

Messages from the Wilderness 10 - God is no respecter of persons

This weekend, we honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country. We enjoy the freedoms we have today because of those who have gone before us willing to make that sacrifice. We must never forget the blood that was shed to keep our country free.

Every weekend we honor and worship the One Who made the ultimate sacrifice for us to be in a better country. We can enjoy freedom from the bondage of sin because Christ was willing to make that sacrifice. We must never forget the blood He shed to provide us a home in heaven. Our Lord conquered death by rising victoriously from the grave. We praise God because He lives to continually make intercession for us. (Heb. 7:25)

Zechariah 13:6 And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

There are so many stories that come to us from great times of world conflict that there is no end of the examples of valor in the line of duty protecting the freedoms we enjoy today. I have selected four particular groups this morning to speak to the issue of that which unites us.

Military communications have to be coded to keep them secret from the enemy. However the process of coding and decoding are time consuming processes. Nations have devoted considerable effort trying to create unbreakable codes. In World War II both Germany and Japan thought they had such unbreakable codes, but in fact these codes were broken and their most vital information were readily available to their enemies.

The one unbreakable code turned out to be a natural language whose phonetic and grammatical structure was so different from the languages familiar to the enemy that it was almost impossible to transcribe much less translate. The unbreakable code was coded Navajo...

The idea of using specifically the Navajo language for military communications can be attributed to Philip Johnson...the

son of Protestant missionaries who spent his childhood among Navajos and learned their language fluently, so fluently that he served even as a child as a translator. From his experience Johnson believed that Navajo was a language that was almost impossible to acquire as an adult...

- Navajo is a tonal language with four tones: low, high, rising, and falling. The meaning of a word depends upon the tone in which it is spoken. Speakers of non-tonal languages simply miss hearing this essential element of meaning.
- The linguistic structure of Navajo is radically different from that of the Indo-European languages. It would not be easy to understand the meaning of a Navajo sentence even if a literal word-by-word translation were available.
- Navajo belongs to an entirely different language family from that of Amerindian languages. An expert in Amerindian languages would have no insights into the Navajo language...
- Navajo is adaptable to the creation of new words within the language rather than using words borrowed from other languages. Such loan words could be easily recognizable in spoken communications...
- The translation of military messages from English to Navajo and from Navajo to English could be done almost instantaneously. It was a matter of seconds versus a half hour by normal means.

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<https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/navajocodetalk.htm>

Maximo Purisima Young was just 19 years old when he heard President Franklin D. Roosevelt call upon Filipinos to join American forces fighting in the Southeast Asian islands during World War II.

In a clandestine radio broadcast which aired throughout the Philippines, Roosevelt asked Filipinos to "stand firm" along with the U.S. and pledged to "keep that promise" of independence for the U.S.

Commonwealth.

"When we heard that, all of us shouted," recalled Young, now 97. At the time of broadcast, he was camped alongside American troops - part of a remote force driven back by the well-armed Japanese army.

"All of us, Americans and Filipinos, were happy; we were shouting," Young said.

Young, a Filipino, spent part of the war on a boat, shipping critical supplies and troops through the treacherous waters around Manila. At one point, he was captured by the Japanese and later escaped. He went on to lead guerilla fighters on the island of Negros, working closely with U.S. forces as they planned their return. His service earned him a Silver Star from the Philippine government.

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<https://americanhomefront.wunc.org/post/their-last-fight-filipino-veterans-make-final-push-recognition>

Woodrow Wilson was a progressive president who listened to the science of his day and held that blacks were deficient and brought segregation to the military, as well as other federal offices. By the time World War II came, they were thought to be unable to keep up with flying military missions. Then came the Tuskegee flyers. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first black military aviators in the U.S. Army Air Corps...[They were] trained at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama...they flew more than 15,000 individual sorties in Europe and North Africa during World War II. Their impressive performance earned them more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and helped encourage the eventual integration of the U.S. armed forces.

On their part the British, like the French before them, accepted as truth the German propaganda about Polish ineptitude in resisting the German-Soviet invasion and were doubtful about the flying skills of the Polish pilots. Flight Lieutenant John A Kent, who was posted to No. 303 (Polish) Fighter Squadron during the Battle of Britain, summed it up in his memoirs: 'All I knew about the Polish Air Force was that it had only lasted about three days against the Luftwaffe, and I had no reason to suppose that they would shine any more brightly operating from England'.

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<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-polish-pilots-who-flew-in-the-battle-of-britain>

Even though they were skilled flyers, they were actually made to train using tricycles in order to learn British fighter formations. Their skill was finally recognized when in a routine mission they spied German fighters and broke normal discipline during the battle for Britain. They responded to their British leader's order to return to base with the request to "Repeat please..." all the while breaking off to attack. The air was filled with planes, bullets, and Polish chatter. The British finally realized their worth and they were made fully operational becoming a key component in the air war.

What was common to all of these and many more ethnically diverse groups was that they went to fight selflessly for freedom in spite of the social bigotry they each suffered. In war, there is no respecter of persons. Our friend, Dr. Rich Maczuga, himself a decorated Vietnam war veteran, affirms how everyone is equal in a fox hole and there are no atheists there. There is only a dependence on each one carrying out their responsibility offering their lives for the blessing of being free.

2. God is no respecter of persons.

Num 15:14-16 And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever *be* among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD; as ye do, so he shall do.

15One ordinance *shall be both* for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth *with you*, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye *are*, so shall the stranger be before the LORD.

16One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.

Num 15:24 Then it shall be, if *ought* be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.

Num 15:28-29 And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

29Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, *both for* him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the

stranger that sojourneth among them.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

The Jews did indeed have a holy calling and service, but faith was available to all. Both Jew and stranger, or Gentile, participated in the same sacrifices. The sacrifices mentioned in this chapter had to do with praising God and forgiveness for sins of ignorance. Both of these sacrifices would bring blessing on *all* the people. It is true that the Jews had a special calling and mission, but that didn't mean that they would get treated with any kind of favoritism when it came to sin. They were just as responsible. They enjoyed their holy calling only as they responded in faith to God. Their position did not excuse them in any way.

Though we support Israel today, that does not mean that they get to violate principles of civilization. Of course, for those who have labeled themselves Palestinians, they think that the existence of Israel is a violation of civilization.

In these passages we see that the Jews were not to hold one standard for themselves and another for those who were "other." If you were a Gentile, a non-Jew, there was a technical word for you...you were called a Stranger. The Jews were not to keep them out and they were not to burden them with extra requirements. Jew and Stranger alike were *equally* responsible to God. Both Jew and Stranger were responsible to each other to maintain holiness for the blessing of all.

There were regular sacrifices for sin that were made, but you know there is always the fact that there are sins we make thoughtlessly. It is those sins that are most likely to be forgotten, if they were even noticed at all. That's why there was this sacrifice for sins of ignorance. Certainly if the Jews sinned they should have wanted to make atonement to secure the blessing of God. But what if the strangers among them sinned? Were they exempt from making atonement because they were strangers? No. If they lived in that land, it was in their interest for God to bless Israel. And if they had sins of ignorance, they were bore the burden right alongside of Israel to seek God's blessings. In this way, the Jews who knew that they were supposed to be a blessing to the world were joined by the strangers. They had an equal responsibility before God. God was not a respecter of persons, and so neither should we be respecters of persons. To be a respecter of persons means to value those who we think can benefit us above others. This is the factor I want to focus on: the responsibility we have to each other.

3. Equal responsibility.

I would like to key in on the concept of the equal *responsibility* that the Jew and the stranger had before the Mosaic Law. People instead are consumed with equal *rights*. There is a time to make sure rights are protected, but the problem is when we are *obsessed* with our rights to the diminishing of our responsibilities. An unhealthy sense of personal rights is when we feel that it is not fair if everyone does not have the same *benefits*. Our concern should not be with equality, but equity. You get *out* of a system what you put *in* to a system. Not everyone has the same intellect. Not everyone has the same talent. Not everyone has the same marketability.

There is a time to make sure rights are protected, but instead of being obsessed with our *rights* and what we don't *have*, we should be faithful in our sense of *responsibility*. We can see this in the parable of the unjust steward:

Luke 16:10-13 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?

12And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The steward suffered loss in his dealings rather than cause loss for his master. You cannot serve your own interests and God's interests. It is the same as serving two masters, it is not only unethical it is also impractical.

Responsibility can be easily misunderstood. We mistake *discipline* for responsibility. We often think of being responsible *for something*, like cleaning a room, paying a bill, or carrying out an assignment. What we need to see is that being responsible also has the idea of being responsible *to someone*. The Jews and the Gentiles were responsible *for* living a life that God would bless, but they were responsible *to* both God and each other. It is not just that the Jews were required to be fair to the Gentiles, but that they were *both* required to be mindful of the blessing of the nation.

The impact on all of our relationships in this sense would be revolutionary. Consider your friendships. I don't know about you, but I and every one of my friends have flaws. We should not be surprised when they do something that

offends us. Do we ditch them when they disappoint us? I hope not. When someone leaves our church in a huff, I want to ask, "Was our friendship dependent only on what you could get out of me?"

We see this kind of mentality when it comes to families who go through divorce. It is said that toymakers are sensitive to the divorce rate.

Why do toymakers watch the divorce rate? When it rises, so do toy sales. According to the analyzers, four parents and eight grandparents tend to compete for children's affections, so buy toys.

—L.M. Boyd, Spokesman Review, March 15, 1993.

I wonder how many parents trained their children to love them depending on what they could get from their parents.

Do we have some friends who are more important to us because of what we can get out of them? This does not mean to say that there aren't some friends who mean more to us than others, usually because of the length of time we know them or the times we go through together. But *all* friendships can stand if they are based on our sense of responsibility to God and each other and a common sense of mission for God's service.

1Cor 12:4-7 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

Rom 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

The sense of this verse is that when we don't exercise love, seeking first our own benefit instead of the benefit of those around us, then we are holding back on what is due them. We are responsible to love them, seeking their benefit first.

Phil 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

Jas 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Think of how this would affect a marriage. People will assuredly affirm that they believe a marriage should be

founded on love. But because of our human nature it would be good to ask yourself, "Is my relationship, my friendship with my husband or wife troubled when I don't get something I think I deserve?" It is possible that the rule applies here: your relationship depends on what you can get out of your husband or wife, not your sense of your responsibility to love.

This can be true of work relationships with your boss or coworkers, your neighbors, your children, anyone.

Now, what I have to emphasize here so that we don't lose sight of it, is that God is not a respecter of persons. We should not be serving our interests but instead being responsible to God for the gifts He has bestowed upon us. In the course of doing this, we should not shut out people who we feel are less than or make extra requirements on people who are *other*.

Jas 2:1-4 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

2For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

If we are not careful to invest that which we have, what we have will be taken from us.

Matt 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

After a while you can tell that people are avoiding you. When they don't answer your messages, you start to get the idea that, in these days of caller ID, they have just not been answering the phone because they can see it is you. You invite them out but there is always something that "they have to do." When people actually have an appointment, they almost always will say, "Oh, I am going to be away," or, "I am going to the doctor." When people say they have something to do it doesn't usually mean that. This is what is meant by being a respecter of persons. The remedy for this is *not* to find some way to conjure up feelings for that person. The remedy is to exercise spiritual responsibility. Responsibility is something you have to consciously choose. It might become a

good habit after a while, but if you don't consciously pursue responsibility you will lose it and turn inward. Choosing responsibility means holding yourself accountable to bless others around you with the way God has blessed you. You deliberately maintain relationships, you bless your friends, your neighbors, your family, your coworkers, the person struggling in the street, or even the person *passing* you on the street. You have to *seek out* opportunities to bless others.

One of the problems I hear very regularly is that people think they are spiritually okay, they don't feel a *pressing need* to come to church. This is an example of slipping into irresponsibility. Attending church should not be a matter of what *you* need, but the responsibility you feel to God and others to bless them and bless God. We should be making it a point to share praises, prayers, experience, and care for each other.

We have to be very deliberate about investing not only our time and talents but also our caring for each other.

A few years ago, the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, MO made public 1,300 recently discovered letters that the late President wrote to his wife, Bess, over the course of a half-century. Mr. Truman had a lifelong rule of writing to his wife every day they were apart. He followed this rule whenever he was away on official business or whenever Bess left Washington to visit her beloved Independence. Scholars are examining the letters for any new light they may throw on political and diplomatic history. For our part, we were most impressed by the simple fact that every day he was away, the President of the United States took time out from his dealing with the world's most powerful leaders to sit down and write a letter to his wife.

– Bits & Pieces, October 15, 1992

If you have been around church and Christian ministries long enough, you know that *agape* is understood as a reference to the special kind of love that is selfless and comes from God. James Packer has this interesting insight about this word.

The Greek word *agape* (love) seems to have been virtually a Christian invention -- a new word for a new thing (apart from about twenty occurrences in the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is almost non-existent before the New Testament). *Agape* draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is

not a form of natural affection, however, intense, but a supernatural fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a matter of will rather than feeling (for Christians must love even those they dislike -- Matt. 5:44-48). It is the basic element in Christ-likeness.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and note what these verses have to say about the primacy (vv. 1-3) and permanence (vv. 8-13) of love; note too the profile of love (vv. 4-7) which they give.

– James Packer

Husbands, deliberately and carefully look for ways to bless your wives. Children, you are not too young to look for ways to bless your parents, your siblings, your friends, your teachers. Employees, start to think of ways you can deliberately and regularly bless your boss, your coworkers, your clients or customers. Keep in mind, it has to be deliberate. Hold yourself responsible to them to fulfill your love to them.

1Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

Rev 7:9-10 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Rev 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Isa 66:18-19 For I *know* their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

19And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

4. In salvation, there is no respect of persons.

God's judgment is on all of mankind. There is no one who impresses Him with their efforts to win Him over. This is because all of the righteousness of man are as filthy rags. He does not favor you because of what He thinks you can do for Him There is nothing you can offer Him that He does not already have. He has held Himself responsible for our sin by sending His Son to the cross and in doing that He has exercised His love toward us.

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The only thing that remains for us to do is receive that salvation.