

## **MEMORIAL DAY SERMON, ZION, 20211**

2 Corinthians 3:17: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

Coast Guard Commander Kelly Strong, as a high school senior, wrote a tribute to his father. His father was a career marine. He called it FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.

**I watched the flag pass by one day,  
It fluttered in the breeze;  
A young Marine saluted it,  
And then he stood at ease.**

**I looked at him in uniform,  
So young, so tall, so proud;  
With hair cut square and eyes alert,  
He'd stand out in any crowd.**

**I thought ... how many men like him  
Had fallen through the years?  
How many died on foreign soil?  
How many mothers' tears?**

**How many pilot's planes shot down?  
How many died at sea?  
How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?  
No ... Freedom is not Free.**

**I heard the sound of Taps one night,  
When everything was still;  
I listened to the bugler play,  
And felt a sudden chill;**

**I wondered just how many times  
That Taps had meant "Amen,"  
When a flag had draped a coffin  
Of a brother or a friend;  
I thought of all the children,**

**Of the mothers and the wives,  
Of fathers, sons and husbands ...  
With interrupted lives.**

**I thought about a graveyard  
At the bottom of the sea,  
Of unmarked graves in Arlington ...  
No ... Freedom is not Free!**

The reminder for all of us on this Memorial Day Weekend is that freedom is not free. We are reminded that sacrifices do cost. A sacrifice that costs nothing is worth nothing. A sacrifice that has no price tag is worth just that- nothing. A sacrifice which requires nothing is not a sacrifice at all.

This week as we celebrate Memorial Day we remember. We stop and thank God for those who have paid the price for our freedom. Courageous men and women who gave their lives to pay the price for the freedom that we enjoy. Men and women who gave their lives on battlefields abroad and here at home. Nearly 1.3 million Americans have shed their blood and died for freedom's cause.

Protecting our freedom has come at a great cost. President Franklin D. Roosevelt said: **“Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them.”**

AND SO WE CELEBRATE MEMORIAL DAY. What is a memorial? By definition a memorial is a commemorative object or event. It is something that is intended to remind people of somebody who has died or an event in which people died. It can be a statue, a date, a place, a speech, or a ceremony.

On this Memorial Day weekend, may we never be guilty of forgetting those who gave all on behalf of our wonderful nation. We are free to worship our Savior this Sunday because of those who sacrificed their lives that we might enjoy this weekly privilege. I'm humbled by their sacrifice. I hope you are too.

Still, as large as that number is, it pales in comparison to the number of men, women, and children who have given their lives for freedom's eternal cause.

Michael J. McClymond, writing for the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, wrote **"The total number of Christian martyrs during the 20th Century is reported at 45 million."** He finished his thought by defining Christian martyrs as **"believers in Christ who lost their lives prematurely, in situations of witness, as a result of human hostility."**

God only knows how many more have shed their blood for the cause of Christ in the last two thousand years. It's fitting this morning that we likewise remember their sacrifice. Still, more fittingly, it's important we remember the One they believed in. The one who shed the purity of his blood for freedom's cause. For without the sacrifice of our Risen Lord, we would not enjoy the freedoms we love and know so well.

We need to understand that Jesus willingly gave up His life so that you and I can enjoy the freedom we have in the Spirit today as well. We could not worship the Lord today like we do if it were not for the sacrifice of Jesus. His sacrifice cost Him dearly because it cost Him His very life. But He gave it willingly so that you and I could experience the freedom we have in the Spirit. The gift of eternal life. The ability to have an intimate relationship with God today. All these perks or freedoms came as a result of Jesus' Sacrifice.

Yes, we enjoy a lot of freedom, but the greatest freedom that we have is the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus. The Bible teaches that the penalty for sin is death, but you and I have been set free from this penalty. We have been set free because Jesus paid the penalty. Instead of death, we have been given eternal life. Jesus paid the price.

I Cor. 7:23, reads, **“You were bought at a price. So do not become slaves of men.”** John 8:36, says, **“If Jesus sets you free, you will be free indeed.”**

Remember the words of our text in 2 Corinthians 3:17: **“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”**

Each of us must be willing to pay the price for the Kingdom of God today. This means a willingness on our part to sacrifice ourselves for our Lord. Jesus was willing to pay the price so that you and I could experience freedom in the spirit. We exercise that freedom every time we pray. We experience that freedom every time we meditate on the words of the Lord. Every time we read our Bibles. Every time we come together for worship services like today. This freedom we experience today did cost someone their life! Jesus gave an offering to us that cost Him everything.

This freedom that we experience today also cost many other followers of Jesus their lives. Throughout the history of the church people like you and me have paid the price to worship and serve Jesus with their lives.

All the disciples except one were martyred for their message of Jesus. The freedom that we have today to serve and worship the Lord cost dearly with Christians giving their life for the Kingdom of God and the message of Good News. This Bible is not free it cost many people their lives, yet many take it for granted.

Today I become perplexed at how people want to embrace Christianity and yet they don't want it to cost them anything. We have some in America who take for granted their liberty and freedoms because it has not cost them anything. But the freedoms we enjoy came at a high cost.

All of us should have the mindset that says, "I will not offer a sacrifice or offering that does not cost me something." Nothing in life is free – it always costs. Your faith in Christ costs – your freedoms in this country cost. So what price are you willing to pay for these two blessings of freedom? Are you willing to sacrifice anything for either one of these blessings?

Do you want something for nothing? Do you want freedom in the Spirit? Do you want the freedoms you enjoy in this country to continue? Then you too have to pay the price to pass it forward.

Romans 12:1-2 states, **"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."**

We are asked to be living sacrifices for God. A living sacrifice means it will cost us our life, our will and our self-centeredness. To be a living sacrifice means we place the values of others above our own. We commit to living our life for the one who gave His life for us. We do this because this is the way to serve God. It is also the most sensible way to serve our country too. We allow the Holy Spirit to change our mindsets from self-centered to God-centered.

A man by the name of Steve Shepherd wrote this for Memorial Day in 2010.

**Lord, help me to live from day to day  
In such a self-forgetful way  
That even when I kneel to pray  
My prayer shall be for others.**

**Help me in all the work I do  
To ever be sincere and true  
And know that all I'd do for you  
Must needs be done for others.**

**Let "self" be crucified and slain  
And buried deep, and all in vain  
May efforts be to rise again  
Unless to live for others.**

**And when my work on earth is done  
And my new work in heaven's begun  
May I forget the crown I've won  
While thinking still of others.**

**Others, Lord, yes, others  
Let this my motto be,  
Help me to live for others  
That I may live like Thee.**

Our commitment is to sacrifice ourselves for others as Jesus sacrificed Himself for us. We go out and let our lives reflect our belief system of being willing sacrifices. This means it will cost us all something if we do it right.

Chip Ingram in his book "Living on the Edge" states this, "**Total commitment is the alignment of one's motives, resources, priorities, and goals to fulfill a specific mission, accomplish a specific task or follow a specific person.**"

Total commitment means absolute surrender. It means the alignment of our will, our mind, our emotions, our possessions, and our relationships around a person, goal, or cause. God commands us to offer our bodies (ourselves) as a living sacrifice. He tells us that acceptable worship to Him begins with the act of surrender.

Total commitment.

It's easy to hear those words and begin to emotionally withdraw. To think that's too high a price. To think that's something "I could never do." But often our initial emotional reaction to the call to total commitment is rooted in our warped view of God. A warped view of what total commitment actually is and what it is not. Total commitment is about being wise and smart, not necessarily being noble or virtuous. It's not so much about self-denial as it is about logic and common sense. It's not so much about what we lose; it's about what you gain.

Our nation became great because we were formed as one nation under God. Everyone in the Revolutionary War was willing to pay the price of freedom. They were willing to sacrifice for their country to be a "One nation under God." The battle cry of the Revolutionary War was, "No king but king Jesus! No English King. No King George. No King but King Jesus." Our nation became great and will only stay great if people still choose to be living sacrifices for her.

In the same vein of thought we need to be reminded of our freedom in the Spirit. Our churches and Christianity will only remain great if the people who are part of this eternal movement choose to be living sacrifices for their King and kingdom.

When we decide to no longer sacrifice for our country or for God then we will no longer be great. We will fall into the history books as a nation or a religion that once was but no longer is relevant because no one wanted to continue to pay the price.

Are you willing to pay the price for the freedoms you have in this country?"

J. F. K. said, "**Ask not what can my country do for me, but what can I do for my country.**" What are you willing to give to keep this nation free?