LEST WE FORGET

May 27, 2018 John 15:12-14

God has truly blessed our nation over the last 242 years. But, because of sinful man, we have from time to time been engaged in wars. Many citizens have served in the Armed forces and have gone to war in the cause of freedom. Veterans are all over. We see them all the time as we go about our daily lives. Many look and act just like everyone else. But, sometimes you see someone who is missing a leg or arm. What are not so apparent are the invisible scars from going to war.

Remembering the friends that were lost, the horrendous trauma from experiencing the brutality of war.

On May 5, 1868, an order issued by General John Logan established a day of remembrance for those soldiers who died during the Civil War. May 30 was the day designated for this observance and flowers were placed on the graves of the fallen soldiers of both the Union and the Confederate armies.

Today we remember the grit and determination of those called upon to fight for the cause of freedom.

It was April 19, 1775. A good sized force of British Regulars was on the march for Concord, Massachusetts to capture rebel arms and powder. When they reached Lexington, they encountered a smaller force of rebels who were farmers and businessmen, standing in their way. Someone fired a shot and after a short fight, 8 colonists lay dead. The fight for our independence had begun.

Rev. Bill Emerson was recorded as saying to a group of rebels at Concord that morning: “Let us stand our ground. If we die, let us die here.”

Cap. Nathan Hale was a spy for General Washington. He was caught by the British and before they hung him he said: “I regret that I have but one life to lose for my county.”

It was 1953---Korea. Navy hospital corpsman 3rd class bill Charette was in a 24 hour battle while also taking care of the wounded and himself being wounded. At one point he was knocked out by an exploding grenade. He and 4 other corpsmen were put in for the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was the only one to live to receive it.

Korea. 1951. It was dark and raining. The enemy attacked in the dark and Corporal Rodolfo Hernandez was fighting from his foxhole when his rifle jammed. He fixed his bayonet and charged into the enemy soldiers. He was found the next morning near death from bayonet and grenade wounds..Part of his head was torn off. After several years of medical care, except for a useless right arm, he was ok.

COL. Bud Day was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967 and had to eject, breaking an arm in 3 places. He was captured and tortured. He was repeatedly tortured over the more than 5 years in different camps. When he was released, he had hookworms, whipworms, was deaf in one ear due to beatings and one arm had a permanent bow. He received the medal of honor.

He also brought another flyer back from certain death; his name was John McCain, the 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 and much suffering and death.

Major Oliver North was left on the battlefield for dead in Viet Nam until someone noticed some movement.

It was June of 2005. Navy seal, Lt. Michael Patrick Murphy did the unthinkable----He left the relative safely of some rocks on a mountain in Afghanistan to make a phone call, knowing it would cost him his life. The 4 seals were being attacked by over 200 taliban soldiers and their only hope was to make a call to base to get help. The only survivor of that encounter was Marcus Luttrell. He wrote a book of that battle called; ‘Lone Survivor’.

Life in the service can be boring, exciting and sometimes very scary. Every combat veteran has his story. But not all are ready to talk about it. It sometimes brings back memories too horrible to relate.

Many people never have to go out on a night patrol into enemy country; or set up a listening post outside the base; or having guard duty at night, looking out into the darkness for any movement.

Many will never experience being in an airplane and getting shot at and maybe going down in flames. Or being in a long tube of metal called a submarine, being depth charged, sweating out a long wait.

But, this weekend, we remember the others. Those who didn’t come home to wife and family. Those whose white crosses in cemetaries around the world give mute testimony to the cost of war. Rows upon rows of white crosses. Each one a life once lived. Many towns around this nation have put up war memorials so that the memory of those who served will be honored and remembered.

This is what Memorial Day is all about. A day to remember those who have gone off to war for the cause of freedom. We remember the widows and the sons and daughters who didn’t get to welcome home a loved one.

We can never know how many died in service to their country. But we do have many stories of sacrifice. Why does a man fall on a grenade, knowing that it could kill him? Or, make a phone call knowing it will cost him his life? You can’t practice for these things. You don’t do it to get a medal. You do it for your friends.

The Bible says: “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

We have a friend who laid down His life for ours. His name is Jesus Christ. This too is a war story.

You see, the devil declared war on the human race in the Garden of Eden and mankind became sinful and the wrath of God was upon us.

God called in the Calvary in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus had to take away the sentence of death hanging over us since sin leads to death in hell.

To do this, Jesus let Himself be crucified on a cross. He died. But 3 days later He came out of he grave. Death no longer was a threat to all who believe Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

Every Sunday is for us a Memorial day remembrance of what Jesus has done for all the people of the world.

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

The Christian flag is a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus for all the people of the world.

May we all remember those who served their country and never came home and may we all remember and give all honor and glory to our only Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen