

Memories
John 14:15-21 May 29, 2011
Memorial Day

I. The Way we Were

Memories, light the corners of my mind
Misty watercolor memories of the way we were.
Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind
smiles we give to one another
for the way we were.

Can it be that it was all so simple then
or has time rewritten every line?
If we had the chance to do it all again
tell me -- would we? Could we?

Memories, may be beautiful and yet
what's too painful to remember
we simply choose to forget
So it's the laughter we will remember
whenever we remember
the way we were.

- A. Our lives are quite miraculously this magical mystery tour of being present in the current moment.
Being here right now;
not yet in the future and no longer in the past;
but, just in this very moment.
 - B. But who we are in this present moment is a very selective, highly filtered, reconstitution of memories of the way we were.
 - C. Who we are is largely the constructive summation, of what we remember.
- II. For 50 years my mother smoked.
She could not quite.
- A. Smoking was largely the cause of her death. For probably 40 of those 50 years of smoking she tried and tried and tried to quit but could not.
 - B. As some of you will remember that when I arrived here from California I was expecting to also be arriving to find my mother dead. She had suffered a ruptured intestine and sepsis had taken over her body and she was in a coma and I fully expected her to be dead when I got here.

C. Well a month later, she came out of her coma and finally recovered from the sepsis. One other miracle was that she forgot that she smoked.

Forgot.

And nobody ever reminded her and she never again touched a cigarette.

Being a smoker was no longer part of who she was, because she couldn't remember it.

III. My point of course is that memories are not just things that happened in the past.

They are in fact who we are in the present.

A. That's why it is that we must remember – we must not forget -- we must remember all those who have given their lives so that we can be here this morning.

B. That of course includes those who have died in service to this country, in service to our communities, in order to bring us to this life that we celebrate today.

IV. We need to remember – we need to once again make it a part of us today --

that it is because of their sacrifice that we are able to be here today.

- A. Time tends to help us forget, to tear our memories apart, dismember them from our being.
- B. So we must re-member them, bring back into our being.
- C. We must re-member why it was that lives were lost;
why families were torn apart;
and why the killing of innocents – the collateral damage was committed – deemed necessary.
- D. We must remember that it is not only those who have lost their lives;
but those who have lost limbs,
lost their chance for a healthy life,
lost their memories, and all too often,
lost their sanity.
- E. We must remember those who lost their husbands and wives and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers -- and children; they too are veterans of the wars we have fought.

- F. With those who have lost their lives, we must remember those who have lost hope; those who have been made single parents; and those veterans who have suffered and years after leaving the battlefield have continue to suffer from the ravages of war; and suffer even more humiliation from a nation that cares too little for them.
- V. Of course the iconic person that we look to as one who gave his life as a sacrifice, a gift, to us and for us -- is Jesus.
- A. Jesus knew how important remembering is and so he instructed us to do it.
- B. From the Apostle Paul we hear these words from Paul's letter to the Corinthians: [1 Cor 11:23-25]

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,
"This is my body that is for you.
Do this in **remembrance** of me."

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in **remembrance** of me."

- C. In a nonviolent struggle to try to overcome the suffering that was brought on by the oppressive strangle hold of the evil empire of Rome Jesus found himself on the receiving end of an arbitrary, torturous, and murderous judicial system.
- D. It was the intent of that evil empire, to dismember Jesus from this world, his followers and the human collective consciousness.
- E. So, what does it mean for us to re-member Jesus?
 1. It is to re-member the commandments he gave us and to keep them; live by them.
 2. It means to re-member his teachings.
 3. It means to re-member how he treated people.
 4. It means to re-member the vision of God's Realm that he offered.

5. And it means to re-member that he gave up his life that we may know these things.

VI. One of the most important things for us in re-membering Jesus, bringing Jesus back into our being, into our present moment; is to re-member that in his vision of God's realm, there was no place for violence.

- A. In John Dominic Crossan's inspired work on the Lord's Prayer, he shows that the last temptation that we, as Jesus did, must learn to overcome, is the temptation to use violence as a way to bring about God's realm.
- B. Crossan argues that "'temptation' in the Lord's Prayer has a very specific meaning, not just a general one. There are certainly multiple types and degrees of temptation all around us every day – political, economic, and religious, local, national and international. Who could name them all?"
- C. But Crossan goes on to say, "that the 'temptation' that climaxes the *Abba* Prayer is quite specific in intention, quite precise in

content, and quite deeply embedded in the concrete historical situation of first-century Israel's confrontation with the Roman Empire....

It specifically asks God not to "lead us into" – yes *lead* us into -- the temptation of violent resistance to Rome's violent domination.

Instead, it asks God to *deliver us from* that evil action or the evil one.

It is, in other words, about avoiding violence even, or especially, when undertaken to hallow God's name, to establish God's kingdom, and thereby to fulfill God's will..."

[John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer*, p. 167]

D. According to Crossan, the temptation referred to in the Lord's Prayer, our last and greatest temptation, is to use violence to establish God's Realm.

Clearly, a method used by Crusaders and terrorists.

But it goes even farther, as we are not to succumb even to the temptation to use **defensive** violence in establishing God's realm.

E. And that is probably our greatest and last temptation, because we haven't yet figured out how to do that.

VII. As we remember those who have died for this country, died to do what they believed was right; died in essence in an attempt to build God's realm; we must also remember Jesus.

- A. Before God's realm will be fulfilled, before it can be realized; we must learn how to overcome the temptation to use violence as a way to usher in, or even to protect, that realm.
- B. That realm will not be fulfilled until we learn the ways of peace.
- C. Until that time comes, we will need to remember those who have been dismembered from us because of our ineptitude, our ignorance, our unwillingness, our blindness, our inability to make war a thing of the past.

VIII. As we remember all those who have died, let us also remember Jesus so that in some glorious time to come, we will stop the violence that continues today to dismember loved ones from us.

And so we pray to God, even as we arm ourselves in defense and fight for the establishment and protection of God's realm – please dear God – teach us the ways of Peace.
AMEN.