are all remembered here on this Memorial Day weekend. These brave people laid down their lives. **Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.** We have another category of soldiers to remember...

III. Christian soldiers Sacrifice their lives.

1. They too gave their lives to save others and to propagate the faith. According to a report from Christians in Crisis a Christian is martyred every three minutes. In nearly 50 countries around the world it is illegal to profess Christ as Savior and or possess a Bible. Christian persecution is on the rise even in America and we can expect it to get worse. It is unfortunate but we have become a hated majority, yet we are called to advance not retreat. This pandemic has showed us how essential they believe the church of Jesus Christ truly is. Yet Christ has claimed the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Many died to stay those gates,

Chapter 11 of Hebrews is what some call the Bible's "Hall of Faith." Men like Abraham, Isaac Jacob, Moses, and Noah. But there are other men and women who dared to step up in the crowd and radically live out their faith in God. They lived on the edge and they made a difference. They were unashamed and they laid down their lives for the Lord. We must not ignore these others mentioned in Hebrews 11: 36-40:

And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

1. The key word in verse 36 is **others**. All those previously mentioned were victors who escaped danger and death. However, others did not have a miraculous deliverance like that of Noah, Moses, or Rahab. **Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

2. Some endured mocking's, scourging's, bonds, and imprisonment. Others were stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword. Some heroes of faith wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (11:36-37). These are listed so we will know it is not always God's will to deliver us our way; therefore, sometimes we must simply endure. The world forced some of God's saints to live like animals in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves (11:38b). They were denied the world's comfort but received God's commendation.

3. The empowerment of America began hundreds of years ago with men and women who carved this nation out of the wilderness. They were generally men and women of faith. And they proved their faith by creating and signing covenants with Almighty God, forever binding America to those contracts... covenants and contracts like the Mayflower Compact, the New England Confederation, the various state charters, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution. They were willing to die to pave a new path and a better future for their families for this nation. These were God fearing people who demonstrated the love that Christ showed for His Sheep. ...**I lay down my life for the sheep.**

Psalms 33: [12] Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

America is a wayward nation and we need to pray for her ills. It is now, more than ever that America needs prayer. We are a sick nation. We have gone adrift. We have slaughter our unborn, we have sold out godly values and morals that this nation was founded upon for prosperity and economics. We have stood by and watch injustice take place in our justice system and cater to the liberal few who hate God and all that His Son stands for.

We wonder why such an evil has come upon us. Dare we ask God did our fore-brothers died in vain? Did their blood count for nothing? We have become complacent and this virus has awakened us to God's desire for His church and His people to remember that all good things come from His hand.

Illustration:

President Abraham Lincoln once said, "We have forgotten the gracious hand of God, which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us," he wrote, "And have vainly imagined that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."

Our faith will never grow until we face a problem we can't handle on our own. God wants our faith to grow continually; therefore, life is a series of problems we can't deal with by ourselves. Sometimes we will be like Paul and some who were not delivered. What does Hebrews 11:38a tell us of those with such faith, the world was not worthy. The world was not worthy of God's Son. Jesus Christ gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom a freedom for all eternity from the wages of sin and death. This was the greatest sacrifice ever given to redeem a lost world.

Conclusion:

God help us as Americans not to make the same mistake as the Israelites. He is the only One who can provide for the USA and you. Placing your ultimate trust in anything other than God is idolatry. Could it be that we are saying we trust in God, but our actions indicate otherwise? ...Toque Ville said, "America is great because America is good. If America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great."

Proverbs 14: [34] Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.