



# Mournful Salute

*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15).*

The red, white, and blue flying high on the pole is announcing, "This is America, the land of the free and the home of the brave."

The flag at half-mast declares, "This is America remembering that freedom is not free. It is bought with blood."

The lowered flag is a mournful salute to those who paid that price. Among those who acknowledge that salute are moms and dads who treasure a picture of a son who went to war and did not return.

Their eyes mist over at the thought of how he waved good-bye when he left for Vietnam.

Among those who understand the mournful salute are those who bring flowers to the grave of their sister and make sure the little flag next to the headstone is still in place.

In memory, they can still hear the salute that was given by the honor guard as the roar of guns echoed over her grave.

They know why the flags are at half-mast on this day.

The knowledge makes them sad. They mourn their loss.

A salute is a gesture of respect. It is a recognition of something special. Recruits are told, "You salute the uniform not the person."

But the flag at half-mast reminds us of those who wore the uniform.

It is, indeed, a mournful salute.

This is not always understood by those who have suffered no loss.

A day in May with half-mast flags signals only a holiday for some.

They don't know it is not a day to celebrate.

It's a day to observe. We thereby note that something significant has occurred. Americans have lost their lives in defense of our country.

The lowered flags remind us of that.

They are an effective reminder.

Something seems wrong when a flag is not flying at the top of the pole. It catches our attention. It reminds us there is reason to be sad.

Memorial Day reminds us that something is wrong with this world. People should not need to sacrifice their lives so others may live in freedom.

What kind of world is this?

The Bible tells us. It is a sin-cursed place where pain and death stalk victims. They spare neither the young nor the brave.

They reap their harvest without war. But battlefields are bountiful fields.

The Lord of the nations knows this. He warned about wars and rumors of wars. He offers the only hope for true and lasting peace. He paid for it with his blood.

He bids his people to be alert for those who mourn losses in this vale of tears. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus knows the pain death brings to hearts.

So, we rejoice with those whose loved ones returned safely from war.

We mourn with those who place flowers on the graves of the fallen.

We point them to the one who will end all warfare and bring back to life all those who have died in service to him.

The half-mast flag is a grim reminder of the price of freedom, which can be so easily lost.

It is a mournful salute.

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