

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

LUKE 22:14-20

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf

of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Drink it in remembrance of me."

REMEMBERING

Psalm 23
Luke 22:14-20

This is Memorial Day weekend and as its name suggests, it is a day set aside for Remembering. Tomorrow will be the traditional Memorial Day event in Glendale which is preceded by a parade featuring the Princeton marching band processing through the village and ending up at the Monument across the street from the firehouse. All of the names of the Glendale veterans who gave their lives in the wars we fought will be read. There will be a speech and it will be concluded by Taps and a flyby of four World War I bi-planes which will soar directly over us. One will then break formation expelling smoke and fly off separately as a symbol of the lost pilot. It's very moving.

Remembering is an important spiritual activity for many reasons. Without your memory, you wouldn't be who you are. I have a friend whose

wife has advanced Alzheimer's and he says that she can't remember anything for more than a minute or two. He has to repeat himself and repeat himself ad infinitum. Nothing sticks in her brain. So if he needs to go somewhere, he either has to take her with him or have somebody stay with her because she will panic not Remembering where he went.

But beyond that, Remembering is a vital function in understanding who we are and interpreting our history. Without a memory, we would begin each day without a clue about who we are, what we are supposed to be doing and how it should be done. Who are these people? Where am I? Who am I? We wouldn't long survive.

Remembering is also critical to telling our life stories both to ourselves and to others. We older golfers are fond of the expression, "The older I get, the better I was." Memories explain where our journey has taken us and they are the seat of our self-esteem, our unhappiness, our regrets, our triumphs—everything there is about us. It is why our phone picture albums fill up to overflowing. While there are lots of memories, we wish we could forget, our snap shots are mostly filled with happy times and the people we love. We want to be reminded of the joys of our journeys because we all know that many of our memories are intertwined with loss and grief. So often the defining events of our lives are the endings. You

couldn't possibly count the people and pets you miss, the memories of whom pop up out of nowhere and cause us to re-experience the emotional trauma we once felt. And life is indeed filled with loss, whether it be slow physical or mental deterioration, job changes, downsizing, retirement, divorce, birth of a child, loss of freedom and spare time—the list is endless; and that's the problem. It's been said that anyone over 65 carries a hundred-pound weight of loss on their backs.

But that is only half the story. Because over a lifetime, we are locked into the memorial banks of untold numbers of other people. And their memories of us are important to them. We all want to be remembered for our accomplishments, our funny stories, our importance to those who were important to us.

I will tell you a funny story, I deposited into my memory bank about my brother whose memorial service was a month ago. It was during my last visit with him before he passed. We were all sitting around his bed yakking when he suddenly said, "I dreamed last night that this guy came to me wanting the money I owed him." And then he asked his wife, "Connie, do I owe anyone money?" She shrugged her shoulders and answered, "Not that I know of." And he exhaled a breath of relief and replied, "Good. I don't want to die owing anyone money." We care how we are

remembered.

Which brings us to our scripture this morning of the Last Supper which serves as the foundation for the Words of Institution we recite during our Communion service. *Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you. Whenever you eat of it, Remember me. In the same manner also, he took the cup and when he had drunk, he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood...Whenever you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim my death until we drink it anew in the kingdom of God.*

Jesus very much cared about how he was remembered. For he knew that his sacrifice could profoundly affect the consciousness of the world going forward. But if no one remembered, nothing would change.

Isn't it self-evident that our memories involve the intersections of change in both our personal and corporate histories? While change is good and necessary in the grand scheme of things, it also leaves us longing for that which does not change. To what can we cling when life confronts us with a new loss? Psalm 23 is so expressive of the constancy of God. *The Lord is my shepherd...He restores my soul...Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord*

forever.

Memorial Day weekend is overlaid with a sense of sadness which is pulled from us with the playing of Taps and the by-plane breaking formation. We long for the spiritual connection to the eternal which reassures us that God never abandons us through our journeys through the darkest of valleys. It is the desire for the restoration of our souls and the promise of everlasting life. And I believe any act that brings a good memory for someone else is what will bring us closer to the peace we all seek. Poet Maya Angelou wrote, "We will not be remembered for what we said or did, but for how people felt in our presence."

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