

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

### **Title: Remember the Dedication and Sacrifice**

### **Lesson: Luke 24:44-53 NRSV**

*44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." 50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God.*

**(Slide 1)** It's the seventh Sunday of Easter and Ascension Sunday. Let's say Easter's greeting: "Pastor: Christ is risen, People: Christ is risen indeed." It's the last Sunday of Easter, and next Sunday is Pentecost Sunday.

As you all know, tomorrow is Memorial Day. I bless all of you, in the name of Christ, who are attending at this Sunday worship service to listen to the word of the Lord, although this precious long weekend to enjoy camping and travel with your family and friends, resting from Friday afternoon to Monday.

**(Slide 2)** Tomorrow is Memorial Day. The day is a day to remember and thanks to those who sacrifice for the country, and we also pledge to serve and dedicate time to serve our local community. In Korea, June 6 is observed as Memorial Day. And during this holiday, people seem to be very busy and excited because of the barbecues and the huge sales events offered by large shopping malls and department stores. A few weeks ago, I made a plan to have lunch together on Memorial Day with Korean pastors serving in the same district. One of them said: "Come to my neighborhood. I know a good place for barbeque. Let's do barbeque because it's Memorial Day. Hahaha." I'm not sure what the correlation between Memorial Day and Barbeque is, and the correlation between Memorial Day and sales events? Of course, no barbeque goes wrong though.

Today I want to talk with you about dedication and sacrifice. The dedication and sacrifice of many people is absolutely necessary for the maintenance and

preservation of a nation and a community. Whether we feel their presence or not, there are people who are protecting this country and community with their dedication and sacrifice, even at this time. We call them soldiers. I guess I'm one of those people who can say I know a little about their hard work and sacrifice. In Korea, most men have military duty to serve the country for at least two years. My role was to train trainees at the training camp to become real soldiers. Most Korean men enlist in the military in their early 20s, can you imagine that young men who are so energetic and full of life's potential are obliged to serve the country for two years? When I got discharged as a sergeant, I told my successors: "All right. Take it easy. I can stretch out my legs and sleep at night through your dedication and sacrifice. "

**(Slide 3)** Along with the military, there are those who protect this country and community with their lives for the sake of the country and community. We call them police, EMTs and firefighters. Of course, basically, Memorial Day is a day to remember soldiers who have died in service to their country, but I think the meaning can be broader. So, the scope of our commemoration could include not only the military, but also the police, EMTs and firefighters.

Are they the only ones? In addition to the military, police, EMTs and firefighters, there are many others who have worked hard and dedicated themselves to the communities in which we live. Tomorrow is a day to remember and appreciate their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice, and a day when we also promise to pass on the love we received from them to others.

**(Slide 4)** Also, when we talk about devotion and sacrifice, there are those who should not be left out. They are the parents. One common thing that Korean mothers in their 50s and 60s have is that their social media main photos are flowers or gardens with beautiful flowers. My mom's social media's picture was flowers as well. Now it's a picture of her two-year-old grandson though. A woman meets the person she loves in her most beautiful and young days of her life and gets married and has children. They always want to give their children good things. They want to cook delicious food for their babies. They want to buy good clothes for their children. It is the heart of parents to want to do anything for their children. While they raise their

children, they may not be able to even enjoy their life and their faces are getting more and more wrinkled. One of the reasons why they have flowers as their main photos on social media may be because they cherish their most beautiful days of their lives when they were as beautiful as those flowers. As we raise our son, we also sometimes think: “Our parents must have raised us this way.”

And there is the last one we must remember. This is the one who gave us his dedication and sacrifice that we cannot repay. This one is Jesus Christ.

**(Slide 5)** The Gospel of Luke we read today is a confession of faith in Jesus Christ in the early church. In the 4th century, the common confession of faith was developed into the common Nicene Creed of the churches around the world and it was developed into the Apostles' Creed that we are used to. Every church in the world, without exception, makes the same confession:

“.....Jesus Christ was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.....”

**(Slide 6)** The Bible testifies about ‘the resurrected Jesus,’ ‘the ascended Jesus,’ and ‘the return of Jesus’. Luke 24 and Acts 1 emphasize the word ‘witnesses’. It says “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48); “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)

Everything that Jesus did on this earth was already foretold in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms. However, the disciples did not accept that fact at first. They followed Jesus, but did not know who Jesus was. So when Jesus was resurrected and appeared to them, they doubted him and were afraid. Only when Jesus opened their ears and eyes did they realize.

**(Slide 7)** Verses 46-47 says that “<sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

It was God's plan for Jesus to come to this earth as fully man and to be a friend to the marginalized and the poor, and to forgive the sins of all human beings by dying on the cross and resurrecting three days later. All of this was already recorded through the prophets in the Old Testament. There are still those who do not know that Christ came to this earth, died for us, and rose again. When this good news is spread to all the peoples of this world, God's salvation and the kingdom of God on this earth will be completed.

Before ascending to heaven, Christ blessed his disciples and appointed them as his witnesses. When Jesus opened their eyes and ears, their lives were completely changed. Before they experienced the resurrection of Christ, they were afraid of death, but after they experienced it, death was no longer an object of fear for them. They remembered Christ's death and resurrection, gave thanks, and vowed to live like Jesus on this earth.

Before going up, Jesus said: “<sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” In the days before Jesus, only special people had the Spirit of God. But now a new world came. All people could receive the Holy Spirit through Christ. The Holy Spirit has come to this earth and is still with us and working in our lives.

**(Slide 8)** In St. Augustine's prayer it is said: “Without God, we cannot; without us, God will not.” Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, but he sent the Holy Spirit to us. The Holy Spirit works through us. What we have to do is to remember the love of Christ, to give thanks for that love, to love God too, and to share the good news of salvation with our neighbors and make a commitment and practice to love them.

**(Slide 9)** Friends, tomorrow is Memorial Day. I bless all of you who have come to listen the word of the Lord during this busy time for barbeques and shopping. So, I welcome you. During today and tomorrow, specially I hope that we will take time to remember and appreciate the lives of those who have sacrificed for this country and our community. And I want us to be like them, who spread the love of Christ to our community. Amen.