

REMEMBER HIM

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Try as I might, I cannot remember my past.

I wish I could because memory has a powerful... sustaining and transforming effect on who we become and how we live.

I do remember how traumatized by father was by WW2,

how the battle lines, the deaths, and the cleaning out of concentration camps had given an already serious man even more gravitas.

And I remember how Sherry's friend, Marca Bristo, fought for the disabled, and

I've never seen steps and curbs in the same way since.

When Sherry and I were in Jerusalem,

we toured the Yad Shem- the Holocaust Museum- and I remember how deeply I was affected.

As a child of the 60s I was against the Viet Nam War, but when Sherry and I walked along the long black wall with the names of those who died there,

and as we became part of a crowd that toured in sacred silence,

it was clear that each and every one of these heroes must be remembered because the remembering will honor them and transform us.

I remember the martyrs who have died for our faith:

Matthew, James, Luke, Polycarp and unknown millions; and

We remember that we did not build the sanctuary in which we worship today-

nor did we open doors to great blessings, or stand tall when things were tough- others did these things and they must be remembered!

Surely we stand on the shoulders of giants and they must be remembered.

if we are to have any chance of being giants ourselves.

In our Revolutionary War, 25,000 men died... to set us free;

13,000 Americans died in the Mexican War, and a breathtaking 623,000

died to maintain our unity and free our slaves in an very uncivil war.

Then there were 117,000 more in the war that was supposed to end all wars, and

408,000 men and women gave their lives to defeat a mad man in WW2.

If we add in Korea, Viet Nam, Iraq & Afghanistan and go back and add in the

Spanish-American War and all of the Indian Wars,

we see that at least 1,269,846 Americans have died for us... and they all died saying, "Remember me." And remember them we must!

Memorial Day also invites us to remember that our founders built our country under God!

While it is true that our founders were not evangelical Christians,

it's not true that they either desired or worked to keep God out of government.

Such a notion would've been unthinkable to Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison,

Franklin, and all the rest.

Washington did have a private faith, but on July 2, 1776, he wrote:

The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Let us therefore rely upon the goodness of the Cause, and the aid of the Supreme Being, in whose hands Victory is, to encourage us to great and noble actions.

Franklin was hardly a choir boy, but he believed and wrote these words:

I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth- that God governs the affairs of men! If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, how can an empire rise without His aid?

Jefferson, it is true, had trouble with miracles, and even deleted parts of the New Testament that he didn't believe, but he did believe and write this:

God who gave us life... gave us liberties. How can our liberties be secure if we remove (or lose) the conviction that they are a gift from God?

I could go on, but it is sufficient to thank God that we were born and reared in a land that is, always has been, and must continue to be under God.

Surely we stand on the shoulders of giants who honored God and country.

Memorial Day, as it has evolved, also invites us to remember those who have taught us, affirmed us, believed in us, and shaped the person we are today.

Through the years I've asked college classes to identify and list those people who've been their gatekeepers, their lamplighters, and their potters.

Noting that it is important to write things like this down, I gave them a few minutes before I put their answers on the board.

Mom always dominated the vote- she was invariably the VIP in people's lives, but others were also mentioned- Dads, teachers, siblings, physicians, counselors, and now and then a minister... convincing me that it's people in relationship with us who make the greatest contributions to us- please remember them this weekend.

Surely we stand on the shoulders of giants who have put us before self.

And finally... God... whose work and whose Son virtually shout "remember me."

When you see a rainbow, remember God;

When you're tempted to believe that you have to, or did do, everything on your own, remember God;

When you get down and feel that nobody cares, remember God;

When you're tempted to believe that you'll never be forgiven, remember God;

When you get scared and feel small, remember God.

Remember me, Jesus said.

Remember my works- my healings, my teachings; my promises, my cross, my resurrection, my invitation-and you will live a life of purpose.

"When you remember me," Beuchner says, "It means that you've carried something of who I am with you. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face, hear my voice, and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost. If you forget me, one of the ways I remember who I am will be gone. If you forget me, part of who I am will be gone. 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,' the good thief said from his cross.' There is perhaps no prayer we can pray so well."

Let us remember all of those who cry to be remembered. Amen.