

Patrick Yancey

3/25/2018

“Remember Us Jesus”

Philippians 2:5-11.

John 12:12-16, Luke 23:32-43.

## Opening.

- It had been an eventful week for Jesus and the disciples.
  - It all began with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
  - Jesus and the disciples had been traveling to Jerusalem to observe the Jewish Feast of the Passover, and when they reached Bethpage, Jesus sat on the back of a young donkey and he rode into Jerusalem.
  - A very large crowd greeted Jesus and the disciples as they approached the city, and many in the crowd spread their coats on the road, while others cut branches from the palm trees and spread those on the road.
  - Much like we saw as we opened worship this morning, children were among the crowd lining the parade route, as they laughed and waved their palm branches. There was much jubilation.
  - The crowds that went ahead of Jesus and the disciples and those that followed them were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!” Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
    - When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”
- And then- almost before anyone could say crucifixion- Jesus is enduring a slow and agonizing death, hanging from a cross.
  - He is crucified along with two criminals, one on either side of him.
  - As they are hanging there on their crosses, side-by-side, one of them mocks Jesus.
    - “If you’re really who you claim to be; if you’re really the King of the Jews, the Messiah, then climb down from that cross and save yourself!” he says.
    - “And while you’re at it, save me—and that other fellow over there, too.”

- But the other criminal wants no part of the mockery. Instead, he says to his fellow criminal, “Look, this man Jesus has done nothing wrong, but you and I are getting what we deserve.
- We’re going to die here, and we’d better spend what little time we have left worrying about what we’ve done and what God thinks of us.”
- And then he turns his head toward Jesus and says, **“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”**

### What will Jesus Remember?

- “Jesus, Remember Me,” says the criminal.
- Jesus will have time to remember- as he hangs from the cross- several hours, at least.
  - He will probably remember many things as his strength and his life slowly and painfully ebb away.
  - Thinking will help take his mind off of the extreme pain he is experiencing.
    - There are many things he could remember from this last week of his life- a week that began so triumphantly and now is coming to such a tragic end.
- He will probably remember eating the Passover meal with his disciples for the last time, making a new covenant with them in the sharing of the bread and the cup, and telling them that as often as they gather together, to do that in remembrance of him.
  - And yet, undoubtedly Jesus will also remember that at that very table was the one who would betray him—a close follower, the keeper of the purse—who sold him out for money.
  - And he will remember how his disciples became disturbed when he told them about this.
- And then surely Jesus will think about the other disciples—how they were as good a bunch of ordinary people as you could hope to find, coming from all walks of life; and yet, they never really quite got what the kingdom of God was all about, in spite of all of his teaching.
  - How, even as late as that last supper together, they were still arguing among themselves about who among them would be the greatest when he was gone!
- And then there was Peter—good old Peter.

- Impetuous; loyal to a fault; but with his own ideas about how a Messiah, a king, should act; and with courage that had its limits.
- Jesus will remember Peter. He will remember telling Peter when they ate that last meal together that he was praying that Peter's faith would not fail, and how, despite Peter's vehement assurance- "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"- three times that very night, Peter would deny knowing him.
- Surely, Jesus will remember going to the Mount of Olives to pray, and praying so intently that "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground."
  - Surely, he will remember asking God to change his destiny, to spare his life—and yet, asking that not his will, but God's will, be done.
  - Surely, he will remember how he found his disciples asleep—despite having asked them to stay awake and pray with him.
  - And how, as he was talking with them, Judas approached him and tried to kiss him.
    - To identify him as the would-be Messiah for the temple guards who would take him away.
  - Surely, he will remember how he was blindfolded, and mocked, and beaten by the guards- in spite of having told **one of his own** followers- a fellow who tried to use a sword to defend him- No more of this!"
  - Then, there were the appearances.
    - -Before the church elders, who swiftly condemned him and brought charges against him; .
    - Before Pilate, who tried to pass the buck to Herod when he found out that Jesus was a Galilean; .
    - And before Herod, who treated him with contempt and mocked him, and then passed the buck back to Pilate.
      - Who finally gave in to the pressure of the mob that had gathered crying, "Crucify him, crucify him!", and sentenced Jesus to death.
  - And Jesus remembers the long, agonizing walk to the place called Golgotha—The Skull—with Simon of Cyrene walking behind him, carrying the cross from which his body now hangs.
  - And he remembers the women by the side of the road, wailing for him.

- And now, he is on the cross, slowly dying as his muscles weaken and his breathing becomes more difficult, and a man he does not know, a criminal being crucified on the cross next to his, says, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

### **How we will be remembered.**

- We all want to be remembered after we die—by our families, our friends, our co-workers, the people who knew us, or knew of us.
  - And we hope that their memories of us will be favorable ones.
  - Most of you know that I recently lost my father in February.
    - And I’ve been thinking a lot about him since and I’ve been framing in my mind, those things I will remember most about him.
    - Just the other day, I was listening to some voicemails that he’d left for me this past year- because I want to remember the sound of his voice.
    - I got a chuckle out of one of those voicemails- he was rather miffed at me, because I hadn’t answered when he called and he made that rather clear in the message he left for me.
    - And I know that today, he’d be mortified if he thought that I’d remember him that way.
  - Now, that message was just a blip and that’s not what I will remember about him.
    - In going through his papers, I found a collection of the sermons he’d written during his time as a UM pastor and I’ll remember that he was good pastor, who was loved by the congregations he served.
    - I’ll remember how he cared for my mother, as Dementia slowly took her away from us and his fearless determination to keep her at home, with him, as long as possible.
    - And I’ll remember how it broke his heart to lose the love of his life.
    - I’ll remember that the last words he said to my brothers and I just before he died- “I love you guys.”
  - And as I reflect on all of those times, I remember my dad as a good and decent man who did the best he could to live into the life he was given.
- Isn’t that really what we all want?
  - We hope that we will be remembered as basically good, decent folks who did the best we could to live the lives we were given.

- And those of us who are followers of Jesus- we hope that he will remember us too, especially when he comes into his kingdom.

### **Jesus Remembers Us.**

- Jesus answers the man on the cross next to his by saying, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”
  - Surely if Jesus can remember a man he doesn’t know, he will remember us—won’t he?
  - Surely if Jesus can save a common criminal, he will save us—won’t he?
  - After all, we are his disciples.
  - No matter that we sometimes deny him or betray him through the things we say and do—or don’t say, or don’t do; .
  - No matter that we sometimes sell him out for money and other worldly pleasures; .
  - No matter that we often argue and fight among ourselves about who is the most important or influential in this life—and then step all over ourselves trying to get there; .
  - No matter that we talk peace, yet fail again and again when it comes time to walk the walk; .
  - No matter that we often profess our steadfast faith and courage, only to back down when we are asked to put it on the line—to take an unpopular stand on some critical issue; .
  - No matter that we fall asleep when we should be praying.
- All of this does matter, of course.
  - At times, Jesus must feel like he is being mocked, beaten, even crucified all over again by many of the things that we say and do to ourselves, and to others, every day.
  - Like the original disciples, we’re probably about as good a bunch of ordinary people as you could hope to find, coming from all walks of life, and yet, we too never really seem quite to have gotten what the kingdom of God is all about, in spite of all we have been taught.

### **Wrap It Up.**

- But what really matters is that we remember who Jesus is.

- The criminal on the cross recognizes who Jesus is; he acknowledges who Jesus is; and then he confidently asks Jesus to remember him.
  - He knows that even though he is a criminal; even though he is being punished justly for what he has done, he knows that he is not beyond redemption.
  - He is confident that Jesus can, and will save him because Jesus' love knows no bounds; no conditions; no limits.
- And so it is for us, as well.
- If we remember who Jesus is; if we acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God and claim him for our Lord and Savior, then we can just as confidently ask Jesus to remember us.
  - We can be just as confident that he will save us.
  - Through Jesus, God has taken the worst that the world has to offer and has come out on top—God has triumphed.
  - Through Jesus, God has gone through the darkest day in history and has brought the light of redemption into the world.
  - Jesus can take us, even in our darkest moments, and redeem us.
  - If we remember Jesus, Jesus will remember us.
- May it be so for us this day, and every day.

Amen