

## A Reunion Forever

Dr. Paul Kim

National Chaplain, KWVA

Marsh Post 442 Chaplain, Cambridge, MA

A reunion is a joyful time, where after a period of separation, family, friends, and classmates, can come together again. We're reminded of how important relationships are through our family reunions, class reunions, and veterans reunions. Truly there is no place like home. When soldiers go on furlough, they make their way home because that's what they've been longing for—to see their loved ones again. On the other side, families await their coming and when they return home safely, they're often met with joyful tears. The heartwarming scene of a soldier coming home from a long period of active duty overseas never gets old.

In August 2019, I was invited by my Army chaplain friend, Sam Birky (Col. Ret), to his 50<sup>th</sup> UDT/SEALS Reunion in San Diego. Prior to joining the Army chaplaincy, Sam was a former Navy SEAL for five years and served two tours in Vietnam. Known as "Top Gun," he hails from a family of warriors. His 20-year-old younger brother, FN3 Harold Birky, also a SEAL, lost his life on January 30, 1970 in Vietnam. Recently, when I visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I saw his name etched onto the black granite stone of the memorial wall. I made a rubbing of his name to honor him. Sam has expressed to me the heart-wrenching pain of missing his brother, who gave his life as a sacrifice in service of his nation. But Sam finds comfort in the hope of a heavenly reunion. Harold was a faithful and dedicated Christian like his older brother. As they're both heavenly citizens, they will one day be reunited, to be joint heirs with Christ. Sam uses this hope in the resurrection to witness to fellow SEALs.

The Bible tells a story of a family reunion through the life of Joseph, who was sold as a slave to Egypt at the age of 17. His older brothers, offended by Joseph's dreams of lording over them, plotted together to permanently remove him from their lives. They were jealous that their father, Jacob, loved this younger son the most. It was a tragic family story of loss and betrayal—until thirteen years later, when an unexpected reunion took place. The brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, as their own land was in a state of drought. Unbeknownst to them, they had to beg Joseph, who had become prime minister of Egypt. The Bible says, "Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them..." (Genesis 42:8-9). When Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, this reunion resulted in forgiveness. As Joseph confessed: "...I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:4-5). What a spiritual man Joseph was in being able to recognize that the injustice of what his brothers did to him was part of God's plan to save his family and create a people belonging to Him. The powerful reconciliation brought upon by Joseph's forgiveness is but a shadow of what Jesus did for us sinners. While on the cross, Jesus prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The Lord Jesus is willing and able to forgive our sins when we trust in Him as our personal Lord and Savior. The Holy One desires to be reconciled with sinners, so that He can enjoy us forever, in heavenly reunion.

Ultimately, God is sovereign and He controls human history. As the one who created the heavens and the earth, He rules with power and authority; with divine wisdom He establishes and brings down

empires. According to His Word—and His promises never fail—He shall return to this earth to restore His kingdom, to have an eternal reunion with His children of faith. The Bible says two angels assured the disciples of the promise of Christ’s return: “...This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). While Jesus was present on earth, He taught His disciples that there will be a heavenly reunion of His Church, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3).

In May 2023, it will be the 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion of my graduating class at the University of Hawaii, Hilo. While it’s important to mark such occasions, all of our earthly reunions are temporary. But the heavenly reunion we have in Christ is forever. What a day it shall be to celebrate the eternal King when He returns for His bride, the Church. On that day, we shall enjoy the wedding feast, and be with Him in glory forever.

It is never too late and you’re never too old to receive the Lord Jesus. The Bible says, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God” (John 1:12). Now is the time to pray to God, to repent of your sin of rebellion and rejection against Him, and to ask for His forgiveness. By becoming a child of God, you are promised a reunion with Him that is eternal. The Lord Jesus is waiting for you to make your decision NOW!

