



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho  
Pastor Neal Buckaloo  
Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011, The Sixth Sunday of Easter  
Reconciliation, to reconcile, to be reconciled

When a women's memorial association in Columbus, Mississippi, decorated the graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers on April 25, 1866, this act of generosity and reconciliation prompted an editorial piece, published by [Horace Greeley's \*New York Tribune\*](#), and a poem by Francis Miles Finch, "The Blue and the Grey," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The practice of strewing flowers on soldiers' graves soon became popular throughout the reunited nation.<sup>1</sup>

Three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, the head of an organization of Union veterans — the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) — established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. Maj. Gen. John A. Logan declared that Decoration Day should be observed on May 30. It is believed that date was chosen because flowers would be in bloom all over the country.

The first large observance was held that year at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The ceremonies centered around the mourning-draped veranda of the Arlington mansion. . . After speeches, children from the Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphan Home and members of the Grand Army of the Republic made their way through the cemetery, strewing flowers on both Union and Confederate graves, reciting prayers and singing hymns.<sup>2</sup>

Decoration Day is still observed and now called Memorial Day, honoring all of the U.S. war death, those who have served their country, and a day to remember family and friends who have died with flowers, prayers and hymns. Tomorrow is Memorial Day, this year falling on the original date of May 30<sup>th</sup>.

What does this background of Decoration Day tell us? The inspiration for the practice of strewing flowers on both the Union and Confederate graves came from the singular act of a group of Southern women organized to honor the Confederate war dead. Yet when they walked the cemetery in Columbus, Mississippi, they were also moved to strew flowers also on the neglected graves of the union soldiers. This healing gesture prompted others to follow suit. So in both North and South the graves of both soldiers were decorated with flowers. Shared sorrow for those who were lost in war brought a sign of reconciliation for an embittered nation.

Reconciliation among peoples who have had deep differences is not a simple matter. Now some 150 years later, there are strong feelings on the part of some regarding the Civil War. If we as human beings struggle with reconciliation, how can it be possible between God and us human creatures?

Think on this. This year you will be one of 7 billion people on planet earth. Planet earth revolves around the sun, which is 100 million miles from the earth and is the center of our solar system. To us on earth the sun is huge. If the sun were a glass jar and the earth a marble, it would take 1 million earths to fill

<sup>1</sup> <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may30.html>; May 24, 2011

<sup>2</sup> <http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/history.asp>; May 24, 2011

the sun. The sun and our earth are not the end of it but are a part of the Milky Way galaxy. Our sun is a middle weight star 26,000 light years<sup>3</sup> from the center of the Milky Way. There are estimated to be over 200 billion stars just in the Milky Way galaxy. And the Milky Way is not the largest galaxy we know of which God has created. And so what are you and I in so vast a creation. We are reminded of words from Psalm 8. <sup>Psalm 8:3-4</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

So who are we in relationship to God, the creator of all that exists? Job questioned God and received this answer in Job, chapter 38.

Job 38: <sup>1</sup>Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about? <sup>3</sup> Pull yourself together, Job! Up on your feet! Stand tall! I have some questions for you, and I want some straight answers. <sup>4</sup> Where were you when I created the earth? Tell me, since you know so much! <sup>5</sup> Who decided on its size? Certainly you'll know that! Who came up with the blueprints and measurements? <sup>6</sup> How was its foundation poured, and who set the cornerstone, <sup>7</sup> While the morning stars sang in chorus and all the angels shouted praise? <sup>18</sup> And do you have any idea how large this earth is? Speak up if you have even the beginning of an answer. <sup>19</sup> "Do you know where Light comes from and where Darkness lives <sup>20</sup> So you can take them by the hand and lead them home when they get lost?

So it is amazing, virtually beyond human comprehension that God would come among us in Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to God's very self.

<sup>Colossians 1: 19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>Romans 5: 6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . <sup>8</sup> . . . God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us . . . <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

<sup>2 Corinthians 5: 17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

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<sup>3</sup> The distance that light travels in a vacuum in one year, approximately 9.46 trillion (9.46 × 10<sup>12</sup>) kilometers or 5.88 trillion (5.88 × 10<sup>12</sup>) miles. Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/light-year#ixzz1NkzHN5Me>; <http://www.answers.com/topic/light-year>