

Memorial Day began as a way to honor those who gave their lives in service to our country; established 150 years ago. Graves of union, confederate soldiers had flowers placed on them what is now Arlington National Cemetery. The very idea of flowers at graves is the confession that out of the cold, lifeless dirt, beautiful life will spring forth, resurrected body.

Soldiers dying would cry out to the Lord and their mothers. Many of our soldiers who gave their lives believed in this Jesus. They found comfort in His love that caused Him to die for their sins. Many lay dying in a foreign land for people here, for the freedoms we enjoy, for this country, died with the certainty He is resurrection and life, His promises -that when they left this world, they had a place in an eternal country, with no more death and war, no more selfishness and evil, no crying, eternity with loved ones.

As bad as war is, it's far worse to be cast into a war unprepared. When the German army attacked France at the beginning of the World War 2, the French had more equipment, a larger army, better-trained troops, and the motivating factor of defending their homeland, yet they collapsed within weeks. What happened? The French were psychologically unprepared for war. They'd been trained to fear war and when it broke out, with its enormously damaging effects, they fled. A war, any war, even any struggle may be won or lost in the heads and hearts of the people fighting it. It's true, what FDR intoned that "we have nothing to fear but fear itself,"

This is also true of your Christian life. It is a war. **Lord God of Sabaoth** the angels and you sing; scriptures speaking of the Lord of host- Sabaoth, host mean armies. The God of armies. From the moment you come into the kingdom of Christ through baptism, Satan, the world, our sinful nature constantly attacking, making war against you, in you, against His church. The attacks relentless; to break up homes and relationships with everyone you love, to destroy your faith and cause you to sin. That you prepared yourself here with what He gives.

At the heart of the church is an icon of war, violence: the crucifix. On that cross, God cried out, bled out for the life of the world. Strange irony, in a world drunk on violence, evil and war, only on the cross of violence that there is hope for healing, peace, life in anyone.

Jesus speaks of that strange story of sin- violence and war against Him, in the OT, the snakes in the wilderness. The people had been delivered from Egypt in the exodus, Red Sea crossing, pillar of fire and cloud, eating bread everyday from heaven and distrusting, complaining; **did you bring us here to die, we want cucumbers back in Egyptian bondage.** God in His wrath brings poisonous snakes. The snakes bite them, they're dying.

They call on Moses to have God recuse them and He does. God tells Moses to make an image of the snake, set it on a pole. Have the people look at it, and whoever looks at it, trusts in My promise will be healed and not die. So Moses does it. The people do it. And it works. And no doubt there were those who though I don't want to look at it, that's silly, stupid, about as silly as pouring water over a baby and a piece of bread and sip of wine. that doesn't make any sense, I've better plans for healing. Some die because they want their own righteousness. Behold the power of His Word and promises -this God who works through means.

So our Lord says, remember the story, that's pointing to me. I must be lifted up, made sin for you, there alone look for healing and not die.

Each of you -daily in sinful warfare, against you, and in you. How often you coward and surrender without much fight; repent, Stop! the excuses. Stop your vanity; you aren't even close to being as good as you think you are. Fight against the passions of your flesh and the evil one. Fight like you're the 3<sup>rd</sup> squirrel trying to get on Noah's ark. Don't give up. Don't give in. He has called you to holiness.

Your guilt is great, unclean lips, like Isaiah, on your own you fail, not survive.

The greatest news you will ever hear, He comes for sinners. And you are truly blessed beyond your knowing. For on that cross is the God who fills the war-torn wounds of humanity with His grace. His weapons the quiet gospel means of His Word, His preaching, baptism, and supper. Only in these things will you find the power to fight the good fight.

As with Isaiah, He brought you here, not to condemn you, that you know His forgiveness and life. Heaven and earth joined, where the Lord fills this place with His presence; still brings atonement from His altar to your lips and actually joins Himself to you here in this time and space. You join the song of the angels each Sunday to sing Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, Lord of hosts. God always works thru means, to bring Himself, the works of His being lifted up, delivered to you, brings healing to.

Freedom in one who laid down His life for you, discover the hope and healing, no matter how deep your wounds, how war-torn your heart, no matter how you've failed in the war, how violent the world around you. As the Reformation hymn puts us, **but for us fights the Valiant one...for soldiers of our country and soldiers of His cross; even take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife, thought these all be gone. Our victory has been won, the kingdom ours remainth.**