

# The Greater Sacrifice

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Memorials, Soldiers and the Cross  
A Memorial day message





The death of a Military Veteran reminds us what sacrifice looks like for the Nation.

# Arlington National Cemetery



Greater love has no one than this,  
that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

**GREATER LOVE**  
Remembering  
the Sacrifice



Memorial Day originated as *Decoration Day* in 1868 to honor Civil War soldiers. On May 5, 1868, Major General John A. Logan, leader of the Grand Army of the Republic (a Union veterans' organization), proclaimed May 30 as Decoration Day, a day to decorate the graves of Union soldiers with flowers.

The first large national observance took place at Arlington National Cemetery, where officials, including General and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant, presided over ceremonies, and participants decorated *both Union and Confederate graves*.

Initially focused on Civil War soldiers, Decoration Day gradually spread to other states. By 1873, New York recognized it as a state holiday, and by 1890, all Union states had adopted it. Southern states often observed separate days for their war dead until after World War I, when *Memorial Day* began to honor all U.S. military personnel who died in service. The term "*Memorial Day*" first appeared in 1882 and became the official name in 1967.



- Today, Memorial Day is marked by **visiting cemeteries and memorials**, placing flags on graves, holding parades, and family gatherings. It also serves as the **unofficial start of summer** in the United States. While the holiday has evolved to include celebrations and leisure activities, its core purpose remains a **solemn tribute to fallen military personnel**.



When I served in the Marine Corps, there was a detail I served on. We called it the “Bone detail.” There was a reason my 21-year-old self served on this detail. It was because, in the 80’s Marines were not issued the dress blue uniform unless their work required it. I voluntarily joined the unit as a Corporal and was sent to NCO school and then to Bone school to learn Sword drill training, 21-gun salutes, flag etiquette and burial practices. During this bone detail, we would sit on a bus until time for each funeral and then we would march over and perform the ceremony. I thought this would be a great way to get those blues uniforms. They are sharp! Every Marine wants them, but most don’t ever get to wear them.

We would surprisingly bury 6-8 military personnel a day. But this was not what I thought it would be. This detail was sad, and I had to witness every family of the lost military member grieving for their child, husband, daddy or close friend. The lessons of youth hit hard! It wasn’t about me or the blues uniform that I had wanted; these were real people just like me. Their sacrifice had been brought to grave reality.

The very first time I buried a military person, with honors, I cried, as did each of the other Marines on the team. We would hear a whisper of “hold your integrity Marine,” and we would do our best to hold it together as we performed the ceremony. (Taps) Now, Taps is the single most somber tone I have ever heard and still can’t hear it without feeling loss. What a horrible idea it was to join this detail! Myself and the other Marines had 6-8 cries a day for months until someone else finally took our place. We respected the service of each one of these military members and shared in their family's grief. How could we not? We reflected on their death, their service and their sacrifice. There are *two Sacrifices we are looking at today*; both honorable, but only one of them that benefits everyone.



As we look at a military sacrifice, we want to honor the giving of one's life in the line of duty. From my perspective as a Marine, I do not believe anyone signs up for military service thinking *they will become a casualty* in one of our country's conflicts. Most of us see the machoism of being in the military and think we can make our lives better by traveling the world or going to school while in the service. Very few ever enter the service thinking they are sacrificing their lives.

The military is very structured. Most men who serve learn valuable life skills that benefit them throughout the rest of their life. The unmentioned fact is that, when the call comes, the orders are printed and we go! Military people make a sacrifice when they are called. This can disrupt families.

Husbands leave wives and kids, the same for the mothers in families. Young people leave the comforts of home and go to some of the most undesirable places in the world.

These places are dangerous and unpredictable. Many find themselves in the middle of a war with people trying to kill them. Bullets flying all around, with any one round possibly taking their life; or at least disabling them for life. Modern weaponry has made the ground troops subject to mass slaughter. But we go anyway. This is what the nation calls *Sacrifice*. The military members, have no choices in where they are being sent and may not agree with why they are being sent, but our government makes us go anyway.

Am I against war? Absolutely not! It is these men and women who allow us to enjoy the freedoms here at home. Sometimes they are honored in this country and sometimes, as in the case of the Vietnam vets, spit on and called baby killers or some other derogatory terms. Do people really honor the sacrifice of our veterans? Not really. The bravest people our country contains are the ones who serve in the military.

We have a complete history of military conflicts in the old testament, many of them involving the Kings in Israel or Judah. Conflicts with the Canaanites, Philistines, Amorites and others. King Saul was commanded by God to annihilate the Amalekites. King David subdued the Philistines and captured their capital of Gath. David defeated the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites and Aramean kingdoms. War and fighting have been part of the world since the beginning, starting with Cain and Able. The only battle that has encompassed all the past ages and into the future is the Angelic conflict. All these other battles are microcosms of that battle. God vs Satan and the fallen Angels. It is a Spiritual battle that is invisible to the eye, but very real.

In eternity past, following creation of the universe, and before creating man, the Angel's volition was tested.

Would they, from their own free will, serve and obey God or rebel against Him? It was Lucifer, the most powerful and brilliant of all the Angels, who arrogantly lusted to be like God. Through negative volition, 1/3 of the Angels followed Lucifer in this revolt. As the leader of this rebellion, Lucifer became Satan, the adversary to God. In judgement, God cast down Satan, the adversary with his fallen Angels to a tiny planet in the universe called Earth. A state of war existed, with Earth as a central battlefield. God Governed a trial to judge the fallen Angels for their revolt and in His perfect justice, found them guilty. He sentenced them to the Lake of Fire for eternity. Satan challenged the Divine judgement before God.

**His case was this:** *How could a just and loving God cast His creatures into the Lake of Fire?*

Satan impugned the grace and righteousness of God.

While God could have immediately sentenced Satan to punishment, God allowed the appeal so He could demonstrate His grace and righteousness to the Angels for all eternity. God would restore the planet Earth and create the human race, to resolve this angelic conflict.

We find ourselves in created time. A time which God exercises His love for His creation and while still allowing their free will to determine their outcome. This is the Spiritual battlefield! Now we know Christ has already won the Angelic Conflict, when He went to the cross to forgive the penalty of sin for the whole world. **(John 3:16)** *That was the Greatest Sacrifice ever achieved!* The second but Most important Sacrifice!



The Cross of Jesus Christ reveals the Ultimate Sacrifice—not merely for national freedom, but for Eternal salvation for all.

While hanging between heaven and earth, Christ died twice that day! His first death was substitutionary spiritual death in which all the sins of the world – past, present and future were poured out on Him and judged. This was the three-hour period that Jesus was forsaken by God the Father. Upon its completion, Jesus cried, “tetelestai” (it is finished) **(John 19:30)** *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

Salvation was provided for all who would believe in the work of Jesus Christ and his substitutionary death. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9).* When He finished His work on the cross, Jesus gave up His physical life. A voluntary action.

Jesus had the authority to summon an army of angels — a force that could have ended His arrest instantly. But He chose not to, because His mission required His suffering and death to ***fulfill prophecy, secure atonement, and model obedience.***

**Fulfilled scripture - (Isaiah 53:5-10)** describes the suffering, sacrifice, and ultimate vindication of the Servant, who bears the sins of others to bring healing and peace.

**The cup of Atonement -** The “cup” Jesus prayed about **(Matthew 26:39)** symbolized the wrath due for sin. Only by drinking it could He secure substitutionary atonement for humanity. Angelic rescue would have left humanity unredeemed

**Voluntary Obedience - (Philippians 2:6–8)** describes Christ as “being in very nature God... humbling Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross.” His restraint showed willing self-sacrifice, not helplessness.

# Sacrifice of a soldier vs Sacrifice of Christ

Memorial day honors those who gave their lives for the freedom of others.

*The cross of Jesus Christ* reveals the *Ultimate Sacrifice* - not merely a sacrifice for national freedom, but for Eternal salvation of the world. **One sacrifice is not like the other.** Jesus' sacrifice was for all, and for LIFE in eternity. The soldier's sacrifice is about his death and finality.

## Soldiers Die for a Nation

- One country
- One people
- One generation

## Jesus Died for the whole World

- Every tribe
- Every nation
- Every sinner
- He Rose again and lives

There are plenty of references in the Bible about military service. One of them is the putting on of The full Armor of God. Putting on the full Armor of God, teaches us how to live a spiritual life while in this world. We are reminded that this is a battle that is against Angelic creatures (fallen Angels). They watch our spiritual progress as we live in either obedience or disobedience to God. The negative volition of Satan is why the Angelic Conflict started in the first place. The Angels are watching as God uses us to prove to all that He is a Righteous and Just God!

**There are 6 elements that have significance to the believer as we put on the Armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18:**

1. **The Belt of Truth** – Buckling truth around your waist; embracing honesty and the truth of God’s word to protect against deception. described in the Bible, specifically in Ephesians 6:14 telling us to “Stand firm”. It represents the importance of knowing and believing the truth of God’s Word, which protects believers from deception and lies.
2. **Breastplate of Righteousness** – Covering the chest; protecting the heart (Kardia in the Greek) by resting in the moral righteousness provided by Christ.  
**καρδία (kardia)** - the righteousness given to believers through Jesus Christ's sacrifice. It serves as a defense against doubts and accusations, emphasizing that true righteousness comes from God rather than human effort  
In classical and biblical Greek, it often denotes the **inner self**, including thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions, rather than just the literal pump of blood
3. **Shoes of the Gospel of Peace** – Wearing shoes prepared with the good news; standing firm and moving forward in the peace that God gives. The "shoes" represent standing firm, the **readiness to share the gospel**, the good news of Jesus Christ, which brings peace with God and assurance of salvation.

4. **Shield of Faith** – A large shield to “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”; relying on Faith in God to block Doubt and Fear.

5. **Helmet of Salvation** – Covering the head; guarding your Mind and Thoughts with the assurance of your Salvation. It serves to safeguard the mind against doubts and negative thoughts, promoting mental clarity and confidence.

6. **Sword of the Spirit** – The only offensive weapon listed; it is defined as the *Word of God*, representing the scriptures used to combat spiritual lies.

The passage concludes with the emphasis to constantly pray with supplication of the Spirit, watching with all perseverance and supplication for all Saints.

When I was in the Marines, I was told to carry the Guidon! I lead from the front, with the Colonel at my right side, running and running and running. I was growing tired and as my arms allowed the flag to drop, The yells came from behind, “Don’t allow her to drop!” I started to fall back while carrying the flag. That’s a big NO, in the military world. I was met by my drill instructor, telling me to “get back up there and lead the troops!” This shows an enemy you are weakening. He made me run around the formation, rallying the troops to “keep going.” They all looked to the colors. The Colors were the rallying point. The front where Victory was shown. You might remember the famous picture of the Marines who were pushing the flag up in battle; showing the rally cry that we will not surrender! Our spiritual life is the same way. We must rally to take in the Word of God! For what good is it to take out the instruction book while in the middle of combat? We must learn it, live it and endure through our life applying it! The war is the Lord’s, and we will share in the Victory.

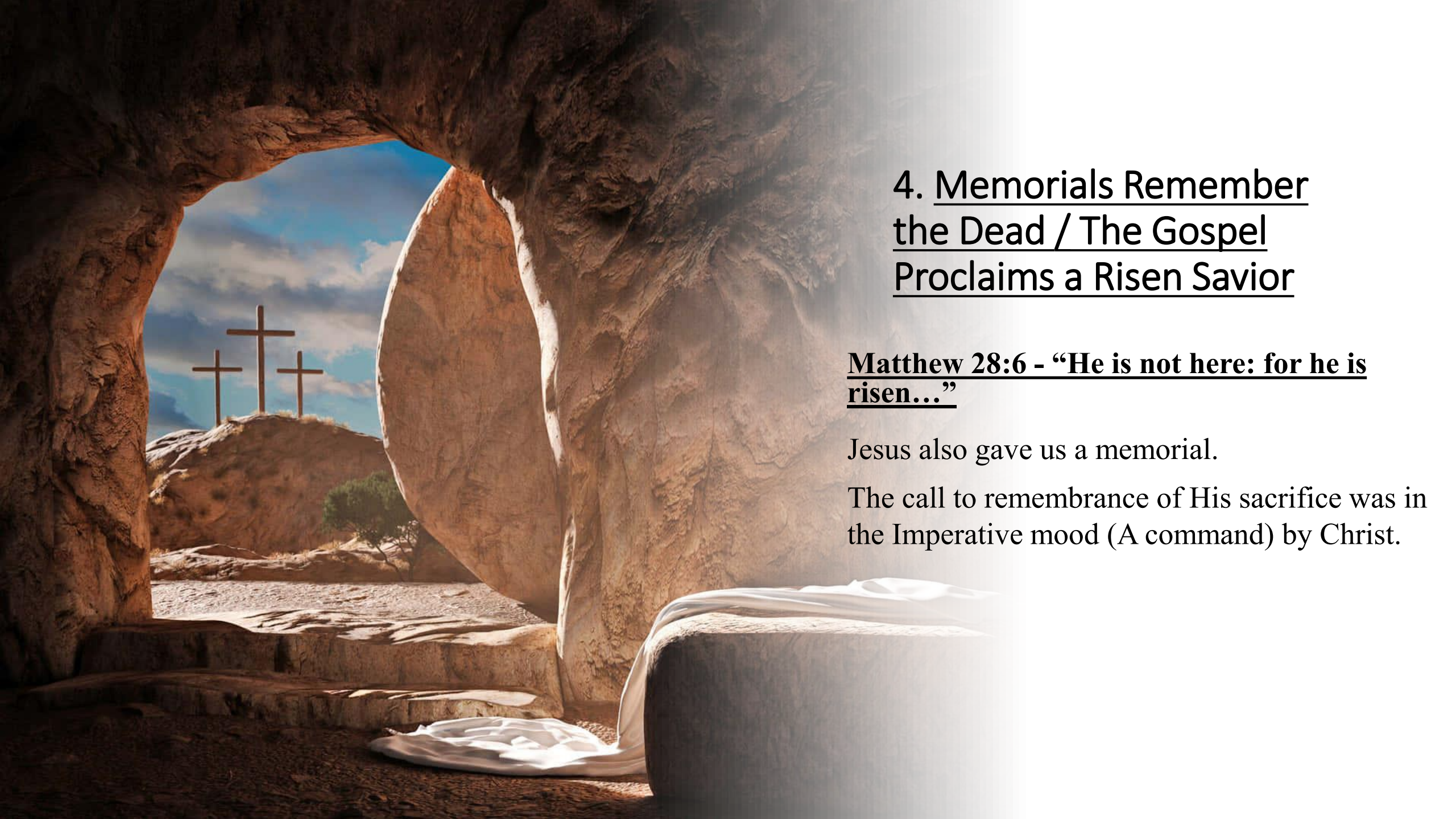
## The Guidon flag

The Guidon flag is the rallying point for the troops. When we would run, in formation, the Guide or (Honor man) would lead from the front, usually accompanied with the highest officer, to show a leading from the front position. It is, in combat, the rally location for all to show they are still alive and fighting. As believers, we are to follow the colors as issued by Jesus Christ. He is the Supreme commander of the heavenly hosts. The church age believer's salvation and subsequent regeneration have enlisted him permanently in the ranks of the Royal regiment of the family of God. Whether he likes it or not, the Christian finds himself in enemy territory, in Satan's world system. He is locked into an invisible, but deadly combat with an unseen, mighty foe – the devil and his demonic army.

The Guidon is the battle cry, "Follow the Colors!" Join the strike at the front, fight to attain the high ground, it is the spear point - The place of Victory! The primary purpose of the church age is the formation of the Royal family of God. Upon an act of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme Commander, each believer becomes a son who is brought up unto glory. Upon your regeneration, we get to be a part of the winning team. Your life has taken on a special meaning. In the tactical disposition of His Royal troops, the Omniscience of God has allotted every believer a specified portion of time and a place on earth where he can best serve the Lord. The real reason God uses you here is so that He can be glorified by *blessing you* in the Devil's world. God does this through his grace.

God provides you with Eternal life, His Word, daily provisions, and security, knowing that He is the Victor in the Angelic Conflict! We rally to Him!

Now God has, as the Victor of the Angelic Conflict, given believers a memorial to remember.



#### 4. Memorials Remember the Dead / The Gospel Proclaims a Risen Savior

Matthew 28:6 - “He is not here: for he is  
risen...”

Jesus also gave us a memorial.

The call to remembrance of His sacrifice was in  
the Imperative mood (A command) by Christ.

# The Christian Memorial The Eucharist / Lord's Supper

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**Luke 22:19-20** And he took the bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you."

Do this as often as you will in remembrance of Me!



- As we remember those who sacrificed for our nation, let us now remember the Savior who sacrificed for our salvation.
- Today we honor fallen soldiers respectfully, but we worship Jesus Christ exclusively.
- “The Lord’s Table reminds believers that salvation was purchased completely by Christ.” We do not come to this table trusting our works. We come trusting His finished work.

## **The Race of Faith - Hebrews 12:1-3**

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

**“Lord, thank You for every person who sacrificed for earthly freedom. But above all, thank You for Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice purchased eternal life freely for all who believe.”**