

REMEMBERING

Psalm 146 (responsively)
Mark 12: 28-34

Faith Community
October 8, 2006

Introduction

A woman whose child was killed by a drunk driver begins a campaign to get tougher with drunk drivers. When the obstacles seem too great to go on, she remembers her child and is re-energized to forge ahead.

A young man recalls the times he visited his mother in the nursing home before she died. What is clearest in his memory is how few of the other residents had visitors. After his mother's death, he goes to the nursing home nearest his house and spends time with the people who rarely have visitors.

A boy is so angry at another student that he gets up from his chair to attack him. In that moment, for some reason, he remembers Jesus' teaching, "turn the other cheek." He not sure it makes sense at that moment, but he turns instead and walks out of the room.

Each of these people remembered.

I

We are what we remember. In many ways we are the accumulation of the experiences we hold on to. Our personal history is what we recall from what has happened in our lives.

We forget a great deal; we have to. Our brains can't hold on to everything that has ever happened to us; it's just not possible. So a lot gets dumped. Some almost as soon as it's over.

Do you remember what you did on April 29, 2000? It was a long day – 24 hrs, more or less. Don't you remember anything that happened? How about November 3, 2004? Or, how about last month, October 10? If we dug out the calendar and looked at it we might remember one or two things that happened that day. We lived through 1440 minutes that day, how many do we remember? We forget a lot because we have to. We just can't store everything that has happened in our lives.

II

What we remember forms our history - our selves. Why do I remember going to Kindergarten and screaming because I didn't want to stay? Why do I remember my father's sermon on the Sunday after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated? That was thirty eight years ago. The sermon was, "Who Killed Martin Luther King Jr.?" And the answer was all of us who stood in the way of his dream becoming a reality - all of us who made it so that he had to go in harm's way to find equality.

We remember inane little things, too. Why do I remember the poem my cousin wrote, making fun of that poetry that doesn't seem to make sense? It goes like this:

Between a screen and three big dogs
There lies a purple hat.
No grills or shirts
Or ugly smirks
Can see the water rushing.
We all know that hair comes from ducks
But little do we take for granted living plants.

Why do you remember little things from your past, which seem to be insignificant, when you have forgotten a billion other things?

Those memories shape us; they define who we are.

Our family memories define who we are as a family. The unique family stories that we tell help us understand who our unique family is. We remember what is important for some reason or other, and we forget the rest.

III

As Christians we remember the God we trust in and serve. Passages like Psalm 146 remind us of what our God is like. Let's read this Psalm responsively. (Read scripture). We trust in God who is eternal. Other gods in our world die out and their plans perish with them.

Our God is the Creator - the God of heaven and earth, land and sea. God demands justice, feeds the hungry, sets prisoners free, opens the eyes of the blind. God helps the widow and the orphan. God judges evil. We reminded ourselves of a lot in that brief Psalm!

Worshipping is remembering the God who made us and the God we serve. We come here to remember – together.

Today, for All Saint's Day, we remember the great saints of the church – the people who have given their lives for this faith. Those who have shown us through their living what it means to be representatives of God in the world. We think of Saint Paul and his missionary journeys, and his sacrifice. Or maybe we think of Mother Teresa, who gave so much to the forgotten, dying peasants of India. We think of St Augustine, whom we may not know much about but who has influenced our lives because he has had such an enormous impact on Western society.

In the Presbyterian Church we understand all believers are saints. There aren't greater or lesser Christians, just Christians who have faced different circumstances. God accepts us all as equal.

IV

In the same way that a family has unique family stories, each congregation has its own stories. As a family has family memories, so a congregation has church memories. What we remember as a church defines us as a congregation.

Our church symbol was originally created by Mary Ellen Porter with an orange juice glass at her kitchen table on a Saturday morning. I can't look at the symbol without seeing the orange juice glass.

These stained glass windows were designed and created by members of Faith Community. Sheri Guyot made the communion set by hand. One day we got a call from Lee Begole, who used to be the police chief for Novi. The governor asked that each community set up their own emergency food program, and Lee wondered if we would be willing to run the one for Novi. That was about twenty five years ago.

Each congregation has its special saints. Myrtle DeWitt, one of the saints we honor today, was in her late seventies when she served on the first session of Faith Community. She gave her time and energy to help this budding congregation survive. Joyce Valentine died suddenly at forty eight years old, on the very day she was to be baptized. Many of us remember George Weinert playing his violin, the stately Glen Forhan, and the humor of George Forsythe. Bob Pugh was among us just a few months ago. We remember especially the children of our congregation: Christopher Sproul, Mallory Buchinger, David Langham, and Jonathan Galloway.

The people on this list are the saints of our congregation.

Conclusion

All Saint's Day is a time to remember why we are here and what we are about. We remember the God who called us together and what we are called to do. We especially remember those who have gone before us and helped us on our way.

Amen