WATCH AND BE READY

Mt. 25:1-13 Nov. 12, 2017

There are not many jobs where a person is always ready to give his life for a greater cause. I can think of two. Working for the Lord and the military.

 On this Armed Forces Sunday we give thanks for all the men and women who wear the uniform of our country, training to go to war if called upon. We also give thanks for our Synod’s Armed Forces Commission and active and reserve Chaplains who serve those who are always ready to go in harm’s way.

 Being ready to serve our nation goes way back to the early colonists who worked the fields or in their shops with their rifles close by if called upon to fight Indians or the British.

 They were called Minutemen---ready in a minute to fight. Paul Revere and William Dawes, Jr. had ridden the night of April 18, 1775 to warn the people that the Regulars were coming out.

 Massachusetts Minutemen answered the call to arms and flocked to Lexington and Concord as the British were on the way to destroy rebel arms and ammunition. 8 Minutemen gave their lives on the Green in Lexington in the first of many engagements during the Revolution.

 In both world wars men and women put on the uniform of their country to fight for freedom. For others and for our own.

 Sgt. Alvin York was a crack shot from Tennesee and also objected to killing. But he went into action to save his men who were being shot. He received the Medal of Honor and many other medals.

 Sgt. Audie Murphy was the most decorated soldier of WW II. He was also awarded the Medal OF Honor. Pretty impressive for a man rejected by the Marines and Navy for being too small.

 Both men just wanted to serve their country.

A football player for the Arizona Cardinals, Pat Tillman, had a very lucrative contract to play football. After 9/11 he joined the Army to fight in Iraq. He gave his life for his country. In the Revolutionary war, Nathan Hale was a spy for us and was caught. Before being hung he said, ‘I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.’

 Men have gone down with their subs, never to be seen again. Bomber crews have been shot out of the sky with no chance for survival. Many of the crew of the USS Arizona still lie in the ship that is now a memorial in Hawaii.

 Our military is our first line of defense in a very dangerous and wicked world.

 The world is also not too kind to those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. A number of years ago 5 missionaries went to share the Gospel with a tribe of headhunters. All were killed. In this book, Voices of the Martyrs, we meet those who gave their lives because they lived the faith, meeting evil face on.

 It begins with Stephen who was martyred in AD 34 by the Scribes and Pharisees. It ends in 2006 with the murder of Pastor Benestey Escobar in Columbia by Marxist guerilas. They stormed into the church and shot him.

 Jesus tells us not to expect to be treated kindly by the world. It hated Him and will hate us too. Eleven of the 12 Apostles met a violent death by a world that did not want to hear the Good News of a Savior in Jesus Christ.

 The world wants to do what it wants to do----we, with our Christian witness get in the way. We bother their conscience. We say life in the womb is precious and should be protected. The world says, we will do what we want to do.

 The devil was in that man who walked into that little church in Texas and show everyone. We are faced with such evil today that some wonder----where is God? Why doesn’t He do something about all this evil?

 Here’s a flash message---God has done something about evil----He defeated it on the cross. His holy blood cleansed us from all sin. The power of the devil has been broken by our resurrected Savior. Death has been dealt the death blow.

 What does that mean? When Jesus returns at the end of time, we too will be raised from our graves by the power of the Lamb.

 There is one warning that we take from our text. All who would be saved must be watchful for Jesus will come like a thief in the night---no warning. We are to watch and be ready. How?

 Keeping the faith. Living like the Christian we claim to be. Acknowledge our sin, repent and love the Lord. Scripture says of Christians, you will know them by their love.

 If we love the Lord and appreciate being forgiven all sin, we will be here every Sunday to praise God for His great goodness and mercy. We are to be like the wise virgins and take care to be ready to meet the Lord.

 How? Regular use of the means of grace; Word and Sacrament. And the door was shut, says our text. After the Lord has come to us, be it at our death or judgment day, there is no more chance to be saved. The time of grace has expired.

 The Lord will say to those who had no faith and showed it by their life; ‘I don’t know you.’ How terrible it will be for those who hear those words. The lake of fire is waiting for the faithless, the devil and his evil angels.

 Only he is to blame who idles away these days of grace because church isn’t very interesting. All they want is my money. Worship is boring. I hate the songs. And on and on.

 On the contrary, we worship the king of heaven and earth. He is our best friend who shed His blood for you and me. He created the universe and has all power.

 Are you ready to meet the Lord? He wants to take His faithful ones home to heavenly bliss and everlasting happiness. What we leave behind is a world of evil, death and suffering. Oh, how we yearn for something better, a life of pure joy where nothing interrupts to cause sadness or pain.

 Do you believe it? Each day brings us closer to our goal. Don’t give up if the going gets tough. Pray for a steady and strong faith to run your race and win the prize of life everlasting. Amen