

## CRIBB<S> NOTE – May 30, 2010

This week we honor those brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for our country. We remember their names and commemorate their dedication to protect the ideals, values, and causes on which this nation stands. How do we demonstrate our respect for them?

Memorial Day was established to remind us of life's fragility and temporal reality. We are given only a few years to accomplish our God-designed purpose on Earth. We face difficulties, disappointments, triumph, and celebrations. This is a time to pause and reflect on the higher meaning of life and death.

Conceived during the bloody, deadly battles of the Civil War, people in several cities around the country took time to remember soldiers who died and were buried in mass graves. The earliest known ceremony took place on May 1, 1865, in Charleston, South Carolina. An estimated ten thousand people, mostly Black former slaves, conducted a funeral procession for the fallen warriors. Their actions launched a movement that commemorated Decoration Day which was repeated in Waterloo, New York, the following year. Eventually Decoration Day was changed to Memorial Day. In 1967, Memorial Day was officially named, and declared a federal holiday by the United States Congress a year later.

As we remember our war dead, we have an opportunity to think seriously about the sanctity of human life. Who is paying attention to the signs of the times?

Natural disasters and man-made catastrophes like the current oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico turn our attention to common concerns that bind people together. This is a time that requires more cooperative human relations to forge a resolution to the great challenges we confront.

Although Memorial Day focuses on loss of life caused by conflict, we also concentrate on the many ways we can work together to improve the quality of life all over the world. Recent events are evidence of this need for nations to form international forces to bring aid and relief to areas directly affected by disaster. It is happening and people are providing generous contributions to make it possible to assist victims.

Paying attention to the signs of the times allows us to witness the heroic activities that bring healing to places plagued by war and poverty. It is the work and commitment by men and women who dedicate their lives to make a positive difference and bring about productive changes that give all of us reason to believe hope is alive.

While bad things like war continue to happen, we cannot ignore the wonderful acts of goodness taking place in our midst. These are the signs of the times. Instead of surrendering to fabricated fear, anger, and malice that lead to division and war, there are people who courageously stand on dangerous ground to plant seeds of peace that produce life-enhancing enterprises.

As we remember those who fought and died for liberties, we must also hold up and honor those brave men and women who continue to make sacrifices so the value of life is fully realized. This Memorial Day gives us reason to view the larger picture in which the best of human behavior is celebrated. We are grateful for our brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. We also appreciate everyone who gives his and her life to elevate our consciousness about God's original intention for human beings to live in community. For all of their sacrifices, we say, "Thank you." That helps to give great meaning to this year's Memorial Day.

-Pastor Art Cribbs