

So here it is! We made it to Memorial Day Weekend! Lots of people are taking advantage of the nice weather and the extra day off work to relax and enjoy God's great outdoors by camping, fishing, or attending family get-togethers. Memorial Day weekend offers an opportunity to do those things.

But Memorial Day itself is much more than just a day to relax. It's an extremely important day that reminds us that the freedoms we enjoy as Americans are freedoms that came at a very high cost. On Memorial Day, we remember and honor all the brave men and women of the armed forces who fought against those who would deny us our liberties and they then gave the ultimate sacrifice, their very lives for all Americans.

As citizens of this great country, you and I enjoy a great deal of freedom, and a quality of life that many people in the world just don't have. And that freedom, that quality of life, didn't just happen out of the blue. It's something that was earned for us by others. On Memorial Day we remember and honor those who helped to make it happen.

There's another day that we are celebrating this weekend, and that is today, Trinity Sunday. There are actually a few important things in common between Trinity Sunday and Memorial Day:

On Trinity Sunday, like Memorial Day, we also take the time to remember. We remember that God reveals Himself to us as three separate persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's important to remember that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, summarized in "The Athanasian Creed" doesn't attempt to completely *explain* God. It only attempts to confess who God is. That is, what God has revealed to us about Himself in His holy Word. To describe the tip of the iceberg above the water is not to describe the entire iceberg. So, we Christians affirm the *Trinity*, not as a complete explanation of God, but simply as a way of describing the tip of the iceberg – what the Bible tells us about Him.

The earliest Christians soon discovered that they simply couldn't talk about God without talking about the three ways in which He had revealed Himself. This doesn't mean that there are three Gods. It means that there is *one* God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Today, on Trinity Sunday, we take time to remember the Trinity – a kind of Memorial Day for the eternal Triune God.

The United States didn't just happen, did it? All the things you see that are American – all the different landmarks, buildings, all the different freedoms – the American lifestyle – it didn't just happen. Our country was set up by other people. Wars had to be fought. Blood had to be shed. In order not to forget that,

there are war memorials to remind us of the price that had to be paid so that we can enjoy everything we see. Those memorials are there to keep us from forgetting that our country is here because of what other people did.

The world didn't just happen either. The sky, the sea, the trees, the animals, all the complexities of the human body – those things didn't just **happen**. Wouldn't it be silly to say that our country popped into being accidentally? And yet, that's what some people say when they describe the universe and our world. The world happened accidentally – a big explosion – bang- and wouldn't you know it, millions of years later, from all that we now have people and everything else.

Not so, God says in the Bible. God the Father, the creator of everything, tells us that the world did not just happen accidentally. Rather, God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, created our world and all that exists in our universe in only six days. But how could that be? You might ask. The answer, really, is very simple – God is powerful. God is wise. God can do whatever He wants. If God wants to create the world, complete with adult animals, trees, and rock formations that may look millions of years old – if God wants to do that in only six days, then He certainly can, because He is powerful, and He is wise.

Wouldn't it be nice if God the Father left behind a few memorials, so that we wouldn't forget just how powerful and wise He was? God **has** left behind a memorial for you, and that memorial is called nature. Look at the beauty of nature – look at all the beautiful variety of birds that gather around a bird feeder. Watch a nature show or visit an aquarium and look at the brilliantly colored fish – all of them beautiful in their own way. Listen to a doctor describe how complicated and how ingeniously the human body is designed. These are God's memorials, and they remind you of just how wise and powerful your creator is.

But after God made the world, the world fell into sin. The devil took over. The people who lived here didn't realize it, but they were slaves to the devil, and slaves to sin. No one was free to go to heaven. No one was free from fear of God. No one was free from the punishments of hell. And so, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, and Jesus, by His perfect life and innocent death, brought us freedom.

On Memorial Day, we remember the sacrifices that have been made by others on our behalf. Because of those sacrifices, we have freedom. We don't have to worry about enemy soldiers barging into our house and robbing us or killing us. We don't have to worry about someone telling us that we can't

worship God anymore. We don't have to worry about being thrown in jail for no reason. We're free from that kind of tyranny. But it came at a cost – people had to go to war, shed their blood and die so that we could enjoy our American freedoms today.

In a ***much*** bigger way, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed ***His*** holy, innocent blood so that we could enjoy our Christian freedom. Jesus went into battle against Satan and death, and the battlefield was the cross. There He shed His blood, finally, even dying, making the ultimate sacrifice. But He did this so that you and I could have freedom.

You see that sacrifice served as a ransom, and once that ransom was paid, you were freed from all kinds of things. No longer do you have to be afraid of God, because you know that Jesus has paid for your sins. No longer do you have to be afraid to die, because you know that you'll be with the Lord in heaven when you die. No longer do you have to be racked with guilt because of those sins of the past. No longer do you have to live in confusion about how to get to heaven. You are free from all those terrible things. Free to live at peace with God, and at peace with yourself. But that freedom came at a price – the Son of God had to sacrifice Himself for you, to shed His blood for you. And so, on this Trinity Sunday, we remember what the second person of the Trinity did – Jesus Christ, His death on the cross.

When the Allied forces defeated the Germans in WWII, thousands of prisoners were released. Thousands of people were given their freedom. Not one prisoner said, “No, I don't believe the war is over. I'll stay here in this prison until you prove to me that the war is over.”

When Jesus died on the cross, and then rose from the dead, billions of prisoners were freed. According to the Bible, every person in the world, for all time was freed from their guilt, from their fear, from the condemnation of hell. But not everyone ***believes*** it. A lot of people say, “That's too good to be true. I'll stay here in my prison of guilt and hopelessness until you prove to me that God really did win the war.” But for you, you ***do*** believe. You are like those prisoners of war, who see the allied troops opening the gates. Jesus has opened the gates of heaven to you. The war is over – Satan has lost – you are free from your sins, free to be a Christian who is loved and taken care of by God.

Memorial Day also helps us to appreciate our citizenship as Americans. How did you become an American citizen? For most of us we were born into it. For some, though, who are not born in this country, it takes a lot of work. There are some facts to study, some tests to take, even some fees to pay.

How did you become a citizen of **God's** country, of heaven? How did you become a Christian? Did you know that no one is born that way – no one is born a Christian. So how does it happen? That's where the Holy Spirit comes into the picture, the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit brings people into the kingdom of God, He turns people into Christians. And He uses the Gospel. For some, the Holy Spirit turned you into a Christian when you heard the Gospel spoken to you. For others, the Holy Spirit turned you into a Christian when the Gospel and water were applied to you – through baptism.

At our baptism we become a citizen God's kingdom. That's what the third person of the Trinity does, the Holy Spirit – He brings you to faith, He transforms you into a citizen of God's kingdom.

Throughout the year, we have different days that remind us of our citizenship, days that help us to be patriotic – we have Memorial Day. We also have Armed Forces Day, Flag Day, and Independence Day. Patriotism is a good thing. It's good to be proud of your country, to appreciate your citizenship and the sacrifices that were made to win your freedom. Is there such a day as a Christian Memorial Day? A day when you remember God the Father who made you, God the Son who died for you, and God the Holy Spirit who converted you. Is there a Memorial Day for the Triune God? I believe that we need a day like that. We are imperfect human beings, and we are forgetful. How quickly we forget about our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier – we forget what God has done for us.

And so, I propose that we have such a day – a Memorial Day for God. *Every Sunday, we'll meet here at 8:00 or 10:30. We'll remember what God has done for us. We'll find joy and strength as we hear His Word. That will be our purpose as a church – to be a memorial to God, a place that doesn't let you forget about what He has done and keeps on doing for you.*

May God bless you this weekend as you commemorate Memorial Day. May God also bless you every Sunday, as you come here to be reminded of your God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and receive with joy the great gifts He continues to give to you!