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Series: Memorial Day
Message: They Gave Their Life
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"They Gave Their Life!"

This is Memorial Day Weekend. The key word for Memorial Day is "Remember." Memorial Day is all about remembering. Specifically, it's about remembering those who gave their life for our country. We should have such a day. We should have a special day for those individuals who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. It's the least we can do.

Do you know how many American casualties there have been in the major wars we've been involved with? Would you like to take a guess? Here are some of the numbers:

War	American Casualties
Revolutionary war	4,435
Civil War	498,332 (364,511 - Union 133,821 - Confederate)
World War I	116,516
World War II	405,399
Korean War	36,574
Viet Nam War	58,200
Persian Gulf War	382
Iraq War	4,400

There have been over 1,124,000 American Casualties of War

(Remember, these are just the major wars. This list doesn't include the War of 1812, the Spanish-American War, the ongoing War in Afghanistan, and other conflicts we've been in....)

1,124,000. That's a big number. Let us not forget that each number represents a human life. Let us remember that each number represents a person.
Remembering: That's what Memorial Day is supposed to be about.

There is another group of people whom we should also remember. Another group of people who have given their lives who are equally deserving of being remembered. Unfortunately, we don't have a Memorial Day for them. I speak of those who have died for their faith.

International Christian Concern reports, "More Christians were persecuted and martyred for their faith in the last century than all previous centuries combined. Nearly two thirds of all Christians alive in the world today suffer persecution in varying degrees, including imprisonment, slavery, torture and even death."

Italian Journalist Antonio Socci, in his book, "The New Persecuted" writes,
"The 20th century may have been the most striking in the annals of Christian martyrdom. In two millennia of Christian history, about 70 million faithful have given their lives for the faith, and of these, 45.5 million -- fully 65% -- were in the last century."

We remember 1,124,000 American casualties of war in the last 200 years or so.
Shouldn't we also remember the 45.5 million Christians who have been martyred in the last century?

45,500,000 Christians have been martyred in the last century.

Memorial Day is about remembering those who have given their lives for their country.
Christians should also remember those who have given their life for their faith.

Now, let me ask you a question: what are you giving your life for?

Every single day a part of your life is being used up. What's it going to? What's it going for? What are you giving your life for?

Let's leave that question laying there for a moment. Let me ask you another question: What did Jesus give his life for? That's a question you should easily answer.

1. Jesus gave his life for us.

Jesus gave his life for our salvation. He gave His life so that we could go to Heaven. He gave His life as the payment for our sins.

He did so willingly. He did so intentionally. He did so because of his love for us.

Mark 10:45 Jesus said, "For I did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

John 10:11 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Jesus gave his life for you.

Now, let's return to that first question I asked you: What are you giving your life for? How about giving your life to Jesus?

2. We should give our life for Jesus.

How do you do that? How DO you give your life for Jesus?

Giving your life isn't just about dying. More importantly, it's about how you live.

How do you give your life for Jesus? In the way you live. In the things you do. In the way you spend your time. In the way you spend your money. In the commitments you make. In your priorities. In your attitudes. In the way you treat people.

When you give your life to Jesus you live your life the way Jesus would have you live it.

Galatians 2:20 "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

2 Corinthians 5:15 "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Where are you going with your life? What are you doing with your life? What are you giving your life for? Are you giving your life for Jesus?

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship."

Romans 14:8 "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."

Belonging to the Lord means you take on the Lord's priorities. The things that are important to Him become important to you. The thing He gave is life for becomes the same thing you give your life for.

He gave his life for the salvation of others. That's what he wants more than anything else. That's at the top of His priority list.

Look at what the Apostle Peter wrote concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

The Apostle Paul expressed the Lord's priority this way:

1 Timothy 2:3-4

3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior,

4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Jesus gave his life so that all could be saved.

We should dedicate our life to telling others about that salvation.

Therefore, let me share with you five quick pointers to more effectively sharing your faith.

A. Pray.

The Apostle Paul was a great evangelist because he prayed.

He didn't depend upon only his own intelligence or his own power or his own abilities.

He prayed that God would be involved. As an example:

Ephesians 1:17-18

17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.

Pray for others, specifically by name, that the Holy Spirit would convict them and that you would have the opportunity to share your faith. Pray that you'd have the opportunity to invite them to church and that they'd be receptive to such an invitation.

Pray for others and also pray for yourself. Pray that God would give you wisdom and sensitivity and the opportunity to share your faith. Pray that you would say the right thing at the right time.

Ephesians 6:19-20, the Apostle Paul said,

19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

A. Pray

B. Love people.

We must be motivated by love. If you don't care about people then don't waste your time trying to share Christ with them. But let me say that if you are truly a Christian, you will love people, you will care about people. That's one of the evidences that your Christianity is real. That's one of the fruits of the spirit.

The Apostle John stated it very bluntly:

1 John 4:8 "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Because God is love, everything He does is motivated by love.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."

God's motive was love, it should be our motive as well.

Loving Christians share their faith. Loving churches care about people.

Consequently, Loving churches are growing churches:

Several years ago the Arizona Republic ran an article titled, "Growing churches rated at top in 'Love - Care Quotient' survey."

"American churches that demonstrate the most numerical growth are congregations where love is

expressed openly, according to a study by the institute for American church growth of Pasadena, California.

The institute surveyed 8,600 people from congregations in 39 protestant denominations to measure their "love-care quotient."

Growing congregations rated 35 percent higher in the "degree of love" they show than do static or shrinking congregations.

"Growing churches are more loving - to each other and to visitors - than declining churches," the institute said. "Loving churches attract more people, regardless of their theology, denomination or location."

Love makes a difference!

Loving people makes a difference.

We should express love verbally, but even more important is to express love in practical ways.

1 John 3:18 "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

I'm thankful for the many, many of you who are always willing to prepare a meal for one of our families, or to provide child care, or to offer help to our widows, or to visit someone in the hospital, or to give someone a ride to their doctors appointment, or who'll visit with someone who is going through a tough time.

That's what Christianity is all about! That's love in action. God bless you.

A. Pray. B. Love people.

C. Be prepared.

If someone were to ask you, "Why are you a Christian?" What would you tell them?

If someone were to ask you, "Why do you go to church?" What would you tell them?

If someone were to ask you, "How can I become a Christian?" What would you tell them?

1 Peter 3:15 "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Are you prepared? Have you put some thought into it?

D. Invite!

People will only respond when they are given an opportunity to respond. Give them that opportunity! Invite them to come and hear about Jesus. Invite them to church.

Jesus said, Luke 14:23 "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full."

The Apostle Paul said, 2 Corinthians 5:20 "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Ananias said, Acts 22:16 "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."

The Apostle Peter said, Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus invited. The Apostle Paul invited. Ananias invited. The Apostle Peter invited.

If you want to make a real difference in the lives of others, speak out, be bold, invite them to church.

Bob Kuest, a missionary friend of mine, wrote the following:
"All the studies done to discover what brings people to church have produced the same overwhelming results. The facts are so lopsided that the number one reason for people attending church exceeds number two by almost seven hundred percent! These studies show that the most effective way to get people to come to church is through relationships, friends bring friends. People inviting people is the key."

Lets care enough about others to invite them to church.

- A. Pray
- B. Love people
- C. Be Prepared
- D. Invite!
- E. Make visitors feel welcome.

Welcome our visitors, smile, shake their hand, introduce yourself, invite them back.
Be courteous: give them the best parking spots, let them have the seat on the isle, be a good host.

Romans 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

1 John 4:7 "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God."

Let me close with this last little story:

"Let me tell you about a church in California. The architect had designed the beautiful sanctuary on a hillside overlooking the valley. Four main entryways were designated with doormats bearing the names of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The greeting chairman made assignments to his committee to stand at the individual doors to welcome the congregation as they arrived. One lady became rather irate when she received her assignment. She immediately called the man in charge, saying to him, "I know I agreed to be a greeter, but I think standing by the door to the John is going just a bit too far!"

Making visitors feel welcome is everybody's responsibility. Let's work together at making our visitors feel at home.

If you are visiting with us this morning we welcome you with open arms. If you are looking for a church home here in Fountain Hills, we'd be honored to have you join our family here at Christ's Church.

If you have never received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior we want you to know that God loves you and that the Lord Jesus Christ gave his life for your salvation. That salvation is available to you if you would receive Him as your Lord and Savior.