

## REMEMBER JESUS

I Corinthians 11:23-26

Sermon preached by Dr. Cahill

Babcock Presbyterian Church

Sunday, September 2, 2012

This morning before we gather around this table to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we should first ask a fundamental question: What is a sacrament?

My dictionary says, "any of certain rites instituted by Jesus and believed to be a means of grace;"

Here's a better definition: "a sacrament is an outward visible sign of God's inward invisible grace."

Another question: "What is grace?" Grace is God's complete acceptance of who you are today coupled with the hope of who you can become tomorrow.

Presbyterians have historically recognized only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper because in the gospels Jesus not only participated in these two rites, he also specifically commanded us to participate in them as well when he said, "Do this to remember me," and "Go therefore and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Since this morning we're celebrating only one sacrament, the Lord's Supper, let's focus on its significance for believers.

The first Lord's Supper was Jesus' last supper. You might even say it was the last meal of a condemned man, because the next day Jesus was crucified.

Jesus shared this Last Supper with his closest friends as a way for them to remember the purpose of his death, so that whenever future generations gathered around his table, we'd remember Jesus too, in Christian community.

Jesus promised, **"Whenever two or more are gathered together in my name, I will be with you."** Whenever we hear Jesus' words, **"This is my body broken for you do this in remembrance of me and "This is my blood shed for you, do this in remembrance of me."** Jesus is right here sitting next to you, loving you more than you could ever imagine. Always remember that.

"Remember me." Memory is essential to our celebration of our Lord's Supper, but Jesus not only said, **"remember me,"** he also promised, after he was gone, he would send the Holy Spirit to help us remember his life and ministry, along with his crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus said remember me knowing that memory is a powerful gift. Memory helps you recall his life but memory also helps you remember when you sensed Jesus was present to you at hinge moments in your life. You see, ours is a living faith because ours is a living God who sent his only son into our world to make the way back to God possible.

So how do you keep from forgetting what Jesus wants you to remember?

For starters, you're doing it now. You being here today testifies to your intentional desire to remember Jesus. You could've spent the morning in bed, puttering around the house, reading the New York Times or going out to have fun. But today you kept God's commandment to, **"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy"** (Exodus 19:8) For the Jews, the seventh day was set aside to make time to worship and celebrate our great and powerful God. We believe Christ was risen on the first day of the week, so we gathered in community each Sunday to remember together. Sure you can worship God on any day even by yourself, but communal worship is especially necessary because by worshipping together we are present to each other to support and enhance our shared experience of Jesus.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of other voices calling out **"Remember me,** some of them unholy voices. There's the voices of secularism, humanistic philosophies and rampant materialism all of which sooner than later expose themselves to be defective substitutes for the real thing.

Firefighters in Fairfax County, VA, received new state of the art helmets. But there was a problem. When it got too hot, the helmets melted. My point is the "new" state of the art philosophies and religions melt away when things get too hot. They may initially look and feel good, but in the end, they're no help at all. That's why we remember Jesus. And that's why it's essential for us to remember together, in Christian community, so we can remember Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last and everything else in between.

So remembering Jesus is important, but before you can remember Jesus you must first know Jesus. That's another reason for Christian community because only Christians can introduce Christ to each other, and only when you know Jesus can you love Jesus, and the more you love Jesus, the more you can love your neighbor as yourself. So empowered by the Holy Spirit the Church becomes sort of like an organic memory bank keeping the memory alive.

Today I want to suggest to you several practical ways you can improve your memory of Jesus and then fall in love with him.

Here at Babcock we have several adult Bible studies that meet during the week. Check the weekly calendar. Not at a convenient time? Let me know, another one can always be started.

Next, on Sunday mornings this fall there will be a series of Adult Forums between services in the Fellowship Hall, miniseries on specific topics relevant to Christian faith and practice.

There will be a miniseries entitled Christianity 101. The basic doctrines or teachings shared by all Christians as well as the unique teachings to Presbyterianism will be the subject of conversation.

Then there will be a miniseries entitled Christian Ethics in the Workplace and still another focused on Christian Worship and Architecture through the Ages and how remembering past practices and traditions inform the present and secure the future.

In December, an Advent miniseries focusing on Church Liturgy and the practice of meditation will prepare us for Christ's coming into the world.

Of course, besides learning about Christian faith and practice, there's living out the faith by involving yourself, being present in the presence of others. Sometimes we call it discipleship, denying yourself time and energy that could be spent on yourself and redirecting it to someone who needs you. Becoming a servant, lowering yourself to raise the other up with no expectation of any payback of any kind is the way of Jesus.

It's true isn't it? Every day God gives you at least one opportunity to invest yourself in the life of another. Sometimes we jump at the opportunity, sometimes we hold back, but either way God continues to pursue you because that's what you're supposed to do.

What makes the difference? Why are some willing to do the right thing while others walk away? One answer: those who remember Jesus giving himself away in order to make love possible will want to go and do likewise.

Remember Jesus, risking his reputation to be with tax collectors and sinners. Remember Jesus speaking truth to power in the face of injustice and hypocrisy. Remember Jesus spending time with children and all other little ones of little faith. And then remember Jesus nailed to his cross drying for our sakes and saying the night before to those gathered in the Upper Room,

“...this is my body broken for you.

...this is my blood, shed for you.

Remember me.”