

Veteran's Day Message
Romans 13:7

11/10-11/07

6 p.m.; 9 & 10:45 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

(*"Honor the Heroes"* Veterans Day Celebration at 2:00 today @ Gallo Ctr.)

"It Is The Soldier"

It is the soldier, not the reporter
Who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet
Who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer
Who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.

It is the soldier, not the lawyer
Who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the soldier
Who salutes the flag
Who serves under the flag
Whose coffin is draped in the flag
Who allows the protester to burn the flag.

-Charles M. Province

In the Bible, God sends men into war, and He honors them when they return. He records their accomplishments as a whole, and details the extraordinary feats of the few.

At the same time, He does not gloss over the carnage of war, or its sacrifices.

So in that same spirit of honor and reality, we want today, to allow one verse to set the tone for all we say and do:

Romans 13:7 **"Give everyone what you owe him... if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."**

KEY IDEA: *Grant veterans the respect and honor they are due.*

Let's look at some key ways in which we can do that:

I. To Appropriately Honor a Veteran, Try to Grasp His Sacrifice

Often we focus upon the ultimate sacrifice that can be made by someone in the military. And, rightfully so.

But, there are many sacrifices that are made:

- being away from home, family and friends in a location not of their choosing;
- there is an emotional toll of loneliness, discouragement, depression, and the extreme emotional trauma that comes from first-hand experience in war;
- submitting their personal independence and exercise of their own will to another;
- listening to the strain in the voices of family over the phone or in letters, and knowing, that in part, they are the reason for their loved one's suffering;
- the willingness to continue to fight for the protection and freedom of their nation, while listening to some in that nation express their disdain for the soldier's mission;
- and, for some, returning home from combat, but continuing to live with what happened on the battle field.

ILLUSTRATION

At a Sunday morning service several years ago, when we were seeking to *especially* honor Vietnam veterans ...

... one of the veterans turned to me and said, "*The first two people I killed in Vietnam were children. I was standing with my buddies, and saw two children running towards us with grenades in their hands. The grenades would have killed all of us. So, I had to make a split-second decision ...*"

There were tears in the corners of his eyes.

I said to him quietly, but with deep conviction, "*The one who put the grenades in the hands of those children are the ones who carry the blame for their deaths.*"

Sadly, those innocent children were dead the moment the grenades were placed in their hands.

I've wondered about that man ... how often he has flashed back to that incident when he sees children of their age.

Some of our veterans are still paying a high price for their past service:

In this week's newspaper, you may have read the article on the number of veterans who are homeless.

“Veterans represent 11 percent of the adult civilian population nationally. As a group, they're likely to be better educated and employed than the general population, and yet they make up 25% of homeless people in the US.”

“California leads the nation in the number of homeless veterans, with 49,724 ... living on the streets.

In all of 2006, the Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that 495,400 veterans were homeless at some point during the year.

Why?

“While it's difficult to point to the causes of homelessness among veterans, they're likely to include factors that affect the general population – health problems, lack of support networks, economic pitfalls. But veterans also face other hardships – stressful work conditions, long separations from family and friends, and physical or mental disabilities stemming from exposure to wars ...”

Now, again, veterans as a group, are “likely to be better educated and employed than the general population.”

But, we don't want to ignore the fact that there are almost 500,000 in our nation, and almost 50,000 in California.

This information may change your perspective when you see someone who is living on the streets.

It may temper the words you use when you speak of someone who is homeless. Because one in four deserves the honor and respect of one who served this country as a veteran.

All this to say, **I. To Appropriately Honor a Veteran, Try to Grasp His Sacrifice**

II. To Honor a Veteran, Express Your Appreciation

A. Express appreciation by saying “thanks”

Proverbs 16:24 “**Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.**”

A simple “*Thank you*” can mean a lot.

It may acknowledge more than you can even know.

So, don’t ignore a veteran or active service member because you’re not quite sure what to say. And don’t worry about saying something profound.

I want to urge you that when you see someone in uniform, or wearing something that shows they are a veteran, say something like, “*It looks like you’re a veteran?*” “*Yes.*” “*I just wanted to say ‘Thank you’ for serving our country.*”

It can be just that simple, and yet, very meaningful.

To honor a veteran ...

B. Express appreciation by listening

James 1:19 “**My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.**”

Sometimes what a veteran needs most is a listening ear.

Just listen ... don’t interrupt ... don’t worry about what to say in response ... just listen, and maybe say “Thanks.”

To honor a veteran ...

C. Express appreciation by choosing your words and questions wisely

Proverbs 12:18 “**Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.**”

Here are a few “do-nots:”

1. Do not ask, “Did you kill anyone?” or “How many people did you kill?”

Veterans have told me it’s a question they are asked often, and do not appreciate.

2. Do not say, “I know how you feel.”

Proverbs 14:10 “**Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.**”

Unless you’ve been there, you don’t know how they feel. And even if you have, you still may not know how they feel because people respond differently based on their own personalities, what they’ve been exposed to, and the way they process information.

3. Be very sensitive asking any questions

It can take a lot of effort to explain to a non-veteran the details of what things mean. And that emotional and mental effort may be beyond what they need to be expending. Let the veteran open the door. Listen. Express gratitude.

You may even say, *“I’m interested in learning what you’ve been through and hearing your perspective on it. If ever it’s a good time to ask questions, please let me know.”*

And then let it lay.

That demonstrates both honor and respect.

4. Don’t thrust your personal or political views of the war upon them

Proverbs 17:27 “**A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.**”

You may be very opposed to a given war. You may have very strong feelings about certain decision-makers.

Don’t assume a veteran or their family members share your perspective ... no matter which side of the debate you are on.

Unless asked for your opinion, keep it to yourself, and simply express gratitude for the service of the veteran.

A special word to veterans and families of veterans:

III. Veterans Have a Unique Ability to Encourage, Understand and Help One Another

Veterans can usually understand one another; they usually feel safe in one another's company.

In just a moment, we're going to show a brief scene from the movie, "*The Straight Story*."

It's not a war movie, but immediately prior to what we're going to see, one aging WW II veteran has shared with another the horrible memories he has of his friends being killed in a surprise attack. He shares in great detail, and with deep emotion, exactly what happened on that horrible day.

That opened the door to the other veteran, who shared his most painful memory.

(Show video: veteran shares how he was a sniper, they were under attack, he saw grass move, shot into it, and only the next day discovered that he had killed a fellow soldier. He had lived with this secret his entire life)

Veterans Have a Unique Ability to Encourage, Understand and Help One Another ...

- There is safety with someone who has been there ... *they understand*
- Veterans seem to share the understanding that *pain is not weakness*
- Just as bodies can be wounded, so can minds and emotions. We would never leave physical wounds unattended. *So we should not leave emotional or mental wounds without proper care and attention.*
- I was told recently that veterans of different generations can truly help one another ... *I was told this by two combat veterans ... one from Vietnam and the other from Iraq.*

the older ones carry wisdom and experience in dealing with life after war; which the younger is just discovering;

the younger veterans can help speak healing words, and restore the pride of the older.

So, please allow me to add my word of encouragement to Tom LaBarbera's, and ask all of you who have served in the armed services, whether in war time or not, to fill out that tear-off card, drop it in the basket on your way out, and allow another veteran to contact you and invite you to activities they'll be having.

III. Veterans Have a Unique Ability to Encourage, Understand and Help One Another

CONCLUSION

Romans 13:7 **"Give everyone what you owe him... if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."**

I hope we have applied this in a way that honors both God and veterans today.

"Father in Heaven, please use me to honor, respect and encourage those who have fought for my freedom. Help me to remember what I have heard today so that my words and actions will always be honoring towards veterans. In Jesus' Name, Amen."