

For the Veterans who served us, and for the families who stood by them...Thanks be to God.
Amen.

Last year Shaun Rogers delivered a beautiful homily. He looked good in his dress blues.. So I thought I would get dressed up in my dress uniform today. Well it seems that when you don't wear those for a while, they shrink? Did you know that? Who knew?

Veterans Day is a national holiday to honor those who have answered the call to serve.

Originally, November 11th was called Armistice Day, and was set aside to mark the end of the Great War, the First World War, the war that was to end all war.

But it wasn't the war to end all wars, as we know. November 11 was Armistice Day until 1954 when, by Act of Congress, the name was changed to Veterans Day.

To me, Veterans give the most. Now, it may not be money or talents.. but they give their future and quite possibly their lives to their country! They willingly go to an 8 week basic training in some far off place. With other likeminded people.. There they encounter these strange people with strange hats yelling at them. These Drill instructors they yell all the time, they call you names.. They talk about duty, honor, and attention to detail! The whole time your schedule is made for you, everything is planned, there is not a lot of down time, and contact with family and friends is minimal. There is mail, and the occasional phone call. I must admit that my first night in basic training, lying there in the dark, I felt like I may have made a mistake. I remember asking for God to help me get through this madness. And I did manage to graduate Basic Training. What an accomplishment. 65 individuals walked into that training barracks and 50

lean, mean, hard chargers marched out. Sadly 15 men, washed out of our flight and started their training over.. I hope they made it!

After these 8 weeks you go off to your technical training, it can be 6 weeks to a year long depending on the job you are going to fill. My tech school was 3 months long and taught at Sheppard Air Force base in Wichita Falls Texas.

Life was a bit more relaxed in Tech school. The focus changed to learning my job. So in three month I learned all about electronics, gas, diesel, and turbine engines. About air compressors, air conditioners, hydraulics.. I slowly started to realize I may have been in over my head.. Again I asked **God**.. Man, please don't let me fail and wash out...

I graduated.. Not top of my class, but I passed!

So the military has this think called a "Dream Sheet" and the idea is that you put down where you would like to be stationed. They would consider your input when matching you up for an assignment... So I put down all these really cool places in Europe.. Germany, Italy, Greece, England. This was going to be swell!!!!

I received my orders...Japan? Umm that wasn't on my dream sheet? How did this happen? I quickly learned that the needs of the Air Force come first. So off I went to the small island of Okinawa Japan.. I was there for 24 months. I worked on the flight line supporting AWACS and RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft. Life was good, 22 years old.. In the south pacific, making \$350.00 every two weeks! Life was good indeed. Met a lot of great people... I made friendships

for a lifetime. There was scuba diving, paintball, oh and there were weeklong exercises called ORI's We played scenarios like Chemical bombs had fallen on the island and we had to do 12 hours shift in full MOPP gear. These are charcoal lined suits that you wear to protect yourself from bio/chemical weapons.. You wear a cumbersome mask and breath through a filter.. Now think of that, in 100 degree weather, with 100 percent humidity.. Life was stinky and sweaty
Soon my two years were up in Japan, they asked me to stay, but I wanted to move on to another assignment.. Plus the island was small.. So once again on my dream sheet I entered: cool places in Europe.. Germany, Italy, Greece, England. This time would be different right??

New Jersey? What is going on here? So off I went to New Jersey.. Two year assignment with the 621st Air Mobility squadron.. I was assigned as a generator mechanic to a mobile unit.. The ALCE.. Airlift Control Element. We would go into austere locations and set up airfield operations and bring in support personnel, maintainers, whatever Uncle Sam wanted to be deployed into a theater.

So while with the 621st, I averaged 190-210 days deployed a year. That's a lot. To Africa for humanitarian missions, to Central and South America for Drug interdiction missions, all over the Middle East, Russia, Uzbekistan... I am thankful, that I was a single guy.. Our squadron had a very high divorce rate.. it was sad to see lives ripped apart.. Another sacrifice by a veteran and his family. Wasn't all bad.. Got see a lot of cool things and do a lot of cool things,.. There were hairy moments where I called upon **Gods** help to keep us safe, and he did!

I got out of the military in August 1998. I wanted to go to school. University of Maryland here I come. After all the military schools I went to and all the stress that they put you under, I found college to be kind of easy. The instructors we laid back and really did not care about how you did. A little different than the military instructors for sure.. Any way some of my military buddies were going to be visiting for St. Patrick's Day and we decided we needed to do to an Irish pub, and drink pints, and talk about friends, deployments, and the good old days. So the day came and we went to Sally o' Briens Irish pub.. We were so busy talking as I led the way into the pub I totally ran over a young lady and scrambled to catch her before she hit the floor. I caught her in my arms.. And it was like a bolt of lightning penetrated my heart! Holy Smokes!! This was the first time I laid my eyes on my future wife, she did not know it yet though.

Well some of the best plans don't work out.. I was busy talking with this lovely lady and one of my friends got into an argument with one of her friends and they left... walking away off into the darkness... I was furious with my friend David.

So I thought that was that.. But you see, God had a plan.. I know that now! A couple months later I was taking a math class... and I really HATE math!! But I was sitting in the class waiting for it to start and in walked my mystery girl.. I perked up and she looked over at me... She gave me some serious stink eye!! Wow!! Well, I thought.. I have 9 weeks to change her mind!! I tried to be funny in class and catch her eye. I just needed to ask her out... what a chicken I was. So on the last day of class, as I was taking my final exam and I told myself.. "Hurry up and finish your

test and then wait for her after class....“ So as I finished the exam and turned it in I scanned the room and discovered my mystery lady had left already..... Setback!

That same day was my birthday.. So a couple of buddies threw me a party and got me a gift.. I will never forget it.. they got me a comb! Nice friends huh? Well they got a small cake and told me to make a wish.. at that moment I asked **God** for help... Please help me with this Mystery girl! So I got to work the following Monday and one of my coworkers said a pretty girl had stopped by and left a card... Could it be? No? really? I took it and ran into my office... my heart was pounding.. my hands sweating as I ripped at the envelop!! It was from her! She wished me a happy birthday and left me her number...

I know it sounds silly, but I do believe God answered my wish.. We started Dating and have been together ever since.

In November of 2001 my father died of Cancer. Hardest time of my life. So hard that Kelly and I almost broke up. We were barely married 6 months... I was heartbroken, we all were.. My Dad dead at 55? He was supposed to be there to take his grandkids fishing, spend time with them, do fun things with them.. Why would this happen? I felt like God let me down..

Over the years the pain has lessened, I still miss him. Especially on Christmas, holidays, and family birthdays.. I wept when my son was born. Tears of joy for my son! And tear of sadness for my daddy! He would never hold him, or watch him play baseball.. The same with Julia..

I am so happy to have been blessed with great children.. They truly are a blessing from God..

Most days 😊

So when we moved to Shippensburg in 2008. We looked for a spiritual home.. I say we, but I really mean Kelly. Kelly has always been a godly woman. I was the proverbial Chreaster! I would go to church on Christmas eve and Easter. However a slow transformation was happening... I started going to church with her.. At first we were at the Church of the Nazarene. A neighbor told us about it and Paster Todd was cool! He preached about Jesus and the history of what the times were like and he always found a way on including Mr. T and the A-Team into his sermons... Amazing...

Then one year we came here to St. Andrews. Tim and Irene Hawkins told Kelly about this great church.. I thought.. Thanks Tim and Irene! What about Mr. T and the A-team? All joking aside, it was an amazing first couple of visits to St. Andrews... Me being introverted, I always vetoed Kelly's request to go to the PLC.. We were always curious why most of the congregation left the church via this other door? Where were they going? So on the 3rd visit Kelly said we are going! PERIOD.. So we went. Who was I to argue... Anyway I got a cup of coffee and sat in the corner. A distinguished man caught my eye.. he turned and started to walk right to me.. "Hi there, welcome to St. Andrews!!" He said, as he shook my hand. That's the first time I met Harold Herman.. What an impression he left on me. That one act made me want to come back. We did.. We found a new spiritual home.. Did you catch that? **WE!**

My dad used to say “with age comes wisdom.” Now that I am older I could not agree more with that statement.

I slowly started to realize that I had always asked God for help. Help me with this or that. Please don't let us be mortared, keep us safe, etc.. etc.. I looked at the blessing in my life. I have an amazing wife, I have wonderful children, I have a good job that I love.. I have a wonderful church family.. I was always asking for something from God.. and boy had he provided.. He provided me with so much.. But what had I done for him? What had I ever given to God? This relationship that I had with God was one way.. He was good enough to ask for help.. But I did not give anything back to him!

I started to help out around here. I worked with Mike Stitt and others on the Kneeler project. The kneelers in the pews were reupholstered. We had a great time and I got to know more people in the Church. There were a lot of us that helped out with that project. I went on to join the vestry and slowly dedicate more of my time to St. Andrews.

On the 9th of February 2014, I was confirmed by Bishop Baxter. What a nice man he is, such an eloquent speaker. I was extremely nervous. As I knelt before him I was shaking.. What was going on with me? He looked me in the eyes and Said, “Mike, God needs you! Then he laid his hands on my head and I felt a shock. It was a profound moment of my life. I started to tear up.. Tears streamed down my face? I still remember that powerful moment when that happened.. Like it was yesterday. Amazing..

That night I was sitting thinking about the day's events... and I opened up the book of common prayer I received from Mother Barbara and Mother Betsy.. I opened it to the page that Bishop Baxter had signed confirming me.. He put "Romans 8:28" well I was not familiar with that verse.. so looking it up this is what it says:

AND WE KNOW THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM,
WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED TO HIS PURPOSE

I was blown away.. God had been working for my good.. I realized that I owed him everything! I loved God.. I never affirmed that to him. but he knew.. He has done so much for me.. I finally get it, I finally understand.. He stuck with me through thick and thin. Through all those years of me saying me, me, me, me... It was that moment that the proverbial light bulb came on.

I needed to do the same. I need to give back to God. I need to help people find God, I need to help get people reacquainted with God. I need to do more! A fire had started to burn inside me. .

I give of my time, my talents, and my treasure and you know what? It feels amazing! All the work I do with St. Andrews is my way of saying to God "Thank you!" Thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed upon me. When mother Barbara told me that there were parishioners that decided to come visit St. Andrews because of the Website I built, I was

gleeful! I was responsible for someone coming into this church and starting or renewing a relationship with God.

So here I am standing before you.. A changed man.. A godly man.. I am not perfect.. I still slip up. But I love God.. And I love my family.. And I love you. Please Give to God your Time, Talents and Treasure! You will glad you did!

Amen!