

Remembering Sacrifice**May 27, 2018 Memorial Day****North East United Methodist Church****Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

The Navy's amphibious assault ship USS New York was built with 24 tons of scrap steel from the World Trade Center.



It is the fifth in a new class of warship designed for missions that include special operations against terrorists. It will carry a crew of 360 sailors and 700 combat-ready Marines to be delivered ashore by helicopters and assault craft.

Steel from the World Trade Center was melted down in a foundry in Amite, La., to cast the ship's bow section.



When it was poured into the molds on Sept. 9, 2003, the steelworkers treated it with total reverence, recalled Navy Capt. Kevin Wensing, who was there. It was a spiritual moment.

The ship's motto?...



Never Forget

This weekend we celebrate Memorial Day. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. Each year we honor all who have fallen fighting for our country, those who made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives for others.

We cannot forget. We must remember.

God has always understood that we are a forgetful people and often in the OT stone pillars were erected as memorials of striking events...



...such as the crossing of the Jordan...

Joshua 4: 1-7 – *“When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones*

mean?’ Tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

...or Jacob’s vision of a ladder descending from heaven.

Genesis 28: 11-19 – *“When [Jacob] reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” **Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel...***

In Exodus 12: 1-14, God instructs Israel to erect a different kind of memorial...to keep THE PASSOVER FEAST...



...to celebrate this feast forever, for generations to come...to keep the Passover as a remembrance of God’s mighty act in leading Israel from slavery to freedom.

Exodus 12: 1-14 –

While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the LORD gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron:

“From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each

household. If a family is too small to eat a whole animal, let them share with another family in the neighborhood. Divide the animal according to the size of each family and how much they can eat. The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects.

Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel must slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight. They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal.



That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. Do not eat any of the meat raw or boiled in water. The whole animal—including the head, legs, and internal organs—must be roasted over a fire. Do not leave any of it until the next morning. Burn whatever is not eaten before morning.

These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the LORD's Passover. On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the LORD! But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.

This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD. This is a law for all time.



God instructs the Jews to have a feast every year to remember His great works He did in Egypt.

The tenth plague is about to fall on the land. In that plague the firstborn of each household will die. But God provides a way of protection for His people. He tells them to sacrifice a lamb... and put the blood of the lamb on the top and side posts of the door. Then He promises...

Exodus 12:13 - ***“...when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”***

There was one essential distinction that fateful night between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The blood applied by faith in obedience to God's instruction made all the difference. God didn't say I'll review your works and decide whether you deserve protection or not. If He had done that, all of Israel would have been in big trouble. This is an awesome demonstration of God's grace. God Himself provided the way of salvation. All they had to do was take Him at His word and do exactly what He told them to do. The blood applied to the door posts was the essential difference.



Of course, we know that the blood of those lambs was only a foreshadowing of the blood Christ would shed...

...the blood that would provide the eternal protection we all need.



God instructed Moses to make the anniversary of this miracle, the Passover, a Memorial Day.

Centuries later, celebrating and remembering the Passover with His disciples, Jesus, also understanding that we are a forgetful people, instituted the act of Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, as a remembrance of His sacrifice, His death, for us. When we take the bread and drink from the cup we remember the One who died for us...who was willing to give up His life that we might have life.

We remember that God has cleansed us with the “*blood of the lamb*” placed over the doorposts of our hearts...and the angel of death now passes us by and we are able to stand before a Holy God and enter eternity.



Christ wanted us to always remember, as it is written...

Romans 5:6 - ***“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.”***

Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion that we might not forget...

Luke 22:19 – ***“He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.’”***



We cannot forget. We cannot forget Christ's sacrifice for us...His love...

As Paul writes...

Romans 5: 7-11 - *"Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."*

"So now we can rejoice..."

How do we rejoice in this new relationship? How do we respond to such sacrifice?

We sacrifice.

Jesus said...

John 13:35 - *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

And Jesus showed us how we are to love one another by washing the disciples' feet.

John 13: 14-15 - *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you."*



“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We respond to such sacrifice by offering our lives. We, as Paul writes, *“by the mercies of God...present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service.”*

We are called to live lives of sacrifice.

I pray that North East United Methodist Church...that we never forget the “*why*”.

Why we serve? Why we sacrifice our time and energies? Why we spend long hours in meetings? Why we put up with people’s faults and diverse personalities? Why we give our money and talents? Why we forgive and love?

It is because *“He first loved us.”*



Jesus said, *“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*

This is a challenge to each one of us...forsaking our wants for others is not natural to us...it is difficult...Yet, Christ challenges us to serve others, to love others, even our enemies...to sacrifice ourselves, many times without notice or fanfare...

Many times this is not only unnatural but impossible; thus, we must remember the “*Why*” – in remembering “*Why*” we love, “*Why*” we sacrifice, “*Why*” we serve, “*Why*” we get up on Sunday morning instead of sleeping in...we connect into the power...we “*plug in*” to the power that will give us the strength to serve when we are tired, to love the unlovable, to forgive the unforgiveable, to keep fighting for what is right and just and true... we “*plug in*” to the power that will give us the strength to sacrifice ourselves...to sacrifice our wants and our needs...so that someone else might know God’s unmerited, unconditional, extraordinary GRACE.

It is in remembering the “*Why*” ...



...looking up, remembering what the “*lamb of God*” who has “*come to take away the sins of the world...*”



...has done on our behalf...

What can you sacrifice? Who do you need to forgive? Who can you begin to work with? What committee might you serve on? Can you get up earlier on Sundays and help greet at the door or serve in the nursery? Can you leave your group of friends to start a new group to reach people that need God and His grace? Can you help with the youth group, the children’s ministry, Vacation Bible School, or sponsor a child in Africa or South America? Can you give up your wants to reach another? What will you sacrifice...what will you give...how will you serve?

Why ask such questions? Because “*He first loved us.*”

May we never forget.