

Things to Remember (Remembrance Sunday)

Deuteronomy 8; 2 Peter 1:3-15

At a commuter train station a policeman noticed a woman driver with her head bowed over the steering wheel in obvious discomfort. The officer asked, "Is there anything wrong?"

Half crying and half laughing, she said, "For ten years I have been driving my husband to this station every morning to catch this train. **THIS MORNING I FORGOT HIM!**"

There's a story about a city fellow who was visiting relatives on a farm. The farmer gave a whistle and his dog herded the cattle into the corral, and then latched the gate with her paw. "Wow, that's some dog. What's her name?"

The forgetful farmer thought a minute, then asked, "What do you call that red flower that smells good and has thorns on the stem?"

"A rose?"

"That's it!" The farmer turned to his wife. "Hey Rose, what do we call this dog?"

There are times when we can be quite forgetful. Been there, done that, haven't you? **What is your worst occurrence of forgetfulness?** Please turn to someone near you and share an experience where your memory failed you.

We know we all can be quite forgetful. Here is another story to boost our egos. One day after Albert Einstein had moved to his home at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, the telephone rang in the office of the Dean of the Princeton Graduate School. The voice at the other end inquired: "May I speak with Dr. Einstein, please?"

Advised that he was not in, the voice continued: "Perhaps then you will tell me where Dr. Einstein lives." The secretary replied that she could not do this, since Dr. Einstein wished to have his privacy respected.

The voice on the telephone dropped to a near whisper: "Please do not tell anybody, but I am Dr. Einstein. I am on my way home, and have forgotten where my house is!" It's healthy that as mature people we can laugh at ourselves

Memory is a gift. In God's infinite wisdom, we were created with five senses: We have eyes to see the beautiful creation. Ears to listen, learn and comprehend. A nose to smell the beautiful flowers and wonderful fragrances. Taste buds to marvel on the finer things of life. And touch to express care, appreciation and comfort. But maybe greater than the 5 senses, God gave us the important gift of memory. Our senses make life so much more enjoyable, but what good are they if we can't remember them?

Peter passionately reminds us to **remember what we know.** He writes, "I will always be ready to remind you of these instructions, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth that is present with you"

Peter tells God's truth and our followership is so important, that we need to remember what we know about faith. Why? It's easy to get side-tracked. We need constant reinforcement and reminding of the truth. We are constantly bombarded with unhelpful philosophies, temptations everywhere we turn, and our own fears and desires. The Christian life is one of swimming against the tide. Memory is critical.

So remember what we know. It's a constant message to the Israelites, said in a variety of ways throughout the Bible. What's the point of all the Bible Study, Sunday School, worship, and seminars, if we don't remember what we know?

Deuteronomy 8 was placed in the Bible to remind us of Israel's history, the reasons why they fell. It's to serve as a warning for our own Christian life. Jesus said, "Remember the Lord your God! Do not let the 'deceitfulness of wealth' choke your life so as to forget the Lord. (Mt 13:22; Dt 6:20-23)

It's so easy to forget who we are & what we are called to be - a chosen people, a royal priest

hood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that we may declare the praises of Jesus who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light. (I Peter 2:9) Christians are called to a higher standard of relationships. That's why we need continual reminders to live what we know. To not give into any temptation.

When Jack Nicklaus was the undisputed world number 1 in golf he was asked how he kept at the top. His answer was startling. At the end of every golf season he went back to his first coach who taught him **the basics** of the game all over again. Every season he went back and learnt the basic building blocks of a good golf swing. There wasn't anything new to learn, just to be reminded again of the basics. We need to do the same. We know retention is a problem.

Peter tells us a second time, verse 13, "I think it is right to refresh, stir up, your memory." A major part of remembering what we know is **Remembering Jesus**. Without Jesus we just have a religion. Without Jesus we just have a nice do gooder social club. The whole Bible was given to us to point us to Jesus, God's only begotten Son. Because of Jesus we can be the Creator's Sons and Daughters.

Years ago in London, there was a Christian restaurant owner named Emil Mettler, who was a close friend of Albert Schweitzer. Mettler would never allow a Christian worker to pay for a meal in his restaurant. One day he opened his cash register and a British Secretary was astonished to see among the bills and coins a six-inch nail. "What was it doing there?"

Mettler explained, "I keep this nail with my money to remind me of the price that Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe Him in return." We were given the gift of memory to remember Jesus' birth, life, his example, his death, burial and resurrection. Remember that He is with God, interceding on our behalf!

We are also given the gift of memory to help us **remember to hope!** Remember, Jesus is alive... today!! The fact that He is risen from the dead makes all the difference in our

lives. Paul says (1 Cor 15) that if Christ had not risen from the dead, our faith would be in vain and we would still be in our sins. We reach into the past to find assurances that our future will not be destroyed by the present.

This fact, more than any other, distinguishes Christianity from all other religions of the world. Christians are the only people who can claim that their Savior is alive today. Christ rising from the dead and being alive today validates that Jesus is who He claimed to be. He makes life worth living. It is only through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, that we can be assured of hope now and a future eternal life. This world really needs the hope that can only come from God.

The words of the familiar Gaither song says it well: "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know, He holds the future. Life is worth the living just because He lives."

Next, we are assured that there is no memory of some things. When we repent, are saved and ask Jesus to forgive us of our sins, the Bible says our sins are blotted out and forgotten, never to be remembered. So the gift of memory and the habit of remembering, helps us: **Remember we are forgiven**. Peter wrote, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." (1 Pt 3:18)

Then being forgiven means **we remember to forgive**. There are memories we need to remember to forget. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never even heard of the incident.

"Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

We need to be like "The Holy Spirit who testifies to us...He says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, I will write them on their minds....Their sins and lawless acts, I will remember no more." (Heb 10:15-17)

In our scripture from Peter, he says a third time, “And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” The consequences of not remembering are so devastating that Peter picks up this important theme from the O. T.

Another important thing to remember is our mission. **Remember the mission.** It’s hard to believe this story is true, but it illustrates the point – remember the mission. In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler Shah Jahan died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife’s casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it. But several years into the venture, the Shah’s grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project.

One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a wooden box, and he had some workers throw it out. It was months before he realized that his wife’s casket had been destroyed. The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction. They built the Taj Mahal, but they forgot the reason for the building. They forgot what their mission truly was! But this is not uncommon!

We must remember to, **Keep The Main Thing The Main Thing.** In every area of life we can get so caught up in all kinds of things, many of them good, but they lead us away from our mission, purpose, and vision. Then we get side tracked and conflict erupts. This is true in every area of life - family, work, government and church. The mission gets lost in the dynamics of selfishness, idolatry, power, prestige, arguments, and sin. Too often we prefer being right rather than effective.

Samuel Johnson said, “The true art of memory is the art of attention.” It’s too tempting to put God on the shelf while we attend to more urgent business, like growing churches, or preaching hope, or fighting injustice. Don’t get distracted. Let’s keep our eyes on the prize to finish our

race. Keep our eyes on Jesus so our lives will be built securely in the power of Christ!

An important act of memory is, **Remember people.** Have you ever forgotten someone’s name? How embarrassing it is when you run into someone you haven’t seen in ages and you know their face, but you can’t think of their name. **WHAT DO YOU DO?** Sometimes it’s terribly embarrassing, because you know them very well but the name just wouldn’t come to you. So you apologize and ask their name.

But if it’s in the middle of a prayer during a pastoral call, what do you do? There has been a time or two that as I prayed for the person’s needs, I could not recall their name. I just blanked out. It’s not like trying to get the right name for your children, because you can go down that short list – Ben, Crystal, Emily.

God gave us the gift of memory to remember people, to reflect on their lives, to learn from them, and to honor them. When we think about it, the Bible is full of characters we still talk about today. We reflect on how they matured & grew in wisdom in the faith as Peter describes. Their lives are examples, testimonies of turning and living in God’s direction. They help us remember Jesus’ grace and truth. Or people like Israel have forgotten their Redeemer, Savior and Rescuer from slavery. It’s why we have the two contrasting scriptures to reflect on today.

Today we remember people we personally knew. We reflect on their lives, their examples, and their love. We honor their testimonies. It’s a way to express our love and respect for them. Today is a way of sharpening our own memories. And I think our ceremony today is partly our own desire to be remembered. So remembering people is what we do.

Someone said, “Say goodbye to me, but not to the thought of me.” Remember your loved ones who have gone before you. Remember and appreciate them. Remember and rejoice in their good. Remember and praise God for them. Say goodbye to me, but not to the thought of me. We remember people.