

## Memorial Day 2020

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In this cool, wet spring filled with dreary news of COVID-19, killer bees and a dismal economic forecast, we once again take a moment to reflect on the national holiday known as Memorial Day. Originally referred to as Decoration Day, it began as a somber day of remembrance when women went to the graves of those who'd died in battles to clean and decorate the site with flowers.

The only relative in my family who died in combat is my great-uncle, James Smith. Gone before I was born, I was raised to honor him.

From the time my memories begin, I have known about Uncle James; he is revered in our family. Uncle James was someone that everyone in our family talked lovingly about, and often. His name came up at family dinners on Sunday afternoon or in general conversations when two or more were together.

I've heard stories about him driving the Wonder Bread truck, about his being such a prankster all through school, and about how he married his sweetheart, Evelyn, just before marching off to war.

Uncle James lives through the memories that my grandfather shared of his baby brother. Sadly, Uncle James never came home from the war. His body was lost in the field with only fragments of bone returned to a heartbroken wife, grieving parents and an inconsolable brother. Like so many of his comrades, Uncle James entered the war at age 24, left home for the first time into the great unknown, never to return.

Perhaps it's appropriate that his only child, Susan, a daughter he never met, died this Memorial Day weekend. She was a cousin I never got to know, though in many ways, I always felt I knew her very well. She and I became email pals after my parents died, giving each of us a link to our shared past.

In one Bible study this weekend, scripture once again provided solace for my restless thoughts. It continues to amaze me how God's plan somehow makes sense out of what is senseless to we mere humans.

In 1st Peter 1:8-9 Peter shares the good news of resurrection:

*<sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

What a glorious message for Memorial Day! Even though we never met Jesus or got to know him on a personal level, we have been introduced to him and have learned to love him. We

have grown fond of him through a long-standing, engaging relationship, first taught to us by others, then enriched by our own commitment of time and study.

Even though I never knew Uncle James, I was taught to know him from my elders. I was encouraged to honor his sacrifice for my freedom. When my parents were gone, I became more aware of my cousin who longed for an ongoing relationship with the family whom she'd also been taught to love. This is the family inheritance we'd both been taught and were invested in.

For me, this is the meaning of resurrection. It is our inheritance from Jesus as he lives in each of us who believe. Even though we never met him or got to know him on a personal level ourselves, we know his sacrifice. We know what he stood for, what he believed in and what he promised us if we'd simply accept him at his word.

I never knew Uncle James personally. Nor did I ever get to know his daughter, my cousin Susan. Even so, I lament her passing; I share in the loss her husband, daughter and grandchildren surely feel. I share in their gratitude that she has attained the inheritance our heavenly father promised to all who believe in him.