



Week of May 26, 2019

Honor

Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor (Romans 13:7).

He didn't want to go to war.

But on his 18th birthday he registered with the county draft board. They assigned him a number. When that number came up, he left behind the places and people he loved. He learned how to march in formation; how to obey orders; how to fire his weapon—how to kill.

He didn't want to go to war. But he was honor-bound.

He had been raised that way. He had been taught to honor his father and mother, and all others in authority. He knew to honor the Lord his God above all.

He didn't want to go to war. But he was honor-bound.

Now he is home again. You can find him washing dishes at a local restaurant. He came back with a limp and a cane. He left his bright future behind with the Viet Cong. It's the tormenting memories that followed him home. Firefights invade his mind most every night. Brothers-in-arms die before his eyes again and again. In Vietnam he lost the control of his mind.

But he kept his honor.

He did what was asked of him. He did his duty. Today, many regard the concepts of duty and honor as outdated and naïve. He does not. His parents did not. His God never will.

Honor has two sides. It is gained and it is given. The person doing the right thing, no matter the cost, gains honor. Those who see that happen, give honor to such a one.

On Memorial Day we give honor to those who deserve it.

On the opening day of deer season you can find him sitting next to his favorite runway. In 50 years he has never fired a shot. He is not there to kill. He is there for the sights, the sounds, the smells—and the memories. Among those pine trees, his mind goes back to better times. For a little while, he forgets war.

On Memorial Day he will watch the parade from his safe spot already picked out at the cemetery. He will look at the markers where loved ones and friends are already buried. Where a small flag flutters, he will read again the notation of battalion or squadron or airwing. He will listen to the words spoken and the three-volley salute.

He has come to honor the memory of those who are to be honored.

There are those who question the phrase, *For God and Country*. But for the one in service to the Lord, serving one's country is a way to serve one's God.

We know wars all too well. We know their cause. We know they will keep occurring until Jesus stops all clocks and calendars.

But we also know that the powers that be are established by God. He sets up these authorities for the benefit of his people. He uses them to deliver us from evil.

People who step forward to answer the call to defend our nation deserve the honor we give them. We owe it.

We do not whitewash the picture of their lives. They, too, have sinned. We do say, "*These people did their duty. That was honorable.*"

When we honor the fallen on Memorial Day, we also honor those who served with them, who paid a price, but lived.

He didn't want to go to war. But he did. He was honor-bound.

We pray: Lord of the nations, we watch the waving flags and we listen to taps. But we cannot see the pain that you see in the hearts of those who mourn. We deplore war. But we thank you for those who have gone to war so that we might live in peace. By honoring them, we wish to honor you. Amen.

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