**Memorial Day**

**Introduction**

1. Last Monday was a national holiday here in the U.S. that we call Memorial Day.
2. It is observed each year on the last Monday in the month of May. The holiday, formerly known as Decoration Day, commemorates military personnel, men and women, who have died while in service to the United States of America.
3. The holiday was first established to honor the many Union soldiers who gave their lives during the Civil War.  One historian states that the first Memorial Day celebration was observed in 1865 in Charleston, SC by thousands of liberated slaves and Union soldiers at the site of a former Confederate prison camp and mass grave for Union soldiers who died while in confinement.  The official birthplace of the holiday is Waterloo, NY where it was first celebrated on May 5, 1866.  After World War I the focus of the day was expanded to honor all who died in any war or military action in the history of our nation.
4. The original purpose of Memorial Day was serious and probably evoked considerable solemnity.  It was common for people to visit grave sites of loved ones who had died in military service on that day.  One wonders how many people today, especially younger generations, really know the significance of the holiday.  Today, Memorial Day seems to be more about having a day off work, going on a picnic with the family, and watching the Indianapolis 500.  While those might be worthy endeavors, the real purpose of the day is what makes it special.  Forgetting completely what Memorial Day is about leaves us more vulnerable to would-be enemies who would put us under their subjection.
5. I have great respect for these men and women who went to serve their country and were willing to give their life so that we may have the freedoms that we enjoy today in this country.
6. Today is Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day!  It is a **Memorial Day** that far surpasses in significance the holiday our nation observed last Monday.

**Why is the Lord’s Day More Significant?**

1. This is a day when the Christians who make up the Lord's church are supposed to gather together to worship God and remember the death of our Savior on the cross.  He made the ultimate sacrifice, giving His life on that cross for the guilt of our sins. He put His life on the line and paid our debt in order that we could have the opportunity to be set free from the slavery and condemnation of sin. He died to give us a chance to live eternally.
2. In partaking of the Lord's Supper we memorialize His death. In the bread we see the nails driving through His hands and feet and the spear piercing His side.  In the cup we see the blood that was shed from His body while hanging on that cross. Today, each Lord's Day, is a sacred occasion that deserves our serious consideration and respect. On this day we honor our Savior in His death for us and also announce to the world that He is risen. – Isa. 53:1-11
3. Unfortunately, as with that other Memorial Day, many seem to have forgotten the real significance of the Lord's Day.  For many it too has become simply a day off work, a day to sleep late, to work in the yard, play golf, go to the park, or to pursue any of a hundred other personal endeavors. Forgetting what this day is all about leaves us vulnerable to the most dangerous of all enemies, the devil himself, and our careless forgetfulness opens the door to once again becoming his slaves, bound by the chains of sin.  We need to remember! – Rom. 5:6-11

**Would We Be Willing To Die For Jesus?**

1. Stephen, one of the 12 who helped with the widows of the church, was speaking with great wisdom concerning Jesus.  Some men couldn’t stand what he said and took him before the council.  There Stephen would give a history of how the Jews persecuted their own when righteous people spoke God’s word challenging the lives of the nation. He used the words of Moses to help them see that Jesus was the great prophet who was to come, but just as they did not listen to Moses, now they wouldn’t listen to Jesus.  Instead, Stephen challenges them to a point they cannot tolerate (**READ Acts 7:51-60**)
2. Paul, who originally was a great persecutor of Christians. He suffered multiple shipwrecks and he was imprisoned and flogged and beaten as well as stoned. I believe that Paul’s faith was so strong that he was willing to die for the Lord.
3. Peter confessed publicly that he was willing to die with Jesus even though our Lord and Savior had just told him that he would deny Him three times. – Matt. 26:34-35 – In the moment that Judas came with the guards to take Jesus, Peter cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest with a sword.

**Are We Willing To Live For Jesus?**

1. Dying for Jesus is a decision some people had to make in the moment, but for most of us, the question is will we live for Jesus?  When Jesus was taken away, Peter went from being the man with a sword to denying Jesus three times.  How could he be willing to die in one moment and unwilling to live for Jesus the next?
2. Fear is the answer.  Peter had to make a decision if he would still be willing to die, this time, along with Jesus.  The answer for Peter was, “I don’t know the man.”
3. Dying for Jesus is a sacrifice I probably won’t have to make, but living for Jesus is a sacrifice I must choose to make every day. When people died for our country, it wasn’t so I could eat hot dogs and watch a parade. It was so I could live with the freedom that comes from being an American.
4. Jesus went the cross because of me. His blood was shed for my sin, not his.  He cried out for my forgiveness on the cross.  Jesus paid it all because I couldn’t pay any.  Then he defeated death; coming back to life, never to die again, and tells me I can do the same thing.  Let me tell you, that’s something to live for.

**Conclusion**

1. We should always remember those men and women who served our country and gave their lives for it so that we can have the freedoms that we hold so dear.
2. We must never forget what our Lord and Savior did when he took on the sin of all mankind and then gave His life so that we have the hope of eternal life with our Father in heaven.
3. Let us all make the sacrifice to live for Christ, it’s the least we can do considering all that He has done for each of us!