

Memorial Day

The origin of Memorial Day, also called Decoration Day, goes back to the days of The War Between The States. On both sides of the Mason Dixon line women began to set a designated day to decorate the graves of their loved ones. This practice was observed by men in uniform and greatly touched even by those of opposing sides who observed the mourning widows and fatherless children. Finally on May 5, 1868, General John Alexander Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in order number 11 proclaimed the first Memorial Day to celebrate our fallen heroes. May 30, 1868 was the first official commemoration, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. We now set aside the last Monday in May as the day we celebrate Memorial Day.

In 1915, inspired by the poem *In Flanders Field*, Moina Michael replied with her own poem:

*We cherish too, the Poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led,
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies.*

Moina conceived the idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day in honor of those who died serving the nation during war. She not only wore one, but sold poppies to her friends and co-workers to raise money to benefit servicemen in need. Madam Guerin from France was visiting the United States and after learning of our new custom was inspired to make artificial poppies to raise money for war orphaned children and widow women in France.

Through the years, the popularity of observing Memorial Day waned. As America entered into more wars the observance became more special. Today, in 2005, it has very a very meaningful significance for our country and for Christchurch in particular. This coming Monday will be the exact day the first Memorial Day was celebrated by General Logan's proclamation, which shall be May 30, 2005. And it is this week-end that General John Alexander Logan's great-great-great-great granddaughter is due to be born. She is the daughter of his great-great-great grandson, our own Robert Painter and his dear wife, Taunya.

I love Robert and Taunya, a perfect example of Christianity and America at her best. I must say, in Christchurch, they are not the exception; our church is full of truly great Christians and Americans. I am writing these words from my dad and mom-in-law's kitchen table in Kissee Mills, Missouri. Last night, I preached to just over 2,700 young people at Central Missouri State University and tomorrow I shall be preaching at the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Word of Life. As I write these words I am reminded of another faithful couple, our own Andrew and Melody King, graduates of The Word of Life Institute. We saw God move in a wonderful way last night and we expect God to do great things in New York. State Senator Daniel Webster gave his testimony just before I spoke last night. I was introduced to him and we were left alone for ten minutes before we went out to the platform. He looked familiar and soon he volunteered the information that he had been to our church in Houston. He talked admiringly of our church. And I told him as I tell you now, "They are the finest people in the world, and I am honored to be serving the Lord as the pastor of Christchurch Baptist Fellowship."

God willing, Saturday evening I shall be flying back to my in-laws' Ozark home and I shall, with God's good blessing, be celebrating Memorial Day with some of the greatest grandparents in the world.

Hopefully, I'll have a few kick back days, and then back home with Barbara and Sean to Houston. This is a good place to be on Memorial Day. Barbara's dad was a very hard working man and Memorial Day was always a big day to her family, because it was one of the few days her dad had off. So, Daddy's girl will be with her dad and her precious mom. We shall be giving God thanks for the continuation for

healing for her mom. But please know, we shall also be joining you in remembering the fallen heroes of American Wars and especially the recent Iraq war as many of our fellow Americans will be missing their fallen loved-ones as they commemorate not only the fallen others, but their own dad, mom, son, or daughter for the first time. Let us join them in prayers. And while you think about it, let us remember a new little American destined to be reared in a Christian home in our midst. The direct descendent of the founder of Memorial Day! It has been wisely said, "When a little baby is born, it is God's way of saying I want life to go on!"

Memorial Day is a day for looking back with gratitude, but today let us look forward to the future and go on. Memorial Day is a good day to remember the immortal words of our sixteenth president of The United States, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us. That from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain..." (A. Lincoln, 1863, Gettysburg).

I thank God for our Savior and Calvary. I thank God for America, for those who served and those who gave the utmost, their very lives to secure the freedom we enjoy today. And I thank God for Christchurch, the dear people who call me Pastor. I will never forget you and I shall remember you this Memorial Day. *"The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another"* (Genesis 31:49). *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"* (Philippians 1:3). I love you.

- Pastor Pope -

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