

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H

by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Begins,

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;  
Thou madest Life in man and brute;  
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot  
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:  
Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;  
We mock thee when we do not fear:  
But help thy foolish ones to bear;  
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me;  
What seem'd my worth since I began;  
For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove;

Who is Tennyson talking about here? Of course it is Jesus. He is the strong son of God, he is immortal love. He is the one whom, though we have not seen his face, by faith and faith alone – we embrace. Jesus. Jesus, who had every right to stay safely in heaven. Jesus, who even after he came and lived among us for 33 years was still holy and pure and free from any blemish of sin so that he could serve as the all sufficient offering for our sins. And, as we say in the communion service, not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. And not just the whole world today with its millions and billions and even trillions of people who are alive right now. But also for all who came before us. The trillions and trillions who have ever lived and died in any way shape or form. He was for them, as he is for us the one who buys us back from sin and death and makes us a part of God's holy family. The apostle Paul puts it this way in his letter to the Galatian Christians, chapter 5 verse 1, "For freedom, Christ has set us free."

I have been listening to the news stories on the radio during these days leading up to our Memorial Day observances. I keep hearing commentators talk about those who have made the supreme, the ultimate, sacrifice. Now I, along with you, want to honor the memory of those who have made our freedom possible. I will bow my head and cover my heart when prayers are prayed and taps are played. More importantly I will bow my head and groan with the Spirit as we pray for peace and the release of our military personnel from assignments that risk their lives whether necessary or unnecessarily. It is always my prayer that they are risking their all for the cause of peace.

Memorial Day is set aside to help us remember. It is not just a day for picnics and outings and a day off from school or work. But what are we remembering? Are we remembering enough? I would like to suggest today that we are not. Not by a long shot. And this is especially true if we fail to remember the sacrifice of the one whose life and death and resurrection ripped us out of the grip of sin and thrust us in to the kingdom of light and love. His name is Jesus. We call him Christ. And his is the ultimate sacrifice that ultimately matters the most. Let us stop and think about Jesus Christ and what he has done for each one of us as we prepare for this Memorial Day.

Strong son of God, immortal love... We have not seen his face. But the fact of our presence here, in this place, where his love has been made known for

generations, is a testimony to the fact we too by faith and faith alone embrace this truth. “For freedom Christ has set us free.” We could not get free on our own any more than we can bring peace to the Middle East without help. Goodwill from Israel’s neighbors both friend and foe alike. Iraq and Iran, Kuwait and Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan, East Glastonbury and Manchester, Portland and Middletown, Hartford and New Haven are all filled with people that Christ died to set free. How will he be remembered? – Only if we speak up.

Remember the story that began the season of Pentecost. Jesus was taken up into heaven. He promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to supercharge their ministry and they stood their staring up into the sky. (Well he did tell them to wait.) But he also said “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” These words to them are our calling today.

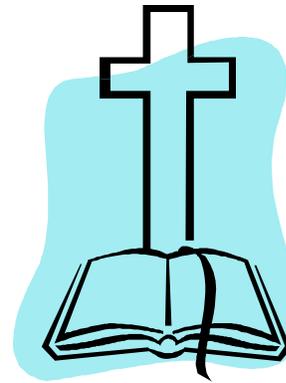
In our Old Testament lesson for today we hear Isaiah speaking for God and he says,

8 This is what the LORD says:

"In the time of my favor I will answer you,  
and in the day of salvation I will help you;  
I will keep you and will make you  
to be a covenant for the people,  
to restore the land  
and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

9 to say to the captives, 'Come out,'  
and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'

"They will feed beside the roads  
and find pasture on every barren hill. \*



This is our message, “Come out and be free” and remember the one who died to make us free. Our, “strong son of God, immortal love, whom we who have not seen his face, by faith, and faith alone embrace, believing where we cannot prove.” Let this Memorial Day be different for us. Let it be a day when we, the disciples of Jesus Christ, let someone know who has really made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. “For freedom Christ has set us free!”