

A happy and blessed Veteran's Day to you all.

Yesterday during our morning worship services we had a very stirring tribute to our veterans. I think having an 18 year old grandson who is undergoing Marine Combat Training at Camp Geiger, NC right now, coupled with the fact that my father-in-law, an 82 year old Marine veteran having fought at Guadal Canal and Okinawa, just moved in with us makes the day more special than ever before. The tribute yesterday made it difficult for me to speak, and reading this story about a military wife's experiences had the same effect. So I send it on to you with prayers that you will be thankful for every blessing enjoyed. Men and women in uniform sacrifice and have sacrificed so that we might enjoy temporal freedom; Jesus sacrificed that we might enjoy eternal freedom.

God bless,

Pastor Les

WIFE'S REQUEST

I was sitting alone in one of those loud, casual steak houses that you find all over the country. You know the type--a bucket of peanuts on every table, shells littering the floor, and a bunch of perky college kids racing around with long neck beers and sizzling platters.

Taking a sip of my iced tea, I studied the crowd over the rim of my glass. My gaze lingered on a group enjoying their meal.

They wore no uniform to identify their branch of service, but they were definitely "military:" clean shaven, cropped haircut, and that "squared away" look that comes with pride.

Smiling sadly, I glanced across my table to the empty seat where my husband usually sat. It had only been a few months since we sat in this very booth, talking about his upcoming deployment to the Middle East. That was when he made me promise to get a sitter for the kids, come back to this restaurant once a month and treat myself to a nice steak. In turn he would treasure the thought of me being here, thinking about him until he returned home

I fingered the little flag pin I constantly wear and wondered where he was at this very moment. Was he safe and warm, was his cold any better, were my letters getting through to him.

As I pondered these thoughts, high pitched female voices from the next booth broke into my thoughts. "I don't know what Bush is thinking about. Invading Iraq. You'd think that man would learn from his old man's mistakes. Good lord. What an idiot! I can't believe he is even in office. You do know, he stole the election."

I cut into my steak and tried to ignore them, as they began an endless tirade running down our president.

I thought about the last night I spent with my husband, as he prepared to deploy. He had just returned from getting his smallpox and anthrax shots.

The image of him standing in our kitchen packing his gas mask still gives me chills.

Once again the women's voices invaded my thoughts.

"It is all about oil, you know. Our soldiers will go in and rape and steal all the oil they can in the name of 'freedom'. Hmmm! I wonder how many innocent people they'll kill without giving it a thought. It's pure greed, you know."

My chest tightened as I stared at my wedding ring. I could still see how handsome my husband looked in his "mess dress" the day he slipped it on my finger. I wondered what he was wearing now. Probably his desert uniform, affectionately dubbed "coffee stains" with a heavy bulletproof vest over it.

"You know, we should just leave Iraq alone. I don't think they are hiding any weapons. In fact, I bet it's all a big act just to increase the president's popularity. That's all it is, padding the military budget at the expense of our social security and education. And, you know what else... We're just asking for another 9-11. I can't say when it happens again that we didn't deserve it."

Their words brought to mind the war protesters I had watched gathering outside our base. Did no one even appreciate the sacrifice of brave men and women, who leave their homes and family to ensure our freedom. Do they even know what "freedom" is.....

I glanced at the table where the young men were sitting, and saw their courageous faces change. They had stopped eating and looked at each other dejectedly, listening to the women talking.

"Well, I, for one, think it's just deplorable to invade Iraq, and I am certainly sick of our tax dollars going to train professional baby-killers we call a military."

Professional baby-killers I thought about what a wonderful father my husband is, and of how long it would be before he would see our children again.

That's it! Indignation rose up inside me. Normally reserved, pride in my husband gave me a brassy boldness I never realized I had. Tonight one voice will answer on behalf of our military, and let her pride in our troops be known.

Sliding out of my booth, I walked around to the adjoining booth and placed my hands flat on their table. Lowering myself to eye level with them, smiling I said, "I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. You see, I'm sitting here trying to enjoy my dinner alone. And, do you know why? Because my husband, whom I love with all my heart, is halfway around the world defending your right to say rotten things about him."

"Yes, you have the right to your opinion, and what you think is none of my business. However, what you say in public is something else, and I will not sit by and listen to you ridicule MY country, MY president, MY husband, and all the other fine American men and women who put their lives on the line, just so you can have the "freedom" to complain. Freedom is an expensive commodity, ladies. Don't let your actions cheapen it."

I must have been louder than I meant to be, because the manager came over to inquire if everything was all right.

"Yes, thank you," I replied.

Then, turning back to the women, I said, "Enjoy the rest of your meal."

As I returned to my booth applause broke out. I was embarrassed for making a scene, and went back to

my half eaten steak. The women picked up their check and scurried away.

After finishing my meal, and while waiting for my check, the manager returned with a huge apple cobbler ala mode

"Compliments of those soldiers," he said. He also smiled and said the ladies tried to pay for my dinner, but that another couple had beaten them to it.

When I asked who, the manager said they had already left, but that the gentleman was a veteran, and wanted to take care of the wife of "one of our boys."

With a lump in my throat, I gratefully turned to the soldiers and thanked them for the cobbler. Grinning from ear to ear, they came over and surrounded the booth.

"We just wanted to thank you, ma'am. You know we can't get into confrontations with civilians, so we appreciate what you did."

As I drove home, for the first time since my husband's deployment, I didn't feel quite so alone. My heart was filled with the warmth of the other diners who stopped by my table, to relate how they, too, were proud of my husband, and would keep him in their prayers.

I knew their flags would fly a little higher the next day.

Perhaps they would look for more tangible ways to show their pride in our country, and the military who protect her.

And maybe, just maybe, the two women who were railing against our country, would pause for a minute to appreciate all the freedom America offers, and the price it pays to maintain its freedom.

As for me, I have learned that one voice CAN make a difference.

Maybe the next time protesters gather outside the gates of the base where I live, I will proudly stand on the opposite side with a sign of my own. It will simply say, "Thank You!"

To those who fought for our Nation: Freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

GOD BLESS AMERICA !

Please pray for God's protection of our troops and HIS wisdom for their commanders.

"Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior."

When you receive this, please stop for a moment and say a prayer for our ground, air and navy personnel in every area of the Middle East, and around the world. And if you think it would bless someone else, feel free to pass it on.

Of all the gifts you could give to anyone, especially those in the US Military, be it Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines or National Guard, prayer is the very best one....Amen.

God Bless America