

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

25 May 2025

Lest We Forget

Text: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, every sin to which we cling, and let us run with perseverance the race for which we are entered, our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . . And is seated at the right hand of God's throne." *Heb. 12: 1-2.*

Hebrews 11 is the Bible's hall of fame.

It presents an impressive list of the heroes of the faith, noting their accomplishments.

Each entry begins with the phrase "By Faith . . ."

By faith Abel, By faith Abraham, By faith Moses, By faith the people crossed the Red Sea."

They were persons who lived by unseen realities, triumphantly.

In God's grandstand sit a "cloud of witnesses."

They surround us, tier upon tier, watching how we run.

In faith's relay race, they have passed the baton on to us.

Our faith is built on the foundation they have laid,

This is what is meant by "the communion of saints."

The Race

In the race "for which we are entered," sin and temptation constitute our handicap.

They need to be put aside like so much excess baggage.

Our assets are the worthy example of those who have gone before and our own faith and endurance.

Therefore, we can run with patience and perseverance.

Our goal is Christ, "our eyes are fixed on Jesus."

He is the pioneer of our faith.

As our example he went before us, blazing the trail.

Years ago Jack Robinson, U. S. Olympic basketball star, described the opening of the summer games in London in 1948.

The participants circled the track before a crowd of ninety thousand spectators, which included King George VI.

There were athletes from almost every nation.

Framed in the entrance to the stadium stood the runner with his torch.

It had been lighted at Mont Olympia and run by relays across Europe.

He circled the track to the cheers of the crowd.

Then, with an emphatic stroke, he put the torch into the oil, and the flames flared up against the English sky.

Simultaneously, the sky was darkened as hundreds of pigeons were released to fly to capitals of the world, proclaiming that peace would reign during the fourteenth modern Olympic games.

Representatives of many nations were there, and God was the Creator of them all.

The imagery of *Hebrews 12* is a great stadium filled with believers of earlier times, watching our race of faith.

Gratitude.

In a memorial service we recall with gratitude those who have gone before us.

This is an appropriate practice.

However, we also want to remember to appreciate persons prior to their death, because gratitude is an emotion for all seasons.

It is an attitude we should cultivate and practice frequently.

Recall persons who have contributed to your life: parents, grandparents, an uncle or aunt, teachers, stalwart Christians.

Look for an opportunity to affirm them, to express sincere appreciation for what they have meant to you.

Don't wait too long to do so.

Value your friends now while you may.

Rudyard Kipling's poem "Recessional" sounds a useful note for Memorial Day.

Written in celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, its message is amazingly modern and applies to our country as well as it did to Great Britain:

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine-

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget-lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart:
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice.

A humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget-lest we forget.

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

Judge of the Nations, spare us yet.
Lest we forget-lest we forget.

Memorial Day reminds us of the reality of life and death.

All life is a gift, undeserved grace from the Father.

We are to receive it with gratitude and live for his glory, whether for a long time or a short while.

Recall the heroes of the faith and what they endured, that we might have an English Bible, that they might bring the gospel to our shores, that we might have religious liberty in this land.

List the heroes of the faith to whom you feel indebted.

While we are grateful for our roots and spiritual heritage, we want to be faithful in handing on the legacy to those who come after us.

We have often been reminded that we are only one generation away from paganism.

All that we do matters.

Do it for God and fellowman.

Then it has significance for us and for the Kingdom of God.

Then our life makes a difference!

And we will not be ashamed when we arrive HOME!