



Memories are a powerful part of our lives. Sometimes unexpected and uninvited, painful memories crash through the doors of our mind like an army tank. Memories of abuse, rejection, embarrassment, failure. Certainly not memories that would be considered good news.

At other times pleasant memories surprise us. They bring a smile to our face and joy to our soul. Memories of a romantic weekend. Memories of a home run, memories of a beautiful sunset, memories of kind words spoken to us by our friends. This past week a friend I haven't seen for 40 years sent me this photo of my six grade basketball team! We were good! That's a pleasant memory!

Sometimes we don't want to remember the bad, but we do. Or we want to remember the good, but we don't. And sometimes we just have a hard time remembering anything.

It reminds me of the story of three elderly sisters: Wanda, Martha, and Wilma. They lived together. One day Wanda went upstairs to run some bath water. She stuck her foot in the water, then stopped, looked around and said to herself, "Was I getting in the bath or out of the bath? I can't remember."

So she called to Martha: "Martha, come up to the bathroom. I can't seem to remember if I was getting in the bath or out." Martha muttered to herself. "You senile woman. What do you mean you can't remember if you were getting in or out of it?"

Martha headed up the stairs. She got about half-way up, stopped, looked around and said, "Was I going up the stairs or down? I can't remember." So she called for Wilma in the kitchen. "Wilma, would you come in here? I can't remember if I was going up the stairs or down."

Wilma sarcastically said under her breath, "Martha, you senile woman. I can't believe you can't remember if you were going up or down the stairs. Thank goodness I'm not as forgetful as you. Knock on wood."

Then she stopped and looked around and asked, "Was that someone knocking at our front door or the back door?"

The Bible Encourages Us to Remember

The importance of remembering is a theme in the Bible. On the night before the Jewish exodus from Egypt, God instituted the Passover as an annual ceremony designed to remind the Jewish people of how God had delivered them from slavery.

Then when the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River, God told them to choose twelve stones from the river and pile them in the city of Gilgal in the Promised land. Joshua told them "*These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever*" (Joshua 4:7).

Part of the reason this was necessary is because we're all so prone to forget. Israel forgot. Psalm 78 it says, "*They didn't keep God's covenant, and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them*" (Psalm 78:10-11). How often, like them, do we forget to remember!

Paul Encouraged Timothy to Remember

The apostle Paul seemed to know this as he wrote his last letter to a young man named Timothy. Here he was, at the end of his life, a battle-worn soldier. He'd given himself to Jesus Christ without reservation. Nothing he asked was too much. He'd faced hardship. He'd been misunderstood countless times. He'd been arrested falsely, ridiculed and beaten. He'd survived a near-fatal crash at sea and was about to face execution. Along the way he'd trained Timothy to take over much of his work. Paul had high hopes for this young man, but he knew much too well the pressures he'd face day after day. So in the last letter he wrote, he sent him a reminder:

**"Remember Jesus Christ,
raised from the dead,
descended from David."**

In ten words he made his greatest plea and offered his best encouragement. Paul had given Timothy some strategies for carrying out his work—how to choose leaders, how to deal with divisive people; how to fight temptation—all good advice for a young leader. But the most important thing he could share with Timothy and with us are those ten words: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David." These words are especially meaningful today because Easter is a time for all of us to remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.

I want to offer to you four reasons remembering this is the most important thing you'll ever do.

Remember because it is a fact of history

First, we should remember this because it's a fact of history. This isn't some kind of hopeful myth, but it's true; it all really happened. Jesus of Nazareth was born of a woman named Mary

who was from the line of King David. When Paul says to remember Jesus Christ he certainly meant to remember not just his humanity but his whole way of life. He was committed to obeying the will of his Father, even when it meant death. His had compassion for people God had created. The Bible says he went about doing good, healing the sick, caring for children, loving and accepting the so-called throw-aways of society.

We're also to remember his teaching. People who heard Jesus were captivated. His words had the ring of truth, so much so that some said of him, "Never has a person spoken like him." To this day no one has come close to speaking words filled with power and life like he did. His words challenge us to look deep within ourselves. His words invite us to receive God's grace. Who else could say things like "Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

We're also to remember his death. We're to never stop remembering he willingly died for people like us. We're to remember how blood and spit were caked to his cheeks and how his lips were cracked and swollen from dehydration. We're to remember thorns ripped his scalp, his lungs cried with pain, and his legs knotted with cramps while he hung alone and forsaken on the cross for the sins of the world. Remember Jesus Christ, descendant of David, because it's a fact of history.

But most importantly, we're to remember because his resurrection is a fact of history as well. The most successful trial attorney in the history of the world is Sir Lionel Luckhoo. In July of 1985 he won his 245th consecutive murder acquittal. You'd suspect him to be a very smart person with trained analytical skills. He certainly must have been an expert on what constitutes reliable and admissible evidence. What would a man like that say about the resurrection? During his own spiritual journey, he used his own expertise in law to investigate whether or not the resurrection could stand up to the test of legal evidence. He finally concluded with these words: "I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it...leaves absolutely no room for doubt." Modern day research has revealed the same thing. Men like Frank Morrison, Josh McDowell and Lee Strobel have presented overwhelming evidence.

We should remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, not because the moral of the story gives us some kind of faint hope that good might come out of bad, like one of Aesop's fables, but because it's true, and since it's true, we know everything Jesus said about himself was true as well.

Remember because it confirms Jesus is the Son of God

Second, we should remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead because it confirms Jesus is the Son of God. You see, it's not just an event we're to remember, it's a person. He doesn't say to remember the resurrection, but to remember Jesus Christ, raised

from the dead. But the resurrection of Christ says something about the person of Christ. His life, his deeds and his claims are authenticated by his resurrection.

I ran across a sign in front of a church here on the Peninsula inviting folks to their Easter services. Here it is. These are folks who purport to follow the teaching and the ethics of Jesus, but deny his resurrection. On the sign they ask, "What if we don't take the resurrection seriously?" But you can't have one without the other. If Jesus wasn't raised, everything he said about himself was false. He was either a liar or a lunatic.

He made some audacious claims. He said to know him is to know God; to see him is to see God; to believe in him is to believe in God; to receive him is to receive God; and to hate him is to hate God. One day he was arguing with some religious leaders and said, "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." This was too much for his critics. They shot back, "Are you saying you're greater than our father, Abraham, who died? Who do you think you are?" Then Jesus made one of the most monumental claims he ever made. He said, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM." The Bible says immediately they picked up rocks to throw at him. Why? Because stoning was the penalty for blasphemy. He didn't just say he existed before Abraham, he called himself, "I AM," which every Jew knew was the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush. Jesus was claiming to be God.

I suppose anyone could make that claim. I could claim that about myself, but you wouldn't believe me. Why should we believe Jesus? Because of the resurrection, which was God the Father's exclamation point on Jesus' claim to be God the Son. Romans 1:4 says he was "*declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.*" How do we know Steph Curry is one of the greatest shooters in history? Because he's on track to make over 400 three-point shots this year. How do we know Jesus is the Son of God? Because he rose from the dead.

Remember because it assures us of his presence

This leads to the third reason we should remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead. We should remember because it assures us of his presence. He's with us, not just as a memory, but as a living presence. It's like that old poem by St. Patrick, "Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."

It's hard to believe that when life is beating us up. That's when we have a tendency to forget. Paul understood this. When Paul wrote this letter he was sitting in a damp, dark Roman prison cell, awaiting trial and execution. He was old, beaten and worn down. His friends deserted him. He knew his time was about up.

Timothy's situation wasn't much better. He was pastoring a small band of new believers in the port city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a lot like the Bay Area. It was a beautiful, prosperous, melting pot of beliefs and cultures, some of which were not at all friendly to the cause of Christ. Some of the people in Timothy's own church would just as well have run him out of town. These were not the brightest days to be a follower of Christ. Paul and Timothy were in a battle.

There are times in our lives like that. Times when our lives resemble Good Friday a lot more than Easter Sunday; when the darkness of the cross overshadows the brightness of the resurrection. There are times in our lives when the fog of sin, evil and despair is so thick that's all we can see. A loved one is diagnosed with a terminal illness. A daughter runs away. The pain of divorce or miscarriage. We lose our job. It's in those times we need to remember Jesus Christ, not just hanging on a cross, but risen from the dead and with us even in our darkest moments.

David Livingstone, in the last century, said, "I go through the jungles of Africa and Jesus is by my side."

Savonarola, that great preacher of the 12th century in Florence, said, "They may kill me, they may tear me in pieces, but never, never, never shall they tear from my heart the living Jesus."

Samuel Rutherford, one of the great Scottish Covenanters put in jail for his faith in the 17th century said, "Jesus Christ came into my cell yesterday and every stone shone like a jewel."

Those are people who remembered Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and present with them. They faced their problems and battles with an inner impartation of strength, grace, and comfort they'd never have without his living presence. When we remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, we're not just remembering an event, we're remembering one who's present with us today. There's no obstacle or enemy too great for him to conquer. There are times we face things far greater than we can possibly handle ourselves. But the one who looks to a risen Lord knows he's not alone. When fears threaten, when doubts assail, when inadequacy depresses, remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, alive and with you today.

Remember because his resurrection guarantees our resurrection

Here's the fourth and final reason to remember—because his resurrection guarantees our resurrection. He conquered death. The Bible says his resurrection was "the first-fruits" of those who've died. That means he was first; we're next. Those who put their hope in Christ will be raised like he was.

If you want to know what life after death will look like, just look at what happened to Jesus. Two things will happen when we die. First, there will be a separation from the body. Seconds before Jesus breathed his final breath, he exhaled, "Father, into your

hands I commit my spirit." Jesus' body was buried in a tomb, but his spirit went to be with the Father. The Bible says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." But that's not all. There's still the resurrection of the body. After three days, Jesus' body was raised from the grave. He showed the scars on his hands and feet. He even ate food! The good news, the gospel, the whole reason we celebrate Easter, is that the same thing will happen to us! One day, when Jesus returns, we'll meet him in the air and we'll be transformed. We'll have resurrected bodies without sin, disease or sickness. That means all suffering and trials are only temporary.

Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church, and his wife Kay went through a devastating loss when their 27-year-old son Matthew took his own life after battling depression and mental illness for years. About a year after this tragedy, Rick said, "I've often been asked, 'How have you made it? How have you kept going in your pain?' I've often replied, 'The answer is Easter.' You see, the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus happened over three days. Friday was the day of suffering and pain and agony. Saturday was the day of doubt and confusion and misery. But Easter—that Sunday—was the day of hope and joy and victory. And here's the fact of life: you'll face these three days over and over in your lifetime. And when you do, you'll find yourself asking—as I did—three fundamental questions. Number one, 'What do I do in my days of pain?' Two, 'How do I get through my days of doubt and confusion?' Three, 'How do I get to the days of joy and victory?' The answer is Easter."

Ten words: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descendant of David.

- Remember because it is a fact of history.
- Remember because it confirms Jesus is the Son of God.
- Remember because it assures us of his presence.
- Remember because his resurrection guarantees our resurrection.

If you're a follower of Christ, what's keeping you from remembering? We live in a world of distraction that constantly tries to turn our attention away from him. We're distracted by the messages we hear from the media and entertainment world saying this is what life is really all about: Go find your true self. You can do and be anything. Buy this. Eat that. Travel there. And if it's not the media, then life has a way of slowly distracting us from what's most important. It's easy to forget in the daily grind of life, work, family. I think that's one reason God allows pain and suffering in our lives—it has a way of stripping us of all the things that distract us. It reminds us of our need for God. But when we remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, we remember that our pain, our sorrow, is real, but it won't have the last word.

If you're not a follower of Christ, perhaps today you'll choose to remember what you thought was impossible. First, that means you accept his love for you. His love was so great he died for your sins. He paid off your debt. Second, believe Jesus rose from the dead. That's what it means to have faith in him. It's trusting in who God is and what he did for you in Jesus. Third, commit your life to him. I don't mean becoming more religious. I'm talking about a personal relationship with Jesus. Today you can begin

that relationship by praying a simple prayer: Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and on the third day you rose from the dead. Please forgive me of my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. I ask you into my life to be my Lord and Savior. Amen.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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