



Life has a way of forcing its attention into our lives, doesn't it? "Think about me! Think about me!" Take your cell phone as an example. What happens when you get a text? What happens when you get an email? A phone call? Cell phones aren't alone. Advertising, sporting events, social events, on and on and on. "Think about me! Think about me!"

Here's the question all of us should ask ourselves: Is my life richer and filled with more meaning because of it all?

I know you have a busy life; so is mine. Your calendar is packed; so is everybody else's in here. Your schedule spills into the margins. But, are you living your life or is your life living you? I often think that people on the Peninsula are living lives like helium balloons. We're flying high with excitement and we're carried by every change in the wind.

I'm so glad you're here today on Easter Sunday because we're going to take the first step this morning to bring lavish richness and deep meaning to our lives by looking at one phrase in the Bible, just one. The Apostle Paul, in the last letter he ever wrote, said to his young protégé Timothy,

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel (2 Timothy 2:8).

Like a soldier about to breathe his last on the battlefield, the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, "I want you to remember something. I want you to remember something that is vital; something that will keep your life on track. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."

This one phrase can transform your life. Today I'm going to show you how. Remembering = recalling information. Remember = means to cause to be mindful of information. People remember lots of information—kids remember their multiplication table; adults remember people's names, shopping lists and to do's. In this situation, Paul gives Timothy a command to keep on remembering—present tense—that Jesus is alive. Keep on remembering; keep on remembering, etc.

This is a habit that takes intentionality. Think of it this way: our thoughts can be like a beagle. I have two friends who've had the unfortunate experience of owning beagles. I love dogs, as you know. I've got two of my own. But the beagle brings a whole new challenge to dog ownership. If they get outside without a leash, get ready to chase that dog for hours! They aren't trying to be

defiant. They aren't trying to defy their masters. They are simply following the next scent. One scent leads to another, which leads to another and they are off to the races. The call of their master falls on deaf ears. They ignore cars. They ignore everything except the next scent before them.

A beagle can only be stopped when the owner captures the dog. You've got to grab your dog. Similarly our thoughts have to be grabbed. They run from one thing to the next until they're captured. On their own, they naturally follow the next thought, then the next thought, then the next.

Our thoughts run wild like a beagle off leash! That's why the Bible instructs us to "**take every thought captive**" (2 Cor 10:5). That's the image of grabbing our runaway thoughts.

And that's why the Bible is telling us, Remember Jesus Christ. Remembering means we recall who Jesus **is**, what he's **done** and what he's going to **do**. Being here today is one way you do that. It'd be nearly impossible to sit through this worship service and not think about who Jesus **is**, what he's **done** and what he's going to **do**. That's remembering Jesus Christ.

But this is only a small part of our week. If you want to live a richer and fuller life, if you want to take every thought captive, you need to remember Jesus Christ every day. The tone of Paul's words to Timothy are a command—"Remember Jesus Christ and keep remembering and keep remembering!" Unspoken but implied are, "if you forget, you'll mess your life up."

If a person stops their "Remembering Jesus Christ" at this point, about 10 minutes into this sermon you'd miss the core of why it's so important to Remember Jesus Christ. Because the verse goes on to add four vital words: raised from the dead.

Remembering is more than recalling a nice thought about a moral, humble, loving Jesus. Those are all true but they lack the single mark of validation that we rely upon for Jesus' deity: his resurrection. This one phrase—raised from the dead—articulates the lynchpin of the Christian faith. One theologian wrote: "In a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all." Jesus wasn't just a missing person's case, he rose from the dead.

The candy heiress Helen Vorhees Branch stepped off a plane at the Chicago O'Hare airport in 1977 and was never seen again. Some speculated she was murdered. Some speculated she went

into hiding. But a body—either alive or dead—was never found. That's mysterious and intriguing. And that's the opposite of everything we know about Jesus Christ. He lived; that's an undisputed fact by everyone. He was whipped with 39 lashes by the Roman soldiers; that's an undisputed fact. He was crucified and killed on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem; a fact that's mostly undisputed. For years leading critics theorized different ways Jesus could have appeared dead but was actually still alive. Today, no leading critic holds this position. The logic is just too weak. Everybody who looks at the evidence concludes the same—Jesus definitely died on the cross.

There's great agreement on all of this. There's one occurrence reported in the Bible that people debate: Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Did he rise from the dead as the Bible says? Did the disciples steal his dead body? That's the theory most leading critics believe today. We weren't there! The only way for us to know is to look at the evidence.

That's what the most successful trial attorney in the history of the world, Sir Lionel Luckhoo did. He's in the Guinness Book of World Records 14 years in a row for being the world's most successful lawyer. In July of 1985 he won his 245th consecutive murder trial. He's a very bright person with tremendous analytical skills. He's a world-class 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 legal expertise to consider the question: Did Jesus rise from the dead? He concluded his investigation 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."

Certainly the 500 people Jesus appeared to over the 40 days he spent on earth after his resurrection would agree. Certainly the 11 disciples who were transformed from terrified men to bold evangelists would agree. And certainly the Word of God agrees. 2000 years ago Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And he's still alive today. This is the lynchpin, some would say the cornerstone, of the Christian faith. The instructions in this verse are to always keep on remembering, keep the thought in your mind every day Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

See, this isn't a thought like any other. When we remember this, the Christian isn't only recalling a memory and then left to live on our own. Oh no! By remembering we enjoy the supernatural presence of God. When we're facing a great task that we can't help but feel is beyond us, we don't have to go alone. When we're facing a struggle that's overwhelming, we don't have to endure it alone. The supernatural presence of God is with us!

David Livingstone, in the last century, said, "I go through the jungles of Africa and Jesus is by my side." 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 men who learned to "remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead." They faced their problems and battles with the supernatural power of God filling their heart with strength, grace, and comfort. They'd never have experienced this if they hadn't remembered Jesus Christ, raised from the dead. But they focused their thoughts, they weren't flying around like a helium balloon. They were thinking about Jesus Christ their risen Savior.

You might wonder how this happens. How does remembering activate God's power? That's a good question. The Christian is given access to the supernatural presence of God because before Jesus died, he said to his disciples, "It is to your advantage that I'm going away. Because if I go I will send you my Spirit. And my Spirit will take what is mine and make them real to you. He will be another Helper."

I was talking with a woman in our church body recently and felt like she was living what I'm talking about. So I asked her if it'd be ok if I shared an example from her life.

About a month ago she felt God leading her to go to San Luis Obispo to serve her sister's family as the husband recovered from a horrific car accident. Her sister was at a complete breaking point emotionally and physically from caring for her husband. As she was there she started to feel searing pain in her legs and feet but she kept on serving them. She thought she was having an allergic reaction to some bug bites. It wasn't until she went to the doctor back at home that she was informed that she had shingles and was put on immediate bed rest for a full week, which turned into almost a month.

This has been horrible physically. She said, "Each day I have to cry out to Jesus 'I can't Lord ... I'm leaning on you.'" She said, "this has broken me emotionally because I don't have the control to run my household. Yet I powerfully felt the supernatural power of God through this whole experience. Jesus is our healer."

She was remembering Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and she was immediately and powerfully upheld by Jesus' strength.

When we do the same, we access the presence and power of Jesus Christ too. He is the risen Lord and he stands ready to meet you. When fears threaten, when doubts bombard, when inadequacy depresses, remember the presence of the risen Lord.

What happens when we neglect to remember? When we neglect to remember, it's possible for a Christian to let anxiety win over us and we lose vital contact with him. Sadly, our lives become powerless and ineffective. There's an old hymn you'll probably know that describes what I'm talking about:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face

*And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

A moment ago I asked, “how does this happen?” It happens because of the activity of the Holy Spirit. Now, I want to answer, “Why does remembering bring God’s presence?” It’s because Jesus is alive and his presence is everywhere. So when we remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead we make our minds consciously aware of God’s truth and his presence. And when our minds are aware like this, Jesus reveals himself to us. He’s always there because the Spirit of God is everywhere. But he often waits to reveal himself until we show we’re interested to listen.

God said to the Christians in the ancient city of Laodicea: **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”** (Rev. 3:20). “Knocking at the door” is a poetic way of saying Jesus is ready to meet with you. “Opening the door” is a poetic way of saying remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead. “Coming in and eating” is a poetic way of Jesus saying, “I will share my company with you and you will experience my supernatural presence.”

So the choices before each of us are: Live a distracted life without accessing God’s presence, or live a rich and full life by remembering Jesus Christ, raised from the dead. You can decide right now which life you are going to live. You can make a decision and then resolve to put a habit around it, right now, to remember every day.

Remembering can be hard to do. As I was saying at the beginning of my sermon, we are distracted people. Remembering anything can be hard! Take this joke, for example.

There were three sisters—ages 92, 94, and 96—who lived together. One night, the 96-year-old drew a bath. She put one foot in, and then paused. “Was I getting in the tub or out?” she yelled.

The 94-year-old hollered back, “I don’t know, I’ll come and see.” She started up the stairs, but stopped on the first one. She shouted, “Was I going up or coming down?”

The 92-year-old was sitting at the kitchen having tea, listening to her sisters with a smirk on her face. She shook her head and said, “I sure hope I never get that forgetful,” and knocked on wood for good measure. Then she yelled, “I’ll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who’s knocking at the door!”

Remembering can be hard to do. God knows that about us. That’s why he tells his people to remember over 100 times in the Bible. In one instance, God gave them a physical object to help them remember: A pile of rocks. After crossing the Jordan River in the Old Testament, God told his people to get 12 stones from the riverbed. Then those 12 stones were stacked up. God said that these stones would serve as a reminder. And when your children ask, “What’s up with these stones?” you tell them that God miraculously stopped the flow of the Jordan River so we could cross.

God didn’t ever want them to get distracted like a beagle and forget that he has the supernatural power to stop the flow of a river at flood stage. God needed them to remember because they were going to face other scary challenges as they lived faithfully for God.

As a physical reminder we have a rock for each of you today. We’re not going to stack them into one pile; we’re going to give them to you and let you take them with you. Put it somewhere prominent so it can remind you to focus your thoughts on Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, and then watch how Jesus will fill you with his supernatural power.

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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Catalog No. 1420-S

This message from Scripture was preached on Sunday, March 27, 2016 at Central Peninsula Church South
1005 Shell Blvd. | Foster City, CA 94404 | 650 349.1132 | www.cpcweb.org. Additional copies available on request.