

Community Church of Issaquah

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Do This in Remembrance

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Waiting in line for my usual skinny vanilla latte with no foam at a nearby coffee shop, I couldn't help but overhear a table full of older women sitting and loudly talking and laughing. One after the other would ask, "Do you remember. . . ." and would tell a quick story about someone formerly in their group who was no longer there. Most remembrances were clever and caused laughing out loud. One woman asked, "Do you remember when the toilet seat wasn't so low to the ground?" Even I laughed out loud. And then the last one I recall hearing asked, "Do you remember Janet? She always was the one person who could make us all feel good."

In our world today as older adults, remembering isn't as easy as it once was. Recently I was sitting in the waiting area of the hospital radiology department waiting for Paolo to complete a procedure. The man sitting nearby kept looking at me in a curious fashion until he asked, "You're Pastor Vincent, aren't you? Do you remember me?" I was embarrassed to admit that I didn't remember him and asked how we knew each other. He reminded me that he was a member of the church I had pastored in the 1980's. Forty years ago. That seemed like a good excuse not to remember him, but it was truly embarrassing.

Each of us spends some time on occasion thinking back and remembering people, experiences, or memories that bring a sense of joy. From the silly to the sincere, our minds are full of memories. We have done our own share of reflecting, and even now find that to be meaningful and uplifting. Do you still spend any time recalling some memories from your past? The reality is that while you are remembering someone else who was a part of our life, someone else is also remembering you. Like the gentleman in the waiting room, it made me aware that surely from time to time I might be remembered by another individual. That thought caused me to ask myself this question, “How am I being remembered?”

When I was in a conversation with my son and daughter-in-law recently about end-of-life legal issues, my son asked me what I would like to have written in my obituary. How’s that for some serious discussion? My response was that I didn’t feel an obituary was necessary, so he needn’t worry about that. I also shared that I didn’t feel that a memorial service was something I would suggest either. That caused me to spend a good bit of time reflecting on my life. My legacy. How do I want to be remembered?

The scripture passage today and our observance of communion or the Lord’s Supper brings that question to the forefront as we partake in this meaningful time together. There in the center of the words of Jesus to his disciples are the words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” The question follows, “how did Jesus want to be remembered?” Would his disciples sit at a table and reflect on the last time they had a meal with the man whom they

followed as disciples? When they ate bread would they only think about the broken loaf Jesus shared? Or the cup of wine that each one of them shared? The memories of Christ were surely different for the disciples following this final supper they had with Jesus. How would Thomas remember Jesus? Would he remember Jesus as the broken body whom he touched out of his disbelief? Would Thomas only think of Jesus when he saw a scarred man and recalled how Jesus had allowed him to touch his hands that had been nailed to a cross?

Would Peter only remember Jesus when the memory of his denying Jesus three times came to mind? Or when he saw water and remembered Christ walking to him and how he wanted to do that but began to sink? Would he reflect on the day Jesus went into the temple to worship and in anger overturned the tables of the money lenders? How exactly do we think Peter remembered Jesus?

Would Jesus be remembered as a kind miracle worker by the thousands of people who sat on a hillside while they were all fed fish and bread from just one small portion of food? Would they recall that experience as they might have shared their memories when the name Jesus of Nazareth was mentioned in a conversation?

How would Mary and Martha remember Jesus when he had come into their home and brought their brother Lazarus back to life? Was Jesus just a friend who had some powers they didn't understand but were grateful for? How was the leper's memory of Jesus formed when he was healed and given a new life? What did Matthew think of

Jesus when he was called away from his job as a tax collector and made a disciple? When Jesus said to remember him, what did he mean?

Every person that Jesus encountered in his short life on earth must have had a different memory of who he was and how he impacted their life. Though the desire of Christ was to be seen as one doing the work and will of his Heavenly Father, every person who came in contact with him during his earthly life must have seen and thought of him in a different light.

So, when Jesus sat in that upper room with his disciples knowing that his hours were fading, there was a reason he gave them directions about how he wanted to be remembered. The intent was not to have them recall his place in their life only once each year on a significant Jewish holiday. It was not a message to remember him only on the Feast of Passover observance. In truth, Jesus gave them instructions to remember him every day. Each time they ate bread at a meal and drank wine at a meal – those were the times that would cause the memory of Christ to be a part of their every day. When he gave them a piece of his bread and a sip from his glass of wine, he simply said, “Each time you do this, do it in remembrance of me.”

You and I likely don't have the same details about sitting at the table every day and having bread and wine daily. As an Italian growing up, that was a bit more common than it is today. Of course, pasta was also a part of the daily dinner menu. But in our lives today, we are brought to the

remembrance table only once each month during our church service. Does that mean that you and I only think about Jesus once a month? I doubt it.

Yet the question for each of us to answer is “Do you remember Jesus? When?” When does Jesus come to your mind? And equally important, how do you remember Jesus? In a few minutes you and I will be observing our observance of Communion. During that time, I want each of us to do an inner search to reflect on our own memory of who Christ is to us.

The second thing I wanted to share this morning is this: How do you want to be remembered? We aren’t in the process of writing our own eulogy today, but from time to time in our busy lives, it seems a wise move to think about what our legacy will be. With the flooding of divisive actions in our country today, I have often asked myself if many of these women and men who speak such unkind and hate-filled words really want that to be their legacy – how they will be remembered. That is both sad and not necessary if we are to truly practice our faith in Christ.

History is how lives and deeds are remembered. Though it’s doubtful that my life is going to be recorded in any national book of history, it’s always been important to me to keep in the back of my mind the fact that my life will be remembered. It’s a personal choice for each of us to plan and conduct our life in a realistic reminder of how we will be remembered. Let me ask you this question, “How do you want to be remembered?” And how do you remember others in your life who have touched your life in some way,

whether good or bad. How do you remember them and perhaps how do they remember you?

Remember. That's a powerful word and an even more powerful reality of our everyday life. Let us prepare now for a time of remembering our Lord Jesus Christ as we focus on the body and blood of the one who came for our redemption and the promise of life eternal with him.