LEST WE FORGET

May 29, 2017 John 15:12-14

Dear Friends in Christ: A blessed Memorial Day to all of you. God has truly blessed our nation over the last 241 years. But, because of sinful man, we have, from time to time, been engaged in wars. Not of our making but to help our fellow man.

Many citizens have served in the Armed Forces of our country and have gone to war in the cause of freedom. Veterans are all over. We see them as we go about our daily lives. Many look and act just like everyone else. But you do see some with missing limbs or artificial limbs. What are not visible are the inner scars from experiencing the brutality of war.

There is a price to be paid by many who have worn the uniform of this country. You don’t spend years at a POW camp called the Hanoi Hilton in North Vietnam or in a German Stalag in WW II and come out the same.

COL Bud Day was shot ddown over North Vietnam in 1967 and had to eject, breaking his arm in 3 places. He was captured and tortured repeatedly. After more than 5 years he was released with others. He had hookworms, whipworms, was deaf in one ear due to beatings and one arm would not work right. He was awarded the Medal of Honor.

He also brought another pilot back from certain death. His name is John McCain, Senator from Arizona.

It was April 9, 1942, the first day of the Bataan death march for Glenn Frazier. He saw men bayoneted for no reason. Men run over by tanks. He saw much suffering and death.

Major Oliver North was left on a battlefield in Vietnam, everyone thinking he was dead. Someone noticed movement and he survived.

It was June of 2005. Navy Seal, Lt. Michael Patrick Murphy did the unthinkable------He left the relative safety of some rocks on a mountain in Afghanistan to make a phone call, knowing it would cost him his life. He was the officer in charge and he did it to save his men. The 4 seals were on a mission when they were attacked by a force of over 200 talaban.

Their only hope was to get help fast. Lt. Murphy got out in the open and calmly made the call for help and was gunned down. It’s all in the book----“Lone Survivor” by Marcus Luttrell who somehow survived that terrible day.

Life in the service can be boring, exciting and sometimes very scary. Every combat veteran has his story. But, not all are willing to talk about it. It can bring back bad memories of friends lost.

Many people never have to go out on a night patrol into enemy country or set up a listening post outside the wire or sit guard duty, looking out into the darkness for any sign of movement.

Many will never experience being in an airplane and getting shot at or shot down, jumping out of a perfectly good airplane with a combat load. Many will never experience living in a long tube called a submarine, get depth-charged by the enemy, sweating out all the explosions outside.

But we are not here for war stories today. We gather on this special day all over America to remember----To remember those who did not come home to their families. Or did come home----in a coffin. There are too many national cemetaries with rows of white crosses. Each cross is a life that was cut short. Each cross represents a missing family member at the table.

Many towns around the country have war memorials to remember those who have served and those who did not return. This is what Memorial Day is all about. We do it so that each generation will not forget that freedom is not free.

We cannot know how many have died in service to our country. I heard that it is well over a million. There are many stories about their service.

Why does a man fall on a grenade? We don’t practice this in Basic Training. Why do men face certain death to rescue a buddy who is wounded? They don’t do it for a medal or fame. They do it to save a friend.

The Bible says: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” We have a Friend who laid down His life for ours. His name is Jesus. His too is a war story.

You see, the devil had declared war on the human race in the Garden of Eden. The devil tricked Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and death was the punishment.

God called in the Cavalry in the person of His Son Jesus. Jesus had to do something to remove the death sentence that was hanging over all people on the earth.

To save us from the fires of hell, Jesus came to earth as a man, took our sins on Himself and died on the cross, taking upon Himself our death sentence.

But, just as He said, He rose from the grave on the third day, taking away the power of death.

Every Sunday is for us a Memorial Day, remembering the sacrifice of Jesus for all of us. T

The American flag is a reminder of all who have given their all for a friend. We shall never forget their sacrifice.

The Christian flag is a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who took away the sins of the world.

May we always remember those who have served their country and especially those who did not come home to family. And may we always give all honor and glory to Jesus, our only Savior.