Memorial Day

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. It is an annual national holiday to remember those who died while serving in the nation's armed forces.

Today is also Memorial Day. It is Sunday, the day that Christians gather each week to remember Jesus' death. Perhaps we should spell it Sonday.

The Fact that Jesus Died

Our memorial of Jesus' death begins by reflecting on the historical facts. The only sinless man who ever lived was put to death as a criminal. "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), but "they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross" (v. 40). The charges against Him were false. His trials were a farce: the judges were prejudiced and the witnesses lied. He was then executed in a manner that was purposefully both humiliating and painful.

The Reason that Jesus Died

Our memorial of Jesus' death must go beyond simply what happened that day. It must consider why it happened. Why did Jesus die? We might say because the Jewish leaders who delivered Him up felt threatened (John 11:45-50). Or, because the crowds who called for His crucifixion lacked conviction; just a few days earlier they hailed Him as the Messiah (Matthew 21:8-11; 27:20-23). Or, that the Roman officials who crucified Him were more concerned with public opinion than truth (Luke 23:22-25). All these things are true, but the real reason that Jesus died is *my* sin. Merciful God wants to forgive, but His justice demands some kind of atonement (Romans 3:23-26). Only the life of a perfect man would suffice, only the blood of Jesus. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God . . ." (1 Peter 3:18).

The Implications of Jesus' Death

Our memorial of Jesus' death is incomplete until we consider the implications of Jesus' death. Paul put it this way: "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). I was dead in sin. Jesus died so that I might live again. I must therefore now live for Him.

There is much to remember on our weekly Memorial Day. And the point, of course, is to keep the memory alive every day.

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