

(FAS) My great-grandparents left Italy and came to this country in the early 1900s. My great-grandfather landed in Canada and was part of a crew laying rails down the East Coast. My great-grandmother came to this country to be with her family around Revere, Mass. When my great-grandfather's crew made it to Revere, he met a young lady, settled there and the rest is, as they say, history, or at least my family's history.

Up until the time I was preparing this sermon, it never dawned on me what it might be like to leave family and head off in what is for you uncharted territory. What do you take? What do you leave behind? What do you remember and retain as part of your heritage and tradition? What part of your old life do you leave behind as your set sail for the New World?

We are in the midst of a weekend we refer to as Memorial Day weekend. Many observances have been scheduled around Wayne and Holmes counties, not to mention throughout the country, where Americans take time to remember those soldiers who died to protect our freedoms. We might say we remember those soldiers who sacrificed their lives in order to preserve our liberty.

This is a good thing. There might be some things we want to forget, but some things are worth remembering. Some things are vital to remember.

(CT) CHRISTIANS MUST REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN THE PAST IN ORDER TO ENSURE A BLESSED FUTURE.

(CS) While we must endeavor to come to grips with the whole counsel of God, I want to focus on what we need to remember and when it is OK to forget.

- I. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN CREATION, IT HELPS US TO PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE.
- II. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE, IT HELPS US TO BE HUMBLE.
- III. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD PROMISES TO FORGET, IT HELPS US IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

(G) I want the congregation to realize how important it is to embrace the Christian faith and pass it on.

(TS) Close to 20 years ago, I was sitting at a kitchen table with two friends. One of them, Paul Miller, was home during a break from classes at Annapolis. I remember him telling me and our friend Shawn about something he attributed to Martin Luther, though I have never been able to verify the source. I still like what he had to say.

Paul said something to the effect: If you accept the first five words of the Bible, then you can believe the rest of it. "In the beginning, God created" If you can accept that, then you can accept Genesis to Revelation and everything in between.

I. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN CREATION, IT HELPS US TO PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE.

A. ACCEPTING GOD AS CREATOR TEACHES US THERE IS SOMEONE MORE IMPORTANT THAN US.

- 1. Sometimes we like to get on our high horse and think we are really important, and when we do, we give pride a foothold into our lives.

- a. Prov. 8:13 tells us that "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."
- b. In Prov. 16:18 it says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

2. Pride is a very dangerous thing.

- a. In my mind, I believe all sin can be traced to pride.
- b. We already know from God's word it brings about destruction.
- c. Pride separates us from God, if we allow it to take hold in our lives and to fester and grow.

3. However, when we recognize God is the Creator, and we are here because of His Power, His love and His grace, it has a way of putting us in our place.

- a. This is evident in a throne room scene in the book of Revelation, chapter 4, where you have the 24 elders bowing before God on the throne.
- b. In v. 11 the elders cry out, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."
- c. Part of the reason God is worthy to receive glory and honor is because He created all things.

B. IF WE FORGET GOD IS CREATOR, WE SET OURSELVES UP FOR FAILURE.

1. Without God, can you really explain why you are here?
 - a. Are you here merely because of some random happenings in the universe?
 - b. Which is a polite why of saying are you here by accident?
2. Without a Creator God, from where do we get our morals?
 - a. In the absence of God, then there is no moral order because there is no one who establishes what is right and what is wrong.
 - b. What happens is might makes right.
 - c. I am sorry, but I get sick and tired of people who do not believe in God telling me how this world should be.
 - d. Without God no one has any moral authority to say what is acceptable and what is unacceptable because there are no absolutes.
 - e. But all of this changes with a Creator God who has power over us because he created us.

ILL Let me give you an example of how our lives fall out of balance when we fail to remember God is our Creator.

Paul explains it so vividly in (Rom 1:20-25 NIV) For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. {21} For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. {22} Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

{23} and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. {24} Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. {25} They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

When you abandon God, you end up worshiping things made by human hands, and that is just downright silly if not pathetic.

3. Solomon was the wisest man in the world, but he made some very dumb mistakes when he leaned on his own understanding instead of God's.
 - a. Yet, despite his sins, I believe at the end of his life he came back to God.
 - b. I believe that is what Eccl. 12:1 is about when Solomon says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.'"
 - c. Solomon concludes the book by saying in Eccl. 12:13-14, "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. {14} For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

(TS) We cannot fear God and keep His commandments if we forget. It requires us to remember. God's working in our lives did not stop with the creation. He continued to shower humanity with His love, His grace and His protection and divine providence because of this burning desire to be reunited with us in heaven.

II. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE, IT HELPS US TO BE HUMBLE.

A. SADLY, GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW HE DELIVERED THEM.

1. In Genesis, we see the creation of humanity, the spreading of the people and how they made their way to Egypt to become a powerful force.
 - a. Yet, in the Book of Exodus in 1:8 we read, "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt."
 - b. As a result, the Hebrews were feared and became slaves.
 - c. God could only take this for so long, and He eventually led them out of Egypt ... and what do the people do? They cry and complain about everything.
2. So, repeatedly throughout Deuteronomy, God time and time again tells them to remember they were slaves in Egypt and how God delivered them from slavery and bondage.
 - a. But we know what happens to them, they forget.
 - b. It seems they always forget.
3. This ugly reality is driven home in Judges 3:7, "The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asherahs."
 - a. They forgot about how God delivered them, and they found themselves in trouble.

- b. Seven times in the book it talks about how the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

B. BOTTOM LINE: WE ARE LOST WITHOUT GOD.

1. God provided a way out for us from the moment we sinned.
 - a. God told Adam and Eve if they sinned, they would surely die.
 - b. However, as soon as their sin is revealed, God already has a plan in place to save us from our sin, and His name is Jesus.
 - c. Now, at the time of Gen. 3:15, we did not know our Savior's name was Jesus, but we did know that God told the serpent he was going to "put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
2. Sin separates us from God.
 - a. The wages of sin is death, Paul says in Rom. 6:23.
 - b. Who has sinned? Paul says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God in Rom. 3:23.

C. THE GOOD NEWS IS GOD HAS PROVIDED US A WAY OUT.

1. Rom. 3:23 might tell us all have sinned, but it does not stop there.
 - a. V. 24 says how all "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

- b. Jack Cottrell says to be justified is to have God treat you "just as if I had never sinned."
2. I know there is a lot of debate among Christians about how we are saved and when we are saved, but to me the Bible is so clear.
- a. We are told by Peter in Acts 2:38 to repent and be baptized.
 - i. Any discussion of salvation needs to include immersion for the forgiveness of sins.
 - ii. Mark 16:16 says whoever believes and is baptized is saved.
 - b. Going back to Jack Cottrell, my favorite author and my former professor, We are saved by grace through faith at baptism for good works.

D. WHEN WE TRULY APPRECIATE WE WERE ONCE SINNERS SAVED BY A LOVING GOD, IT HAS TO AFFECT HOW WE TREAT OTHERS.

1. Because God forgave us, we need to be willing to forgive others.
2. We need to have a love for the lost and share the Gospel with them: They need to hear the message: Jesus saves, Jesus saves.
3. Some of us will become preachers, some will become missionaries, some will become Sunday School teachers, some will become ushers, greeters, prayer warriors, sons and daughters or encouragement ... you name it.

(TS) I have been hammering home the point today that we need to remember; we cannot forget. However, I want to give you permission to forget some things.

III. WHEN WE REMEMBER WHAT GOD PROMISES TO FORGET, IT HELPS US IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

A. GOD TELLS US HE WILL REMEMBER OUR SINS NO MORE.

1. In Jer. 31:34 it says, "No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
2. If we didn't catch it the first time, God repeats it two more times in Hebrews 8:12 and again in Hebrews 10:17.

B. IF GOD WILL NO LONGER REMEMBER OUR SINS, WE WOULD DO WELL TO FORGET THEM, TOO.

1. When I say forget them, too, I am saying we cannot cripple ourselves by dwelling and ruminating on what we did in the past.
2. Now, I don't want you forgetting in the sense that you had a moral failing and now you are ready to do it all over again because you forgot all about it.
3. Paul conveys this idea in Phil. 3:13-14 where he talks about how he is forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, how he is pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called him heavenward in Christ Jesus.

(TS) I like what it says in Psalm 103:2, "Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

CONCLUSION

1. I pray that you will forever remember God is God and we are not, so we can have a future marked by blessings and not by curses.
2. This is not pretty, but it is true: In Deut. 8:19, "If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed."
3. So, please, remember the Creator in the days of your youth, before it is too late.
4. Remember that Jesus did not give his life to preserve our liberty, but to secure it.