

# MAKING MEMORIES

## Meditation, May 28, 2017

### Youth Sunday

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, when we honor the memory of those of our armed forces who gave their lives to secure and defend the liberation and freedom of so many, including us, around this world. I'm personally convinced the best thing we can do to show our gratitude and honor their memory is to determine to exercise our freedom responsibly ... **we want to see freedom not so much as the right to do as we choose, but as the opportunity to choose to do what is right.** Let me reiterate: Freedom is not so much the right to do as we choose as it is the opportunity to choose to do what is right.

And today on this Youth Sunday, I want to especially thank all the dedicated volunteers and church staff, all the devoted parents and family members, all the good friends and loving church members who are doing all they can to help these young women and men entrusted to this church's care to learn to exercise their freedom responsibly. Thank you to all who working to help them take every advantage of the opportunity our freedom offers to choose what is good and right, to train them up in the way they should go, by encouraging them to become young men and women of faith, integrity and honor through service to God, family, community and country ... and in so doing you are helping them build a treasure house of good and wholesome and constructive memories that will be with them for a lifetime and beyond!

If you've been in this congregation for awhile, you'll know I've long been convinced that one of the great hindrances to joyful living in the present is the painful memories of past failures that ever haunt, hamper and hinder us in our present. You'll also know I've been long convinced that the path back to joyful living, the path out of the wounds of old hurts and failures, is (a) the path of God's gracious *forgiveness and* (b) the personal resolve not to do those stupid things again ... which, I know, is easier said than done. But by His grace and forgiveness God has opened your cell door and set you free; why in the world would you want to go back in there again? As the old proverb goes, no matter what your past has been, you have a spotless future.

And if you've been in this congregation for awhile, you'll also know I've been long convinced that one of the most effective ministries of the church, and perhaps especially in ministry with young people, is to do all we can to provide *joyful* memories, *good* memories. Memories of joy, memories of happiness, memories of service in mission, memories of healthy relationships, memories of good clean fun, memories of wholesome and enjoyable activities, memories of loving, supportive, lasting friendships ... as well as good memories of adults who love and encourage and nurture, rather than bad memories of adults who misuse them or beat them down with discouragement or who treat them as little more than a nuisance or a bother. Such happy memories of joy in our pasts do much to help us to live joyfully, confidently and freely in our presents and our futures.

We are all about making happy memories of laughing *with* God, sharing His joy, enjoying life as He would have us enjoy it. We have no interest in memories of life lived laughing *at* God, which is an increasingly sad phenomenon in our increasingly secularized culture. When we laugh *at* God, when we join in with the worldly, secular, cynical voices that mock piety, when we scoff at morality, chastity, integrity, honor, reverence, when we make light of God's good ways ... in short, when we don't take God seriously and live accordingly ... more often than not that makes for really *bad* memories, regretful memories, destructive memories, painful memories, memories that continue to wound and cripple rather than heal and/or inspire. People laugh *at* God when they take Him lightly, when they don't understand Him, or they cynically laugh at God because they think He is hopelessly irrelevant to their situation(s). I'm also convinced ONLY those who take God seriously really understand the sheer delight of laughing with God, enjoying His good gifts, living life as He designed it to be lived. That's what we try to do here.

Making good memories. What a way to choose to use our freedom. What a way to honor the sacrifice of those we honor tomorrow. And what a way to honor the ultimate sacrifice of the One who fought the ultimate battle to set us free.

Making memories. What an effective and necessary ministry.