

## Heroes

He was only 21. He'd been teaching school for 2 years when the war began. He was a little above average height, had fair skin, blue eyes and light hair. He was involved in the Long Island campaign which was just this side of disastrous. We were facing the enemy across the East River not knowing what their next move might be. Fearing surprise more than anything, General Washington wanted someone to sneak over the lines and get information.

Spying is a dirty job and nobody wanted it- so Nate volunteered. There's something about taking on the job that's got to be done that's an American custom of American heroes. He was sent through the enemy lines dressed like a Dutch schoolmaster. He got what he went after and was on his way back when the British found the information on him. He admitted he was a spy and they hanged him the next morning.

He wrote some letters home but the British destroyed them so that "the rebels should not know they have a man who can die so firmly." In his last moment they let him say what he wanted to. He was just a young American who had no time to do anything memorable but die. So he stood there with the noose around his neck and told them his rank- Captain; his name- [Nathan Hale](#); and then added "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

And he showed the world what Americans are made of.

Memorial Day is specifically about remembering those who, like Nathan Hale, willingly gave up their lives for the causes of

freedom and American principles here and around the world. Remembering and honoring them is appropriate and reasonable because, we who are so separated from the ravages of war too easily forget what our freedom cost to achieve and maintain- the blood and very lives of some of our finest young men and women.

Nathan Hale was hung by the British Army in the prime of his life but if his words were a true reflection of the passion and valor in his heart, he had no regrets. He would have done it again and again. It is fitting that we remember him and all those who have paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

It seems it takes another war and fresh bloodshed of our own sons and daughters to jar us into remembering the extremely high cost of freedom. **PRAY**

### **Nathan Hale- American hero:**

1 **Available/willing**- volunteered

2 **Courageous**- even with a noose around his neck

3 **Ultimate sacrifice**- not only willing to die. He died.

\*\*\*\*\*

Israel, in the time of the Judges, had once again disobeyed God. It must have been quite severe and widespread because God had removed His hand of protection and blessing from the Israelites and allowed their enemies the Midianites and others to harass, invade, pillage and destroy their people, land and crops. But, it was now time for God to raise up a deliverer, a hero, for His

people. Who would it be? Would he be tall, strong and handsome, a seasoned warrior and experienced leader?

**11** The Angel of the LORD came, and He sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the wine vat in order to hide it from the Midianites. <sup>12</sup> Then the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said: “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.” <sup>13</sup>

Gideon said to Him, “Please Sir, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about? They said, ‘Hasn’t the LORD brought us out of Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.” <sup>14</sup> The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in

the strength you have and deliver Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not sending you?” <sup>15</sup> He said to Him, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.” <sup>16</sup>

“But I will be with you,” the LORD said to him. “You will strike Midian down [as if it were] one man.” <sup>17</sup> Then he said to Him, “If I have found favor in Your sight, give me a sign that You are speaking with me. <sup>18</sup> Please do not leave this place until I return to You. Let me bring my gift and set it before You.” And He

said, “I will stay until you return.” <sup>19</sup> So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from a half bushel of flour. He placed the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought them out and offered them to Him under the oak. <sup>20</sup>

The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat with the unleavened bread, put it on this stone, and pour the broth [on it].” And he did so. <sup>21</sup> The Angel of the LORD extended the tip of the staff that was in His hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire came up from the rock and consumed the

meat and the unleavened bread. Then the Angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. <sup>22</sup> When Gideon realized that He was the Angel of the LORD, he said, “Oh no, Lord GOD! I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face!” <sup>23</sup> But the LORD said to him, “Peace to you. Don’t be afraid, for you will not die.” <sup>24</sup> So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it Yahweh Shalom. It is in Ophrah of the Abiezrites until today. **J**udges 6:11-24 (HCSB)

It strikes me interesting here as well as other passages of scripture where it says an angel appeared and/or spoke, then it says the Lord spoke. Was the angel speaking the words of God as His messenger or could the Angel/Lord’s appearing and speaking be a pre-incarnation visit to earth of Jesus Christ the Son?

I can visualize clearly Gideon’s expression and reaction when the angel said “the Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” There must have been a grand pause as Gideon searched behind himself for someone else. “You talkin’ to me?” Considering all observable facts about Gideon, he showed no signs of leadership potential other than a little creativity by threshing wheat in a wine press. He doesn’t even seem to show any leadership around the family farm. As far as we know, he was threshing wheat by himself.

It seems to be quite a consistent pattern of God to speak to, to call to special tasks and leadership quite ordinary human beings- Moses the stammering, stuttering reluctant leader, David, the musician, shepherd boy, giant slayer king, a bunch of uneducated fishermen turned the world upside down with the message of the resurrection, and Gideon the fearful farmer.....

Gideon's (mighty warrior) complaints/ excuses-

Living/working in great fear of his and Israel's enemies

Doubted God- Where are the miracles?

My family is the weakest in Manasseh

I am the youngest in my father's house

Give me a sign (3)

God spoke/commanded- tear down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole and build an altar to sacrifice for God. The altar to Baal and the Asherah pole were elements of idolatry that Israel had invited into their homes and culture. This was why God was judging them in the first place. Gideon obeyed God but he did it at night because he was afraid. The men of the city found out and were about to kill him but his dad Joash spoke up, apparently with at least a remnant of faith in Jehova God, and defended his son by making the case "let Baal plead his own case."

Of course you know the rest of the story. Gideon assembled a massive army of 32,000 troops to attack the federation of nations that had come together to attack Israel. But the army was too large. They would have taken the credit for victory instead of giving God the glory, so God whittled the army down to 300 men.

Gideon, still fearful, spied on the Midianite army and discovered that God had already put fear into their hearts. That same night Gideon return to the camp of his 300 men. He instructed them to

surround the enemy camp with a trumpet in one hand, and a torch concealed by a pitcher in the other. At a signal they all blew their trumpets, broke the pitchers exposing the torches, and then shouted,

“The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” Judges 7:20 (HCSB)

This put the enemy in complete confusion and derision. Many began to kill each other while others began to flee. Gideon’s men pursued them experiencing a great victory. He continued to pursue Israel’s enemies until peace was restored and idolatry removed from the land.

<sup>22</sup> Then the Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you as well as your sons and your grandsons, for you delivered us from the power of Midian.” <sup>23</sup> But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you.” Judges 8:22-23 (HCSB)

## **Gideon the hero?**

**1 Believed God** Even though most of the nation had turned from God and he in his life time hadn’t seen any of the evidences of God’s presence, protection, and power that he’d heard about, he still believed. He had some questions, but he believed.

**2 Obeyed God** He was commanded him to tear down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole and

build an altar to God. He obeyed. He did it at night because he was afraid, but he obeyed. Had Gideon not obeyed God in this relatively lesser thing, would he have been able to lead Israel to defeat the Midianites?

### **3 Spirit of God was on him**

**34** The Spirit of the LORD enveloped Gideon Judges **6:34** (HCSB)

**4 Worshipped God**- after spying on the Midianite camp and hearing the fear of their soldiers. They had even already heard of the “sword of Gideon” who had never fought a battle in his life.

**5 Was Humble**- refused to take credit for victory and refused to rule over Israel even when asked. I will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.

Gideon the fearful, insecure, whiney, son of a farmer became an Israelite super-hero who ultimately delivered Israel from all her enemies, to reject the idolatry of their neighbors, and return to a right relationship with Jehova God.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Great Christian heroes:** (you and me)

**1 Available/willing**- not necessarily extraordinarily talented or gifted, just available. Nathan Hale and Gideon may have been somewhat reluctant and even fearful but they were still willing.

**8** Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Who should I send? Who will go for Us? I said: Here I am. Send me. **Isaiah 6:8** (HCSB)

He didn't know how, when or where, but he was available and willing, Are you? Are you available to God?

**2 Obey God-** Would Gideon had led the Israelites to victory against their enemies had he not torn down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole, and built the altar Jehova God? I don't think so. In fact I am quite sure of it. I don't think any of us take seriously enough how important it is to obey God even in the "little" things.

**15** "If you love Me, you will keep<sup>[9]</sup> My commandments. **John 14:15** (HCSB)

**3 Sacrifice-** time, money, energy, talent, even life. Preferably some of each. King David said-

**I** will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost [me] nothing." **2Sam 24:24** (HCSB)

Nothing heroic will ever take place until some form of sacrifice is being offered. Heroism is costly.

**4 Humble-**Christian heroes are reluctant to take authority, credit, or glory. They deflect it and pass it on or should I say pass it up. Nathan Hale just loved his country. Gideon wasn't seeking a position of fame and power. He was just obeying God. **1 Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves.