

# The Way of Remembrance

## 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

### Introduction

Did you know that ...

- The average attention span for an adult in America is about 20 minutes. As you might suspect that number has decreased in the last decade or so. We used to have average attention spans of 32 minutes. That 12-minute decrease is attributed to our use of technology and our fast-paced lifestyles.
- An adult human's short-term memory can hold seven pieces of information at the same time, but we can only hold those for about 20 seconds.
- Alcohol, not age, is the number one factor in why people struggle to create new long-term memories. Studies show that heavy alcohol use can also lead to permanent memory loss or dementia.
- About 60% of an older adult's memories are events that happened when the person was between the ages of 15-25.
- Left-handed people tend to have better memories than right-handed people.

Memory is a funny thing, isn't it?

- I can remember Karen's home phone number back when we were dating but have no idea what the number was in any of the houses we lived in once we got married.
- I'm very good at remembering the names of people I meet but I usually forget to pick up my cell phone when I leave the office every day and have to go back to get it.
- I remember that Newton's first law of motion says: "An object at rest will remain at rest and an object in motion will remain in motion and in a straight line unless acted on by an outside force." I don't remember if I was supposed to cut that board 12 3/8 inches or 12 5/8 inches.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher in the 1800s, told people that bad memories had distinct advantages. For example:

The advantage of a bad memory is that one enjoys several times the same good things for the first time. (Friedrich Nietzsche)

But you and I both know that unless we are prompted to remember something we are prone to forget – even the most important things.

- Men ... how many years have you been married? Never mind. Don't answer that.

As you know our Lenten theme this year is:

THE WAY

And you know, we are building these sermons around a single verse of Scripture:

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Today we are focused on how THE WAY OF JESUS is the WAY OF REMEMBRANCE. Specifically in today's text from 1 Corinthians we are asked to remember the truths behind an event we know as the Lord's Supper or the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Today is Maundy Thursday. On this day almost 2,000 years ago, our Lord Jesus and His 12 disciples met together in an upstairs room to share in their last Passover meal before Jesus would be crucified.

- On that night Jesus broke the news that one of these trusted friends would break rank and betray Him. That news caused quite a stir, with everyone scrambling to profess their allegiance.

The Passover meal was itself a meal of remembrance. Several thousand years before Jesus and the 12 ate the meal we remember tonight, their ancestors ate the first Passover meal just hours before God set them free from bondage in Egypt. By the command of God and religious tradition that meal was repeated every year on the anniversary of their release. Why? So they would always remember what God had done for them.

Each part of that meal held special significance. The lamb. The bitter herbs. The salt water. Even the bread and wine.

- But on this night in that upper room Jesus took two of those items and gave them a new significance. That's what you hear at each communion service when I offer the Words of Institution

On the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread. He gave thanks and broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat. This is my Body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me."

When the meal was finished, He took the cup. He again gave thanks and He gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this for the remembrance of Me."

For our purposes tonight the key part is the word "remembrance."

The WAY OF JESUS is a WAY OF REMEMBRANCE. What are we to remember?

## **#1: REMEMBER THE REASON JESUS CAME**

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. And so, they built the Taj Mahal, but they forgot the reason for the building. They didn't remember.

Verse 26 tells us:

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

At all the Passover meals that have ever been held since the release from Egypt, there is always a question ... usually asked by the youngest person present:

And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' (Exodus 12:26)

The Scriptural response is clear:

It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:27)

We don't have that question built into our Holy Communion liturgy. Maybe we should! Why do we worship on this Maundy Thursday every year? Why do we serve Holy Communion at every worship service throughout the year? It's so you don't forget what Jesus has done!

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

It is an historical event – verified through non-biblical sources – just as certainly as we can document the day Abraham Lincoln was assassinated or the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. But more than that, it is a theological event unlike anything that happens in any other religion.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

In every other religion, people make sacrifices to their gods. In our religion, our God makes an incredible sacrifice for us. A part of our liturgy says it well:

In the mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and for His sake God forgives you all your sins.

Jesus died for you. You need to remember that!

## #2: REMEMBER THE RESULTS OF HIS COMING

Once when little Tommy visited his grandparents, his grandpa gave him his first slingshot. Tommy loved it, and he ran all around the farmyard practicing his aim. Soon he noticed his grandmother's pet duck. On an impulse, he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck was killed.

Of course, Tommy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the woodpile only to look up and see his sister Sally had watched the thing. She had seen it, but she said nothing.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, would you help me with the dishes?" But Sally said, "Well, Tommy told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Tommy?" And then Sally whispered to Tommy, "Remember the duck!" So Tommy did the dishes.

Later that afternoon Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing with him. Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to stay and help me make supper." But Sally smiled and said, "It's OK Grandma. That's all taken care of. Tommy wants to make supper." Again, she whispered, "Remember the duck." So Tommy stayed while Sally went fishing with her grandpa.

After several days of doing both his chores and Sally's, finally Tommy couldn't stand it anymore. With tears in his eyes, he confessed to his grandmother that he had killed her pet duck.

"I know, Tommy," Grandma said as she gave a hug. "I was standing at the kitchen window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you."

The Scriptures tell us that when the forgiveness of God is poured onto our lives we are 100% set from the guilt of our sins.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:34, 36)

That's worth remembering! We are free!

But you say "Pastor I know that." Do you?

- Are you carrying around any guilt about something in your past?
- Is there a wrong you won't forgive someone else, even though God has forgiven you for the wrongs you've done against Him?
- Is there an ongoing sin you haven't confessed? Maybe a "secret sin" you hope God hasn't seen?

Whatever there may be, Jesus Christ died for you ... for that!

Why do we do this? So that you will remember. Each time when you come forward, you need to remember what Jesus has done for you. This is a powerful moment in every worship service! You are forgiven! Remember that!

## APPLICATION

I am going to close with a prayer, written a man I don't know anything about other than he wrote this prayer. But as we prepare to come to the Lord's Table, I think it sets a tone that is good for us to hear:

Father,

I praise you for the table you have prepared. Not for food for the body, As much as food for the soul. Drink that satisfies my inner thirst. Bread that nourishes the hungers of my life. Fruit of the Spirit that grows me upward.

Father, You have adorned your table Not elegantly, Yet, lovingly. Rough wood beams, crossed, Wrought iron nails, Crude thorn-crown. No china place settings, Only earth to take the spills. No silverware is placed, Only silver pieces scattered about. No tumbler of fine glass, Only a sponge of sour wine. No knife to pare the meat, Only a spear to pierce the heart.

Your food, O Lord, satisfies not for a time, But blesses my life for eternity. The cup you brought, Your Son's blood, Spilt upon the table, Runs, covering everything, Until You no longer see What was my shameful self.

The bread of life You've given, Your Son's life, Is broken for me to eat. I receive it Lord. I receive it all, Full, complete. It is enough for me.

May I remember Lord, That all my thirsts And all my hungers Begin and end in You. (Glenn E. Robertson)

Amen.