

Fil-Am Community Church

Pastor Rolly Estabillo

A Day of Remembrance

Key Verse: *Psalm 46:1-11*

Some events in human history impact us so greatly that they will forever be engraved in peoples' minds. The bombing of Pearl Harbor, the assassination of JFK, and then Martin Luther King, Jr. And very recently, the fall of the Twin Towers in New York. I'll never forget that I had just awakened when I turned on the TV and was surprised to see one of the towers in flames. At first, like everybody else, I thought there was just a fire in the building. As I sat down on edge of the sofa to find out more details, I watched in horror when a plane crashed into the South Tower. Those images are forever embedded in my memory. You no doubt remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when you first heard the news.

The video clip we just saw extolled the ideals of remembrance, the virtues of and reasons for remembering. Even President Obama has called for National Days of Prayer and Remembrance for September 9-11, but on this very day, what is it that we should remember?

### **1. WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE COST IN HUMAN LIVES.**

On September 11th, nearly 3,000 people lost their lives at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in rural fields in Pennsylvania. It was the most

devastating attack ever to happen on American soil; costing more lives than even the attack on Pearl Harbor where 2,500 Americans died. Nineteen cowardly individuals, who killed in the name of religion, carried out this insidious attack ten years ago.

We need to be careful not to forget the lives that were lost on that dreadful day. We cannot put a tag price on each human life. Only God can give it and only God can take it away. Life is sacred and life is precious.

This becomes more pronounced and far more significant when seen in the light of eternity. For sure, many of those who died during those attacks died without hope of eternal life. They are separated from God forever. One thing September 11 has shown us is that we never know...none of us ever know how much time we have—or how much time those around us have...therefore it is imperative that we spread the news of the saving Gospel of Christ with everyone we can! The Bible says in **2 Peter 3:9** that God doesn't want anyone to perish but for them to come to repentance.

We should not also forget the lives of those who have been forever changed. Not to forget the widows who are raising children alone. Not to forget the parents who will never hold their children again. More than anything else, they need comfort, they need assurance, they need hope. As Christians, we can extend this comfort and assurance to them, sharing with them the love and compassion of Christ because our God is a God of comfort as the Bible

says in **1 Cor. 1:3**, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.*

## **2. WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE EXTRAORDINARY ACTS OF HEROISM AND COMPASSION**

We also need to not forget the heroism shown by ordinary people who rose to the occasion in extraordinary ways. Reactions to this crisis, has brought forth both the best and the worse in people. Yes, there have been some dark spots such as the Pakistani woman who was purposefully run down while crossing a super-market lot with groceries simply because she wore the traditional dress of her homeland. But it has also called forth unnumbered heroic acts, some recorded and many that were not. There were many lights in the darkness. September 11th shocked this nation, and in remembering that tragic day: let us gain a renewed respect for those who have proven themselves to be true heroes!

The firefighters, police, and rescue workers who risked their lives and even gave their lives to save others are true heroes!

In the September 2002 issue of the “Focus on the Family Magazine,” a story was told of the actions of Al Braca. Al worked on the 105th floor of Tower One. When he realized that they were trapped in the building and would be unable to escape, Al shared the gospel with 50 of his co-workers and led

them in prayer. Some of those same individuals had in the past mocked him for his faith.

If September 11 can teach us anything.... anything good at all...certainly it shows us that by following the model of Christ....ordinary Christians like you and me can be heroes!!!

And who hasn't heard of the heroic act of the passengers aboard United Airlines Flight 93?

One of those passengers was named Todd Beamer, in a conversation with a telephone operator he told that plane had been high-jacked and that the passengers were discussing ways to overpower the high-jackers. He ended his conversation by asking the operator to pray with him. The last words the operator heard him say were "Are you guys ready? **Lets Roll.**" The heroic sacrificial action by those passengers to bring down the plane no doubt saved many lives as the high-jackers were denied their ultimate target. Some have suggested its target was the White House and the President of the United States.

Stories were told of Americans reaching across religious and ethnic lines to help. One such story was told by a Pakistani man named Usman Farman, he worked in building #7 of the World Trade Center. He was one of the lucky ones who made it out of the building, when he saw the collapse of the first

building he began to run. In the process he fell on his back on the ground and looked on as a massive cloud of debris was overtaking him.

At that moment an orthodox Jewish man came up to him, and saw the Muslim pendant he wore around his neck, on which was inscribed a prayer for safety in Arabic. The Jewish man held it in his hand and read out loud in Arabic for a second and then in a Brooklyn accent he said, “Brother if you don’t mind, there is a cloud of glass coming at us, grab my hand and let’s get the hell out of here.” Farman said “He was the last person I would have thought would have helped me.’

### **3. WE NEED TO REMEMBER WHAT THIS HAS REVEALED TO US ABOUT STATE OF THE CHURCH**

Perhaps most distressing of all is what this crisis has revealed about our country’s relationship with God. Immediately after the attacks, church attendance spiked for several weeks, rising in some place to as much as half the regular adult attendance. That attendance surge was short-lived though, for levels were back to normal by November. Much as they did after the Gulf War.

I have even heard some suggest that they were lower than prior to Sept 11. George Barna the church statistician, professed his amazement saying, “ I was among those who fully expected to see an intense spiritual reaction to the terrorist attacks. The fact that we saw no lasting impact from the most

significant act of war against our country on our own soil says something about the spiritual complacency of the American public.” He went on to say that he felt that the influx was due to irregulars (those who attend once every month or two) suddenly returning on a consistent basis for a month or so, before they fell back into their “regular pattern of irregular attendance.”

#### **4. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF WHERE TO LOOK FOR OUR STRENGTH (PSALM 46)**

Shall we all stand and read together Psalm 46? “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (3) Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling. (4) There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. (5) God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. (6) The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. (7) The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. .... (10) Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (11) The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

In this psalm David encourages believers in times of trouble. Psalm 46 is famous as the inspiration of Martin Luther’s great Hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” When David said, “God is our refuge” what he meant was that

our sense of security is not derived from our nations defenses but that it rests in our faith in God. God and God alone is our refuge in times such as these.

As believers we need to remember that our feeling of security goes beyond the measures of home land defense, beyond metal detectors, security checks, military power, political alliances or the strength of our economy. Our faith must rest solidly on a relationship with a living God. Security is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of confidence and courage in the midst of trouble. When tragedy occurs there are tears. Tears of those directly affected and tears of sympathy.

David reminds us that God is not only our refuge but our “strength.” Strength is the ability to rise above tragedy even with tears in our eyes and go forward. God is not just some far off source from whom we can seek advice but this psalm tells us that he is “a very present help.”

David ends this great psalm by reminding us in verse ten that it is when we are overwhelmed that we need to allow God to move.

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (11) The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.”

The Twin Towers have been destroyed and with them symbols of America's security and prosperity. But beyond all the tragedy and the tears, the terror and the fears, one symbol still stands strong it is the cross.

God was not surprised by 9/11

But He was saddened by it.

God did not cause 9/11

But He does comfort those affected by It.

God may not choose to prevent future acts  
of terrorism

But He will provide peace in the hearts of all those who turn to Him.

At times such as this, more than anything else, I believe that we need to be reminded that God cares! The Bible reveals to us that God does indeed care.

The Philips translation of **I Peter 5:7** says, "*You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties on him, for you are his personal concern.*" The Living Bible paraphrases that verse with these words "*Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.*" It is comforting to know that God is aware of your feelings today and desires to comfort you.

Song: "Be Still".