A Beautiful Picture

*John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

One of the most famous photographs coming out of World War II was taken by Joe Rosenthal on February 23, 1945. The picture shows six U.S. Marines placing our flag on the top of Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi. The photograph won the Pulitzer Prize for photography, was used in the 7th War Loan Drive, graced the covers of countless newspapers and magazines, and served as inspiration in the creation of the Marine Corp Memorial at Arlington Cemetery in Virginia.   
  
That's a lot of mileage for a single photograph.  
  
Recently, I saw another photograph. In many ways it differs from Rosenthal's picture. This photo was taken in a time of peace and not of war. The photo will not raise a ton of money, nor will it ever appear on any magazine covers. The greatest difference is this: while Rosenthal's photo shows men putting up the flag, this picture shows men taking it down.  
  
Still, there is a moving similarity between the pictures. Let me describe the photo for you.  
  
The picture, taken by Josh Edelson, shows some California firefighters who had been assigned the job of protecting 50 homes from a wildfire. In the background you can see the flames coming over the top of a hill. What you can't see are the propane tanks that were blowing up and the power lines which were falling. Amazingly, the firefighters are not looking at the fire; their eyes are fixed upon an American flag, which had been left flying from a home's second-floor balcony.  
  
The photographer said the firefighters spotted "Old Glory," spoke together for a second, and then climbed up to remove the flag to a place of safety.  
  
So there you have it: two immensely moving photos of men with flags. With many differences, these pictures move us because of something they have in common: they both recognize that some things are important; some things are worth our time, and some things are worth dying for.  
  
Similarly, when the Lord looks at us, I think He feels the same way. Read through Scripture and you will see that He thinks we are important, worthy of His time and, yes, even worth dying for.  
  
Now it's true there were no photographs taken at the Bethlehem stable or the site of Jesus' crucifixion at Jerusalem. Even so, the Gospel paints a beautiful picture showing God's commitment to rescuing His lost and condemned children.  
  
And although no cameramen were posted outside the Savior's borrowed grave, the events of Resurrection Sunday have changed this sinful world. More importantly, the resurrection of the Redeemer says His work has been completed and for those who are brought to faith, there is forgiveness and life eternal.  
  
All of which makes for a most beautiful picture, indeed.  
  
**THE PRAYER**: Dear Lord Jesus, those who stood at the foot of Your cross were horrified by the injustice of the occasion. There is no doubt it was a terrible event. Still, we who have seen You in the word-pictures of the Gospels, rejoice in Your sacrifice which forgives and saves. May others join us in seeing Your love. In Your Name I ask it. Amen.