

# Veteran's Day Tribute

Given at Huntsville, AR Freewill Baptist Church, November 11, 2007

**Dr. Joel Philip Church**

On a chilly morning in October in 1962, on an isolated, remote spy station on a hill in northern Turkey, overlooking the Black Sea, I awoke to the sound of airplanes overhead. Going outside the barracks and looking up I saw low-flying, fully armed, Russian Migs. Within eyesight on the sea I observed a complete task force of Russian naval vessels.

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was still reeling over President Kennedy's forceful insistence that the ships carrying missiles on their way to Cuba to turn around. This was known as the "Cuban Missile Crisis." We found out later that this was a time when the world was nearer to a nuclear holocaust than anyone suspected.

The Premier's intention was to remove us from that strategic location because he knew that we had reconnaissance equipment beamed toward Moscow and his military. But because of fear of repercussions and under-the-table deals, he decided against using the force he had available.

I was fortunate that day and the days to follow. Not a shot was fired nor a bomb dropped.

Possibly there are those in this congregation this afternoon who were not as fortunate. Possibly there are families of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their life. Whether or not you faced enemy weaponry, if you were a member of any branch of the U.S. military you are a hero of freedom.

*Today is Veteran's Day*

## **Ecclesiastes 3**

- 1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
- 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
- 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
- 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
- 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
- 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Everyone loves peace, but God's Word is clear that there is a time for war. On the wall of the Korean War Veteran's Memorial is an inscription inlaid with silver, which reads, "Freedom Is Not Free." This means there is a cost to the freedom that so many of us take for granted. I applaud every person, and every family member of a person, who has served to keep America free.

*Today is Veteran's Day.*

In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site is on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, D.C. It became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans. November 11 was given universal recognition as the day to acknowledge our veterans. This day was selected because the ending of World War I fighting was at 11:00 a.m., November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month).

In 1938, November 11 became Armistice Day. This became the new legal holiday, which honored World War I veterans.

Then in 1954, after having been through both World War II and the Korean War, Congress amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting the word "Veterans." With this legislation, Nov. 11 became a day to honor American veterans of **all** wars.

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From the American Revolution to date records show that there have been 1,247,327 war deaths. These are men and women who knew there was a time for war and gave themselves to defend their convictions and keep American free.

On this special day, let us remember the heroic acts of men and women who put themselves at the service of orders from superiors – no matter what the cost.

A relatively few of our veterans were in actual combat.

In the Vietnam War, about 90% of our soldiers were support troops, only about 10% saw actual fighting, and I imagine it's still about the same. But every one of them made themselves available. They were there to do whatever was asked of them, whether they were clerks, typists or cooks they sacrificed as much as did the infantrymen, pilots and gunners.

Our soldiers, marines, seamen, Coast Guardsmen and airmen are just ordinary people who will do what they are told because they trust that their country would not ask them to risk their lives if it wasn't necessary. They trust their captains, their generals, and their president. They trust us, the American people.

There is an unwritten, unspoken covenant that soldiers make with their countries. It's a simplistic, yet important, covenant.

In their minds they say "I'll risk my life, maybe even lose it,  
in a cause I can't fully grasp,  
in a battle that is part of a larger war that I may never understand.  
I'll do it for you because I am one of you and you have asked me to do it.

In return, you must promise me one thing. You must promise never to forget. You must promise never to forget us, and what we did, because we did it for you.

*Today is Veteran's Day*

Today, our nation is involved in war. Let us daily pray that God will bring peace in the middle east, but until he does, let us hold up and support those who are fighting now for our freedom. I can no longer fight the enemies of our country, but I can be a solid support for those young men and women who are standing in my place.

If you are, or have been a member of any U.S. Military force, **please stand**. [Applause]. Be seated.

If you are an immediate family member of a veteran, please stand – family members also pay a price for freedom by supporting and sacrificing that member who did serve, **please stand**. [applause]. Be seated.

Thank you.