

Remember Me

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Introduction.

- A. Death is a frightening thought in many ways, and one of the things that is most frightening about it is the thought of oblivion. We fear the thought that one day, we will no longer be present on the earth, and neither will anyone else who even recalls that we existed. It's only natural, then, that we respond to the thought of our deaths with a plea to not be forgotten. We see one such plea in Christina Rossetti's poem "Remember."
- B. I don't think we often realize it, but we see another such plea in Luke 22:19-20. The more I study the Bible, the more I realize how incredibly complex an idea the Lord's Supper is, but there is undeniably a very human side to this command of Jesus, one of the last He ever gives before His crucifixion. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen, and it must have cast a pall over everything else. He was steeling Himself for the supreme challenge He was about to face, and His disciples weren't being any help at all. They were busy bickering about who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven, showing absolutely no sign they'd heard a single word He'd spoken during His ministry. Who in that situation wouldn't be afraid, not just of pain and death, but of not mattering, of being forgotten? It's in that context that we see Jesus asking, "Remember Me. Remember who I was. Remember that I loved you."
- C. That same command, that same plea, echoes down the centuries to us. It's a challenge. We are called upon to remember someone we never knew, to commemorate a life we never saw or experienced. We don't have the advantage of having spent three solid years with Jesus. We don't come to the Lord's Supper with the same experiences as Peter or John, who knew what His voice sounded like and what His favorite kind of fish was. And yet, we are called upon to remember Him anyway. Thankfully, the Scripture tells us all we need to know to carry out this earnest wish of our Lord. Let's look at it in answer to His plea, "Remember Me."

I. Remember What?

- A. If we want to remember Jesus, though, we first have to figure out what it is that we are supposed to be remembering. What makes Jesus worthy of our attention this morning? There are many possible answers that we come up with as we reconstruct Jesus from Scripture, but here are just a few. First, we should remember Jesus for **HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Peter mentions this in 1 Peter 2:21-22. Remember, friends, Peter was an eyewitness. He was constantly beside Jesus for three years, and during that time, he never saw Jesus lie, or get angry at someone He shouldn't have, or even be unloving. He never saw Jesus sin, even once. What would it be like to be around somebody like that? Somebody who kept the rules perfectly, who never so much as put a foot wrong? I've known some good people in my time, but I've never known anybody like that. I think it would be hard to believe even as it was unfolding in front of me, that each day, some part of me would be waiting for them to slip up. Peter saw Jesus die, but never saw Him slip. Even if Jesus had never done anything else with His life, that would be a monumental achievement, indeed, THE monumental achievement. We need to remember it. So often in our lives, we struggle with the inevitability of sin. We feel like we can't possibly resist the weight of temptation pressing down on us, like there's no choice but to bow to the will of Satan. Jesus shows that there always IS a choice, because He always made the right one.
- B. Similarly, we should remember Jesus for **HIS COMPASSION**. Look at how He's presented in Mark 1:40-41. This is probably one of the first acts of His ministry, and it gives us a glimpse into Jesus' mind. It shows us what His motivation was throughout His ministry. He empathized with people, wanted to help them, and did. Even though we do not live in a very compassionate world today, we still value displays of compassion when we see them. You could argue, in fact, that the TV show "Extreme Home Makeover" is in the business of selling and marketing compassion. If nobody cared, the show's advertising would dry up, and it would go off the air. As we celebrate compassion, though, no one's compassion deserves more celebration than Jesus. The Florida quarterback Tim Tebow gets a lot of air time on ESPN because he traveled to the Philippines to be part of a medical mission. Tebow, though, didn't travel half as far as Jesus. Jesus left behind the perfect bliss of heaven to come down here to the dirt and the muck and the stink of human existence, not because He was forced to, but because He deliberately chose to. That kind of compassion is worth remembering.
- C. Likewise, Jesus is worth remembering because of **HIS TEACHING**. We see an important snippet from the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 10:29-31. Ideas like this were and indeed are revolutionary. We live in a natural universe that, to all outward appearances, doesn't care one lick about us. It's obvious that we have a Creator, but it's not so obvious how we can get in touch with Him, or even if He has any interest whatsoever in us. Moses revealed to the people that God had expectations for their conduct, but his portrayal of God was so distant that to this day, the Jews refuse even to utter His name. Not so with Jesus. He taught that God was not just our Creator, but our Father. He's not just a CEO far away in heaven who likes ordering us little peons around. He is a loving, caring God who is more near to each one of us than we could imagine, so much so

that He knows the number of hairs on our heads. Once we get that, it makes the world a very different place to live in. We know that God is constantly working for our good, and that eventually, that good will be worked out. That's an immeasurably comforting thought, and it's not a thought that we would have without the teaching of Jesus. We ought to remember Him for the grace of teaching us that.

- D. We also need to remember **HIS FEAR**. Look at the way this is presented in Matthew 26:38-39. Here, we see another glimpse of the humanity of Jesus. I think there's a temptation to take what Jesus went through for granted. It's like we think the rules are different for the Son of God than for the rest of us, that it was no big deal for Him to live sinlessly, then to march up to the cross and demand to be crucified. Life wasn't that serene for Jesus. Sure, He possessed the eternal Spirit of God, but He also had a normal, frail, suffering human body that argued back a lot. He had that innate desire to continue living, no matter what. That's why we see Him pleading with God to let Him not die. Jesus could have gotten out of the crucifixion, there's no doubt about that. He had the twelve-legions-of-angels solution, just for the asking. He never asked, not in a way that made it clear that He wanted God to answer Him. His purpose was more important to Him than His pain. As strong as His fear was, His love for us was stronger. We should remember Him for that.
- E. We should also remember **HIS SUFFERING**. This is briefly described in John 19:1-3. Let's talk about the violence of this first. One of the blessings of living in the US today is that we are pretty well insulated from outbursts of random violence. Very few, if any, of us have really been worked over physically. Not so for Jesus here. He was scourged. For those of you who aren't familiar with the torture implements of the ancient world, a Roman scourge was a whip, probably with multiple strands, with slivers of metal and bone embedded in the heads. I leave it to your imaginations to consider what such an implement would do to someone's bare back. Suffice it to say that even if Jesus had not been crucified, the scourging would likely have killed Him in a few days anyway. That's an awful punishment to think about, even when a hardened criminal is on the receiving end. In this case, the recipient was Jesus, who had never wronged anybody. As if that weren't enough, He was mocked for being the King He was and beaten again, once again, for us.
- F. Finally, though, we should remember **HIS DEATH**. One account of this appears in John 19:28-30. As always with Scripture, the prose here is very spare. As John tells it, it doesn't sound too painful. There are reasons for that, but we should also remember the reality of what happened. The Romans took a normal healthy thirty-year-old human body and wrecked it to the point where it was incapable even of remaining alive. This was the result of that process. Nor was the destruction of the temple of His body all that Jesus had to deal with. He also groaned beneath the weight of all the sins of the world. No one ever died a death like that before, and no one ever will again. He died without deserving it, without being forced to. He died because He chose to, for love of us. In Psalm 137, the psalmist asks that if he forgets Jerusalem, he will never play or sing again. If we forget Jesus, we might as well forget everything else too, because this is the most important.

II. **Why Remember?**

- A. These are just some of the things we could remember. If we wanted to recite all the things about Jesus worth remembering, we'd have to just read all four Gospels. There are reasons, though, why we need to remember these things. First, we should remember **TO MOURN HIM**. Ultimately, of course, the story of Jesus is a happy one. It leads to exaltation for Him and for all of us. However, that's not the part of the story we're told to focus on as we partake of the Lord's Supper. Look at Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 11:26. We don't use the bread and cup to proclaim the Lord's resurrection until He comes. We proclaim His death. As we eat and drink this ritual meal, we say very simply, "We remember. We haven't forgotten what Jesus did, and we promise that we will never forget it." For the rest of our lives, once a week, we bring the past back into the light and we dwell on it. There is some joy in that, as we remember how wonderful Jesus was while He was alive, but this memory is predominantly sorrowful. His perfect life was extinguished, snuffed out by evil men who envied and hated Him. The greatest good the world has ever seen was overpowered by the greatest evil. On the most basic level, that is worth remembering. That is worth mourning. It's even more worth mourning when we realize that it happened ultimately because of the sin we have chosen to commit.
- B. Even more than that, we should remember **TO LIVE FOR HIM**. The death of Jesus is the most riveting event ever to occur on the planet. Once we look at it, really look at it, we can't look away anymore. We can't just shrug our shoulders and continue on unchanged. Because He lived the way He did, because He taught what He taught, because He died the way He did, it changes the way we live our lives. Paul describes this process in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. We are compelled—some translations say controlled—by the love of Jesus. When He died, we died too. Sure, we still have free will, but if we are any kind of decent people at all, we will subordinate that will to Jesus. He deserves it. He gave everything for us, so everything within us demands to be given back to Him. We resolve that this week, we're going to win that battle with sin that we usually lose, because of Jesus. This week, we're going to be more loving to our family, our friends, and our neighbors. This week, and for all the weeks to come, we're going to live for Him. That's the true remembrance that He demands: showing Him that He matters to us in the most powerful way we can.

Conclusion (after Lord's Supper). If you want to live for Jesus, now is the time to begin.