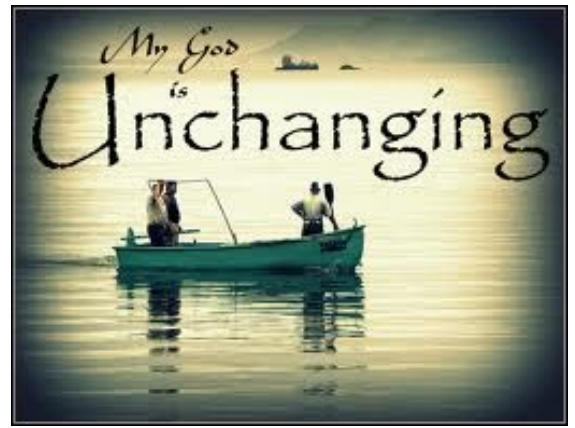


GOD IS THE SAME

On this memorial Day it is helpful to remember that our cemeteries change, our wars never seem to end –but, God is the same. He is the “heart connection” that beckons us to those we remember today. He was there with them. He is with us today. In October 1866 a teen-age-girl named Emma gathered garden flowers for the grave of her father, Dr. Ruben Hunter, civil war surgeon, when she met Elizabeth Meyer at the Boalsburg, Pennsylvania cemetery. Putting flowers on the grave of her son, Amos who had been killed at Gettysburg. Their hearts were joined forever as they each spread half of their own flowers on the two graves. They met every year after that. Memorial Day has to do with the heart –not with war, marches, or bands.



All of us have questions that cannot be answered. At one instance, the Pharisees came to Jesus with the story of a tower that fell and killed a number of people. They wanted to know why? Jesus had a wise answer, “Sometimes towers just fall.” I remember a family who could never find peace until they listened to the simple words of a grandfather, “Sometimes things happen.” Today, people want to know WHY, WHAT, WHEN. Nobody can tell them. But no matter when or why we go to a cemetery –God is always the same.

Things never stop changing; people have always wanted to go back to what they remember as a more dependable, more stable time in history. I think it is because they haven’t ever really read history. If they did, they might be happy to be where they are. The pandemic changed things (even for those who claim it didn’t happen) –people try to say, “things are the same;” but, no matter how much they try to “act like” everything is the same, it’s not –not even for the churches. What is the same is “God is the same.” And, that has always been sufficient. “All may change; but, Jesus never, Glory to His name.” We’ll go with that.

My parents thought that they lived through more drastic changes than any people who ever lived upon the earth. I’m not so sure when I look at what has been required of those of us who have worked in the last thirty years. There will certainly be even more change in store for our children and grand children.

What we like about our ancient, primitive tools is there was a time when one could learn to use them at age 12 and still be using them at age 80. There were less people on the earth when we were kids –our own country has more than doubled in my own life-time.

And where are we to find something to “hang” to? -Something that will remain the same?
- Something to stay with us, while we stay?

GOD IS THE SAME: The Bible is the only book that tells us what we might do about all of this. It is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path. We find in it the knowledge of God, Comfort

in sorrow, .Hope for tomorrow.

Yet often when we read it we become puzzled.... fascinated, but still puzzled.

What is our problem? Basically it is this: Our Bible reading takes us to what, for us, is quite a different world. The Near East world as it was thousands of years ago, primitive and unmechanized by our ideas. A world of ox carts, tents, pyramids, long cloaks and head wraps. It is in that world that the action of the Bible is played out. In that world we meet Abraham, Moses, David and the rest.

It is all interesting; but, it can seem so very far away. It all belongs to that world & not this world. We live in a world of jets and cranes, sports clothes and micro waves, computers, I-phones, I-pads, lap-tops, "live stream" church services, technical difficulties, four wheelers, & snowmobiles. Well, not so much snowmobiles anymore.

Sometimes we think of ourselves as mere spectators, looking back through a tunnel of time, wondering if we have been forgotten.

Our thought is, "Yes, God did all that then, and very wonderful it was for the people involved, but how does it touch me now? I don't live in the same world.

But do we? Yes, we do live in the same world!

It is true, that in terms of time and culture, they and the historical epoch to which they belonged, are a very long way from us. Life was difference for those we remember this Memorial Day. However, the link between them and us is not found at that level.

THE LINK IS GOD HIMSELF, God is the same.

To sharpen the point I will say, He is exactly the same.
The only difference is that we are the people of the Bible today.

The farmer down the road is the shepherd. The orchardist is the vineyard keeper. The contractor friend is the builder and carpenter. The brother or sister in the army is the soldier. The motel operator is the innkeeper. The need to make a living continues, so do taxes. People still complain about taxes; and in some places, like Africa, they have no tax, and they don't do very well either. People still get sick and people still die. They still laugh and they still cry. They still love and they still hurt.

Sure, culture has changed, and government has changed, (by the way, there is no government from Bible times that Americans would approve of). Yet, human needs have remained the same. And God has remained the same. So that today, instead of dealing with them, He deals with us.

AND THIS IS OUR HELP, GOD HAS NOT CHANGED!

1. God's life has not changed. Psalm 93:2, "He is from everlasting." Psalm 90:2 - "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." He has no beginning, He has no end. He exists forever, He is always the same. God can never stop being what He is. The Hymn writer says, "We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee." God is the same.

2. God's Character does not change. Strain and stress can alter our character (and we need to make allowances for each other); but, nothing can change the character of God. In the course of a human life, tastes, outlook, and temper may change drastically. People may become crotchety, calloused, and bitter. Yet, God never becomes less caring, or less fair, or less good, or less truthful, than He used to be.

3. God's truth does not change. We sometimes say things we do not really mean. Simply because we do not know our own minds, or because our views change, or because we are angry or careless and talking stupid. But God does not need to do that, His Words are abiding, true expressions of His heart.

When we read our Bibles, we need to remember that God still stands to all the promises and demands, and statements of purpose, that were given to believers 2,000 and more years ago. They are not relics of a bygone age, but an eternal, valid, on-going revelation of the mind of God toward people in every generation. God is the same.

4. God's ways do not change. He continues to act toward people in the way that He did in the Bible. Still He seeks the fellowship of His people. Still, He makes us wait, to teach us patience. Man's ways are pathetically inconsistent; God remains the same.

5. God's purposes do not change. I Sam. 15:29 "He is not a man that he should have to change his mind." God does not lack foresight, or power, nor is He fickle. No, God is the same.

6. The Son of God does not change. Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ "the same yesterday and today, and forever." He never changes, and this fact is a strong consolation to His people. Where is the sense of distance and difference then, between believers now, and in Bible days?

God has not changed, Nor has our human need. The thought is a comfort, amid all the changes and uncertainties of life. God remains the same. Christ who is our life, remains the same. This is our Christian faith & consolation. God is dependable. God is always the same.

GOD IS THE SAME

The greatest value, and strength, and "touch-stone" in the world is that God can give people love. That is the same, no matter when you live God's great gift to the world, is love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will be saved." Do not forget that the primary definition of God is: "God is love." To see love is to see God. God is love, God loves, we must love, and that means, we do better when we care about others and see their plight. Certainly love will help to save us from our greed,

fear, hate and prejudice.

GOD IS HERE

As He cared for John and Martha, and Timothy and David, so He cares for us, It is Christ who said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." It was Christ who left the 99 sheep to look for the one lost sheep "until He found it." Do not underestimate the goodness, the kindness, the mercy, the grace, the love, the sacrifice of Christ. Do not despise it in your life; do not deny it to others, as though you are somehow or other a superior Christian. DO LET EVERY RACE AND COLOR HAVE IT!

~ Luke 2:8-11, 13 "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were very much afraid. And the angel said unto them, ***Fear not***: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, `Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace, good will toward men.*" "On earth peace, good will toward men." It is where we must put our hope and our hearts.

People have always asked the question, "Where is the good?" Well, if we refuse to listen to the Christmas Angels, there won't be any.

It has always been the job of the devil to breath discontent, whining, dissatisfaction, complaint, divission, fear, and paranoia into the Church of Jesus Christ. It has always been the job of the minister to stop it.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, `Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace, good will toward men.*"

The Church started on the first Christmas eve with that wonderful message. It has not changed. It is exactly the same. Nothing about it is different.

The devil says, "be afraid" the Angels still say, "Fear not." The devil says, "Boy, have I got bad news." The angels still say "We've got the good news." The devil says, "we need to get something going, get something stirred-up -maybe another war." Let's have a rally to **divide us frm them**. The bigger the rally –the more right we are! The devil says,–we could fight each other about anything and everything." The Angels say, "Peace on earth good will toward men."

The devil says, "Looks like God is losing." The Angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest." Don't listen to the devil, even when he gets himself a microphone or a church pulpit –because, "God is the Same." Don't be too worried about God losing. Maybe ithings keep changing for us --But, that doesn't change Jesus.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). ***God is the same.*** There is someone to trust! You may be sure that Jesus will be with us on this and every new Memorial Day.. Stay with a sure thing!