

Memorial Day, for most people, is the unofficial beginning of summer. It might be the first day the boat is in the water or the first day the backyard grill is fire up or the first day spent in the cabin or the camper. From Memorial Day on it is acceptable to wear shorts and flip flops, no matter how cold it may be. For school students it is the final turn, the home stretch, the last inning before summer vacation. Let's face it, everyone looks forward to Memorial Day, either as a day off work and/or the beginning of summer schedules and sunshine.

Memorial Day, as it was originally constituted, was anything but a carefree day in the backyard, on the lake, in the woods and in the sunshine. It was, and still is, a day to remember those who gave their lives in service to their country, particularly during a time of war. It is a time to remember our fallen heroes, our sons and daughters, parents and grandparents, who made the ultimate sacrifice to give us the freedoms we enjoy. Across our nation there will be parades and speeches and gatherings in cemeteries to commemorate and remember these Americans, whose lives were cut short for the sake of the greater good.

Do we fully appreciate what we have and enjoy because of them? Will we honor their memory by continuing to make our nation a better place? What sacrifices are we willing to make during peacetime to preserve this blessed union of 50 states and people from around the world that call our nation their home? What might we give to make our neighborhoods and communities a place where everyone can live in safety and security, while pursuing life, liberty and happiness? May the Lord bless us with the sense of gratitude and patriotism which honors those who gave their lives that we might live free!

We as God's people, of all people, have a reason to be thankful. Although we know that this country and our homes are only temporary, heaven is our home, we realize that it is a gift from God. Our sincere prayer, in faith, is expressed in these immortal words:

God bless America, land that I love  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night with the light from above

Yes, indeed—God bless America, and may He bless her through us!