

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church

Sixth Sunday of Easter/Memorial Day: May 25, 2025

“In Remembrance”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to the Sixth Sunday of Easter and also to the Memorial Day Weekend. In this morning's Gospel we have Jesus healing the man at the well. Interestingly enough, the man had been at the well for a very long time and we get the impression that when he would try to get into the healing waters others would cut in front of him. Now we might wonder, how could anyone just go past another who is in need, and how does this happen over a long period of time? Well, if you are upset by this, you are by no means alone.

This weekend is Memorial Day weekend where most people will have a picnic, go for a nature walk, try to get a good deal while the stores have sales, or maybe simply sleep in. However, this weekend is brought to us, not to relax, but to remember those souls, who, unlike those who left the disabled man behind, did not. They were trained as team members, they were taught to leave no person behind; they gave their all, so we can enjoy the freedom to worship here today, and to enjoy the things we choose to enjoy.

Every conflict or war the United States has ever been involved in has had its share of casualties of both sons and daughters lost, often due to the unusual bravery they displayed in the midst of combat. Every once in a while, during those conflicts, something happens, a soldier does something, which is so out-of-the-ordinary that Congress acknowledges that person's efforts by awarding them the Medal of Honor. This award is presented to someone who distinguishes himself by gallantry at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty. The deed performed must have been one of self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life. More often than not, these individuals sacrificed themselves for the greater good of others.

I share with you a story so as not to forget, but to remember, the sacrifices of those who served - as this is what we are called to do this weekend. There are many stories, but I bring you one.

I share with you the story, of Douglas Albert Munro. The Medal of Honor was awarded to Petty Officer Munro as a result of his actions on September 27, 1942. Munro, in charge of a group of 24 Higgins boats (or landing craft), engaged in the evacuation of a battalion of marines trapped by enemy Japanese forces at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal.

After making preliminary plans for the evacuation of nearly 500 beleaguered marines, Munro, under constant fire by enemy machineguns on the island, and at great risk of his life, daringly led 5 of his small craft toward the shore. As he closed on the beach, he signaled the others to land, and then in order to draw the enemy's fire and protect the heavily loaded boats, he valiantly placed his craft with its 2 small guns as a shield between the beachhead and the Japanese.

When the perilous task of evacuation was nearly completed, Munro was instantly killed by enemy fire, but his crew, 2 of whom were wounded, carried on until the last boat had loaded and cleared the beach. By his outstanding leadership, expert planning, and dauntless devotion to duty, he and his courageous comrades undoubtedly saved the lives of many who otherwise would have perished. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

This is the real reason we have a Memorial Weekend.

Jesus, in our reading today, also puts himself in harm's way. He healed the man at the well on the Sabbath, and we know that those in charge of the Temple will see this as treason to their faith. Yet, we know, Jesus will pay the ultimate price for healing and tending to God's people. Not with rules and judgment, but with love and compassion.

Jesus willingly endured his pain and suffering on behalf of His people to the point of death. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans chapter 5: "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die."

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The ultimate victory was not simply the taking of some important hilltop or body of water, or even one country over another, but one which secured our very souls.

Jesus is the ultimate example that those who serve our country often look to. The men and women of the military put their lives in danger for the sake of their fellow soldiers to save other human beings. Those who serve our country come from an array of religious and spiritual beliefs so that all Americans can worship the way they desire.

Just a reminder as you have that hot dog, that hamburger, or go to that movie, picnic or watch the Grand Prix, know that your ability to enjoy this holiday came with a price.

And as we come to the Eucharist table today, be reminded that our ability to feel free from sin, to feel worthy in front of God, to look toward everlasting life came with a price. Remember Christ died for us, so that as we remember those fallen soldiers this weekend, we can also know that they “rose in glory.” That Jesus made his sacrifice so that they may also join in the saints in heaven. Those who died serving our country may have given their all, but they will not be forgotten. Amen