

“We Forget, but God Remembers”

“And he said, ‘Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise’” Luke 23:42-43.

Is this you? You leave your house to go somewhere. You back out of the garage, close the garage door and head on your way. Then part way down the road, you wonder, did I really close the garage door? So, you turn around, head back to find that yes, you really did close it? That was me this past Friday. How about this, is this you? You confirm an event’s time with someone and lock that event into your mental schedule. Then when the day of the event arrives, you realize you that had forgotten the correct time for the event? That was Pastor Eggold and me on Thursday. Perhaps, this is you? You quickly forget how something was in the past because of the current state of things. That certainly has been me and maybe I should say this will be many of you, when you get to check out the newly renovated floor of the school after this service. It’s an amazing difference!

Now the point I want you to begin to see from these examples, is that we are forgetful people. Even if the examples I shared didn’t resonate with you, there are numerous others that likely would apply for your own life. We can even look at this reality from another angle, there’s a reason that there are so many different reminder tools available to us! We need help keeping track of things and without that help many things would be forgotten! Whether it’s with a few things, or with many things, forgetfulness plagues all of us to some degree. We are forgetful people.

However, forgetfulness doesn’t only impact our daily lives! It infects our spiritual lives as well! We forget to come to church consistently or forget to study God’s Word regularly with others. We forget the Bible teachings that we were taught when we were younger. We forget that God has things to say about how we are to live and act with others. We forget God’s faithfulness to us in the past because we’re overwhelmed by the problems of our present and future. We forget what God has declared us to be and instead focus on what our sins and the world and the devil convince us that we should become. Ultimately, all this forgetfulness, leads us to forget what it means to be repentant and humble before our God.

Admitting this about ourselves isn’t easy, but it certainly connects us with the people Malachi was dealing with in his day. The people of Malachi’s time had lost sight of the reason and purpose for serving the Lord. Even with things slowly rebuilding after the devastating exile to Babylon, many of the Israelites saw things in their community that suggested following the Lord was pointless. The arrogant and evildoers were prospering! People were outright challenging God with their priorities and lifestyles and it appeared that there was no consequence. Their apparent escape of God’s judgement continued to fuel the idea that serving God was unproductive, useless and that is was simply best to just forget Him!

Yet, not everyone in Malachi’s day had forgotten the Lord. There were those who still feared the Lord and to them the Lord listened and responded. The Lord remembered those who humbly and repentantly clung to the Lord and His saving name. He claimed them as His own treasured possession and was willing to spare them when the day of judgement would finally arrive. The Lord promised them that the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve Him and those who don’t would be clear once again. He was assuring

this remembered faithful that their holding onto Him and His promises in humility and repentance wasn't in vain!

These words from Malachi take on an even greater weight when we look to our reading from the Gospel of Luke. Luke's words before us are the familiar account of Jesus' crucifixion. And when we hear them in the light of the prophet Malachi's words, we actually get a foretaste of the fulfillment of the promise the Lord makes to those remembered faithful in Malachi's time. For there on the cross, Jesus claims His treasured possession by shedding His own blood for His people. There upon the cross, in an unfathomable exchange, God spares His adopted children, that treasured possession, by not sparing His only begotten Son! In a way that only God could design, Christ's crucifixion stands as the clear distinction between the righteous and wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who doesn't.

One of the two criminals, who hung next to Jesus, got this distinction there in that moment. In humility and repentance, he confessed that he had forgotten the ways of the Lord and hung there upon a cross justly for his own actions unlike Jesus who was innocent. Appealing to Jesus, with nothing of his own to offer, that criminal asked the innocent One to remember him when He came into His kingdom. And without hesitation for what that criminal had done, Jesus paid attention to and heard that criminal who feared God. Jesus claimed that criminal as His treasured possession, as righteous, as one who served God, saying **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise”** (*Luke 23:43*). And with those words, Jesus wrote that criminal into His book of remembrance. Because of Jesus, that criminal was spared, powerfully revealing the Lord's faithfulness to His words to Malachi, **“I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him”** (*Malachi 3:17*).

This weekend, the last weekend of the Church Year, we recognize that Judgement Day still approaches. The Day is coming when the righteous and wicked will once again be clearly distinct. And the ways that we have continually forgotten the Lord will no longer escape His judgement. Our sinful actions that shout out to the world that it really is pointless to serve God, pointless to keep His Law, pointless to live a life of repentance, that we should just forget Him, those actions will no longer be tolerated. When we continually clinging to our sin, we frequently forget the fear of the Lord and we are no longer ones to whom the Lord pays attention or hears. Like it or not, as a forgetful sinner, this is truly who I am. Like it or not, in your own sinful forgetfulness this is truly who you are too.

Acknowledging what we are in our own sinful forgetfulness, we cry out to the One who has come to us, to Jesus, who came as our mediator so that we might be heard by God once again. Because of Jesus, our cry of “Remember us in your kingdom!” is paid attention to and our plea is answered peacefully through His blood shed on the cross. We have been delivered and transferred into the beloved Son's kingdom, redeemed and forgiven. In Jesus, we are remembered as God's treasured possession, as righteous, as ones who serve God, and this clear distinction that was promised in those words from Malachi, won for us as described in those words from Luke's Gospel, will be affirmed for us for all of eternity on the day that Christ returns. In Christ, this is who I am. In Christ, this is who you are. In Christ, this is we are. And as we await His return, He will never let us forget it! Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan