

On a Memorial Day weekend, we often pause to acknowledge the amazing gift that we have within us, the gift of memory and remembering. This helps us to grow and learn, as well as to keep the past with us as we travel in life. The idea of REMEMBERING is a very special concept in our Bible. I did some checking for us about the word REMEMBER within the Bible, and I found this: In Gen. 8, we are told that “God remembered Noah...” which was quite a good thing, because they were in the Ark cruising around with no land in sight! God remembered. In Gen. 19, God remembers Abraham, also a very good thing since Sodom and Gomorrah were both just blown up. Abraham is out there still running around. In Gen. 30, we are told that God remembered Rachel, who had not been able to have any babies. Now God remembers her, and she gives birth to her son Joseph. In our passage today God remembers the people of Israel who have been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. God remembers his covenant with the people. Simply to be remembered at all when you have been enslaved is a very good thing. In 1 Samuel God remembers Hannah who has had no children. God remembers her, and she has her son Samuel who becomes a great prophet of God, and anoints King David! It is good when God remembers you. In fact, it is a good thing that God remembers at all! God remembers...

I have enjoyed telling a story for many years now which actually goes back 40 years. In January of 1978 I was a freshman at Baldwin-Wallace, and I was in a class on Human Anatomy. For 10 weeks I studied very hard, had lab sessions

with a real cadaver, and I still remember key things from that experience. BTW, I like to tell people that 2 of my 3 science courses at B-W were in fact religious experiences for me; Human Anatomy was profound as was my course in Astronomy that next quarter. I remember from Human Anatomy seeing a real human brain. If you ever wondered, it looks like baloney ( which might make sense ) except that it is gray! So that is good to know! We have gray baloney in our heads. OK. But it would seem that we have more than that. Inside that tissue we have chemicals and we have electrical impulses, and due to that magical mix of baloney and chemicals and electrical impulses, we remember our grampa's face. We remember playing Little League baseball. We remember our first kiss. We remember, so many things. And all because of gray baloney, chemicals, and electrical signals! I must say that I am in awe of a computer hard drive that can remember so much stuff, or a little flash drive. But I'm not sure that any of it can top our gray baloney.

Today, on a somber weekend, which should **in fact** be a somber weekend, on this weekend we are asked to remember. We are gripped by the picture on the cover today. Sometimes we don't want to remember. We decide that it hurts, so we don't want to do it. We think it is unpleasant, so we don't want it. How often do we hear people suggest that things in the past need to be left in the past? I had a pretty dramatic situation 24 years ago with a church member who revealed to me that she had had things done to her as a little 8-year old by her brother and uncle, things that really damaged her life. At that point she

had been told by her mother **who knew all about what had happened to her** that the best thing for her was simply to sweep it all under the rug, to let it go, to act as if it had never happened. She asked me if that was in fact the best advice, that she just needed to say “Well, in spite of terrible things that happened to me when I was little, it is best to just forget all about it! Don’t remember anything! Isn’t that for the best?” Well, I told her NO! This started a big crisis that lasted for a few years. There were people involved who didn’t want anything to be remembered. The phrase which I heard again and again was to “sweep it all under the rug.” There is one huge problem with this. Eventually you will trip on the rug. And then you’ll see what kind of mess is hiding beneath.

We see in the Bible that when God remembers, good things happen. I wish we could look at that idea and realize that God intends the same for us. That is why such a gift was given in the first place. We grow and learn, we make mistakes and we learn, we grow and we understand, when we remember. And we also carry the past with us, which seems to be very necessary. By the way, the woman who went through some big upheaval in her life 24 years ago because she decided to REMEMBER, she is happy and healthy today. And that is a great thing.

When we were working on the bulletin cover and the picture for the screen that we will see at the end of the service, I was so gripped. We as Americans have been given such a valuable gift, but we really do not want to remember. The Civil War was a terrible moment in our history, possibly our worst by

far. But will we remember? Will we remember that Abraham Lincoln came to believe in his life that the war was in fact given to the US as punishment by God for the fact that enslaved humans were coming to our shores beginning in 1619? Abraham Lincoln believed that it was absolutely punishment from God to us. Ultimately Lincoln paid with his life as a part of this punishment. But people don't want to remember. They want to forget, or worse, to revise the past, to change the story and the facts. But this cannot be permitted. We can never forget that a rather large group of people were willing to fight to protect a system that benefitted very few, but that required the agreement that a large group of human beings would be treated like livestock. They are property, and anything that the owners wanted to do to them or with them was legal. And God's punishment came. If we do not remember this, perhaps new kinds of punishment will come as well. We might not like it. People don't want to hear about the Lynching Museum in Alabama. They don't want to hear about the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. They don't want to hear about the pain of the past. Sweep it under the rug! Just let it be gone. But that would be a tragic choice, and a serious mistake.

In the Bible, when God remembers, good things happen. God wants us to remember. We need to realize, especially this weekend, if we will remember we will be blessed, as people and as a nation. But if we choose not to remember, nothing good will come from it. Let's trust God's design for us. Let's trust that this amazing piece of gray baloney is in fact one of the greatest

gifts we will ever have. May we remember, in spite of the difficulty. And may we remember that when we are unjust, when we benefit from the wrongs done to others, when we just don't want to care, God will remember that too. May we use it to remember, as God always does. AMEN.