

Pastor Jim Lloyd

Date: September 11, 2016

Title: We Must Not Forget

Text: Romans 13:9-10

⁹*"The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* ¹⁰*Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law"* (Romans 13:9-10).

Anyone here remember where you were or what you were doing a year ago today – September 11, 2015? September 11, 2014? How 'bout – Where were you on September 10, 2001? How 'bout it – Can anyone tell me where you were on September 11, 2001? I might not know where I was or what I was doing on any other day of 2001, BUT I know where I was and what I did on September 11, 2001. I guess I've seen hundreds – maybe thousands – of pictures from 9/11. Some of those pictures are almost burned into our memories. A few of them particularly. One is a photograph of a simple handmade sign hanging from a building near the World Trade Center. The sign contained a solemn promise: "We will not forget." Certainly, we won't. We can't.

On September 11, 2001, our lives changed; our futures changed; the world changed. Because of the events of 9/11, many of us began to see the world differently...to see our lives differently. In the aftermath of the attacks, many people took the opportunity to rethink – what they were doing, where they were going, and how they were getting there.

The negative impact of 9/11 on the world has been enormous. You're probably aware of the numbers. More than 2800 people died in the attacks. More than 40 billion dollars-worth of damage was done. More than a trillion dollars in losses to the global economy was suffered. More than 300,000 people lost their jobs. The negative impact has been enormous, but looking back over the past 15 years, it can also be said that there have been some positive things happen as a result of 9/11. Just days after the attack on America, President Bush spoke these words to the nation: "In the past week, we have seen the American people at their very best everywhere in America. Citizens have come together to pray, to give blood, to fly our country's flag. Americans are coming together to share their grief and gain strength from one another. Great tragedy has come to us, and we are meeting it with the best that is in our country, with courage and concern for others. Because this is America. This is who we are. This is what our enemies hate and have attacked. And this is why we will prevail."

We learned some lessons in the wake of 9/11. Lessons that we must not forget. We had the opportunity to develop a clearer perspective on some crucial issues – such as: What is really important? Who is really important? And what should we be doing with our lives? We must not forget the lessons we learned in the weeks and years since 9/11. As a church and as a nation, I believe we developed a better perspective in three key areas. These are areas in which our motto must be: WE WILL NOT FORGET. And should you have the propensity to forget, LET ME REMIND YOU.

- 1. We MUST NOT FORGET what we learned about PRIORITIES.** In the first year anniversary issue [Sept 02] of Men's Health was an article written regarding the upcoming anniversary. It said: "None of us will forget where we were on September 11, 2001. The question is: Where are we now? Did those days of disbelief and rage, of tears, hugs, and anxiety, lead to lasting changes?" I don't often read to you, but I'd like you to hear some of the comments their readers wrote in response to a survey. Michael wrote: "I still complain about bills, work and taxes, but now every morning I hug my two kids goodbye, and every evening I give them a kiss when I get home." Mark wrote: "I'm trying to take a more positive attitude – I've definitely become a less aggressive driver." Adam wrote: "Everyone killed or injured started that day like any other, not knowing they might not be coming home...[now] I try to get the most out of everything and not get caught up in details that ultimately don't matter." Gary wrote: "I make it a point to listen to my wife every day as she tells me about her day. After more than 30 years of marriage to her, I find I love her even more." Ken wrote: "September 11 taught me that my life's work should be about my daughter and building a family...I've learned that there's much more to life than making a buck." September 11, 2001 gave us all an opportunity to rethink our priorities. People who go through tragedy often learn what is truly important in life; it gives us a chance to re-think the way we live. ILLUSTRATION: After comedian Richard Pryor was critically burned in an accident, he appeared on The Tonight Show and told Johnny Carson that during his brush with death, he discovered that money wasn't all that important. He said, "All I could think of was to call on God. I didn't call the Bank of America once." In the summer of 2002, MSNBC reported from a survey taken, that a majority of teenagers said that since 9/11 they have spent more time with their parents and family members than they used to. The National Center on

Addiction and Substance Abuse also reported that for the first time a majority of students surveyed said that their schools were drug-free. Joseph Califano, the center's president, said, "This may be a reflection of the issue of patriotism – that it's unpatriotic to do drugs. And parents may be more interested in their kids after 9/11." We began relearning an important lesson about our priorities – about what is really important in life. It's a lesson WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET. The people in our lives are more important than our careers and they're more important than our possessions. PEOPLE matter more than anything else. Paul said, *"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law"* (vs. 8). Paul reminds us that it is not the things we accumulate that give life meaning; it's the relationships we nurture that matter the most. Let's not forget what we've learned about priorities. Loving the people that God has placed in our lives – that's what matters the most. WE WILL NOT FORGET.

2. **We MUST NOT FORGET what we learned about SACRIFICIAL LIVING.** Like his brothers and his father, Mike Kehoe is a New York City firefighter. He responded to the call on September 11 and went to the World Trade Center to rescue lives. As people were rushing down the stairs to get out of the burning tower, Mike was seen climbing UP the stairs. Somewhere around the 28th floor someone took his picture. In it you can see a crowd of civilians going down the stairs, while this dedicated servant is moving up the stairs, against the flow of traffic. The photograph, which was widely circulated, earned him the label "hero" – but as far as he was concerned, he was just doing his job. Unlike many of his friends, Mike SURVIVED 9/11. In the weeks following, he worked many 24-hour shifts atop the rubble at Ground Zero, putting body parts and debris into 5 gallon buckets. In Mike Kehoe, we see an example of sacrificial living. And in him, we see what a hero really is. There were countless acts of heroism on 9/11. Some of the stories we've heard; others we'll never hear. Some of the names we've learned; others we'll never know. Some of the heroes lived through the ordeal; others gave their lives in an attempt to save others. All of them – especially the 23 cops, 37 Port Authority officers, and 343 firefighters who lost their lives that day – taught us a lesson in sacrificial living. And they taught us what a true hero really is. How can we consider a man a hero just because he can hit a baseball or broke a tackle? We've seen true heroism in action: it consists of SACRIFICIAL LIVING. "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends." It's interesting that as we approach the anniversary of 9/11, Major League Baseball players (who earn, upon average, \$2.5 million per year) are in a squabble over money with the owners – as if to remind us all: we're rich, we're pampered, we're NOT your heroes. Because of September 11 we re-learned what a hero really is because we saw heroism in action. It's sacrificing your own safety for the sake of someone else. Because of 9/11, I will never look at a police officer the same way again – or a firefighter – or a soldier. They are our heroes. BUT, they aren't the only ones. Thousands and thousands of people gave sacrificially in response to the crisis. Many rescue workers labored days on end without pay in an effort to locate survivors. People from all walks of life volunteered their services in whatever way possible – because they wanted to help. Many learned again the lesson of sacrificial living. It's what Paul made reference to in Romans when he said, *"...for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law."* In the Christian subculture, we must remember who the real heroes are. They're not really the ones who sing and preach and perform before huge crowds. They're the ones who serve on the mission field under life-threatening conditions. They're the volunteer youth leaders who, at the end of a grueling work week, spend the weekend at the church ministering to our teens and the teens of our community. Or the ones who race home from work – sometimes without their supper – to spend their Wednesday evening with a bunch of rambunctious kids. They're the people who work in the nursery, who help clean the building, who volunteer for Kids Crusade. The ones who do any of the thankless, low-visibility jobs that must be done in order for the work of the ministry to continue. These are our heroes. Jesus said it this way, *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:26-28). We are called to sacrificial living – sacrificing for others – even if it costs us our own lives. This is what true heroes do. It's a lesson we learned on 9/11. We MUST not forget.

3. **We MUST NOT FORGET what we learned about our MISSION IN LIFE.** For at least a few weeks after the attacks, America came together in unity. Republicans and Democrats cooperated with one another; the media refrained from taking cheap shots at the President; and people from all backgrounds joined hands to meet the challenges we faced. In was ONLY temporary, but it was GREAT while it lasted. During that window of time, however, we got a glimpse of how great it can be when people live together in unity. Even though we have differing political views, we saw that we don't HAVE to live in a world of political sabotage. Even though one of the foundations of our freedom is the freedom of the press, we learned that the media doesn't HAVE to be

antagonistic to do its job well. Even though this nation is a melting pot consisting of a multitude of racial heritages, we learned that when we stand together as one people, we truly ARE indivisible. Though some – maybe most – may have returned to “business as usual,” as God’s people we CANNOT allow ourselves to forget the value of unity. Paul said, *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”* (Ephesians 4:3). King David said, *“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity”* (Psalm 133:1). It’s as simple as this: GOD WANTS US TO GET ALONG WITH ONE ANOTHER. After 9/11 we learned how to put our differences aside and join hands with one another in love, to serve a common cause. Let’s not forget how to do this. Let’s not forget that it is at the heart of our call to follow Christ. In today’s text, Paul said, *“The commandments...are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.”* What we’ve learned about our mission as a people is that we are here to love one another. Love is the fulfillment of the law. We are here to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That’s what God desires for His people. Shortly before His death, Jesus prayed this prayer: *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”* (John 17:20,21,23). In the aftermath of 9/11, I’d like to think that the world saw the true character of the American people. They saw how we can come together in a time of crisis. They saw how we can work together toward a common goal. THE WORLD NEEDS TO SEE THE SAME CHARACTER IN THE CHURCH. When we learn to live together in unity, we’ll make a difference in the world around us. Our mission is to love one another, because LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW.

- 4. Conclusion.** I suppose we can’t be so sure about the future. It troubles me to say that there may be other attacks, other crises that we must face together, BUT regardless of what happens, we can be sure of this: Our strength and our resiliency will be found in our ability to love one another. As a result of this unspeakable tragedy that befell our nation 15 years ago to the day, I trust we have re-learned some things about love. We have re-learned that **people matter more than possessions**. We’ve learned that **sacrificial living is the sign of a true hero**. We’ve learned that **there’s power in unity**. And these principles are summed up in Paul’s statement: *“Love is the fulfillment of the law.”* On September 20, 2001, President Bush spoke these words, “What is expected of us? I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat. I ask you to uphold the values of America...” Today, I ask you to uphold the supreme value that God has called us to – LOVE. Look for opportunities to express it to everyone you meet. Never miss a chance. In the days following 9/11, when our hearts were breaking, we saw firsthand the power of love. We learned what it can do. And now, let our motto be: WE WILL NEVER FORGET.