

## Remembering

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*Readings: Deut 8:1-5, Hebrews 13:1-8*

On remembrance Sunday our thoughts turn to many sad events which most of us have at least a second hand experience of, whether via our parents or grand parents who suffered . Maybe there are a few who have first hand memories and a sense of loss from the second world war.

I don't want us to repeat those memories and thoughts, but to think about the importance of memories for each of us in our Christian walk.

So how is your memory?

On Monday morning I meet with a few people in a room upstairs and we often begin by asking who went to church the previous day. Very commonly...Oh, it was a lovely service, and an excellent talk, but I cant quite remember what it was about.. Some of us have less than 24 hour memories.

Memory loss , dementia and Alzheimer's are terrible conditions that we face as we get older. I've recently met two old college friends whose wives are suffering from Alzheimer's. One couldn't recall the names of their three children.

And for me last week having to learn by heart for a concert in Bath Abbey, Faure's Requiem, was a real struggle. How Judy Dench does what she does I will never know.

One thing I do know is that we remember best the things we are passionate about; I am regularly amazed by my wife Diane who is able to tell me the name of pretty well every plant in our garden.....it's because it is her passion.

In the Bible there are 231 times when the word Remember is used. I imagine quite a few of you will be abler to recall some of them.

Perhaps the most important is

**For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 1 Cor 11:23-25**

The Eucharist, or Holy Communion is and has been the primary service as Christians gather together. John Wesley took the Lord's Supper every 4 or 5 days because he was convinced of its importance in changing our hearts. In the book we have been using for our recent studies and talks we have read that St Cuthbert based on Lindisfarne in the North Sea, when he presided over the Communion Service would often be in tears as he brought to mind (remembered) the passion and death of our Lord. In our remembering do we engage to that

extent or do we simply think of it as a contract that has brought about our acceptance and forgiveness?

A few more things it's important to remember

Remember our true citizenship is in God's Kingdom, not here.

We are told many times in the letters of Paul, Peter and others in the NT that we are living as strangers and refugees in a foreign land, and that the culture and values of the world around us can weaken our passion to live for God, so we are reminded in Rom 12.....

**Don't become so well adjusted to the culture that you fit into it without even thinking...**

How good are you at remembering that?

The coat of arms of Peebles in the Borders has three fish but one is travelling the opposite way from the other two, a reminder that sometimes we are to go against the flow!

One of the ways of helping us to live lives that are different is to remember we belong to one another.

Remember to meet together

We are a family knitted together like a body, so the writer to the book of Hebrews warns us and them not to forget to meet together. Heb 10:25

**Do not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.**

Home groups are one of the ways to do so. We have around 15 groups in the life of this church, meeting in people's homes, studying, sharing life's joys and pains, praying together. I am a passionate believer in the importance of these regular meetings of people of different stages in life helping each other to keep pressing on as followers of Jesus.

How good are you at remembering that?

Remember to be informed

One of the most brilliant things over the last 25 years has been the success of the Alpha course in helping us to understand and remember where we stand and what we believe:

**1 Peter 3 v 15: Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.**

I have been on a number of Alpha courses here over the years and each time I become clearer about our faith. And it's a brilliant way for anyone during these fragile times when people are questioning where the world is going to think about the important issues.

How good are you at giving a reason for the hope you have?

Remember Moments, people, places

Remember the special **moments** when you have been especially aware of God's presence and love for you.

Do you have those?

**People** who have played a part in helping you on in your faith.

Have there been any special times when you have been particularly conscious of God's touch or presence? Parents, friends, church leaders?

Do you have a **special place**

Jacob, after dreaming and seeing the ladder up to heaven: surely the Lord was in this place..pillar and poured oil over it..named Bethel.. place of God.

Jeff Lucas, a Christian writer, tells of when he was recently walking across a grassy field somewhere on the IOW. Why did he want to walk in this field? It was many years before when he was a teenager in a camp and in a marquee that it was in that very field that he first responded to the call of Jesus to follow him.

And this unprepossessing derelict chapel in a quiet village in North Wales. As an 18 year old about to be freed from the restraints of school and family I walked past this chapel, jumping for joy that I knew I was forgiven and my life from then on was safe in God's hands. And 4 years later outside this same chapel after a Sunday service talking to the visiting Methodist minister who had led the service, being told that the grounds of the school where I had been appointed for my first job in North London were right next to his home.

Is there for you a place where you go back to in your memory.

Memento Mori

We don't only look back but ahead too.

We don't often talk this but our faith has a long tradition of Memento Mori, a reminder that we will all die.

Preparing to die has been a responsibility of a Christian disciple.

Common Worship has a prayer:

'From famine and disaster, from violence and murder, from dying unprepared, good Lord deliver us'.

I am impressed when I hear from friends that they are planning their own funeral.

But remember that death is not the end. Quoting from the Last Battle by C S Lewis:

'I have come home at last! This is my real country. I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for for all of my life though I never knew it til now'

He goes on:

All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read, which goes on for ever, in which every chapter is better than the one before'.