

Your Remembrance

May 26, 2019

Pastor Tom Ford

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John 14:

[26] But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Grace to you and peace, from God Our Father and Our Lord and Savior Jesus The Christ!

I'll let you in on a little secret. My wife is a Sudoku addict. It is a puzzle involving inserting numbers into the empty squares in every direction to fill a 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 sub-grids that compose the grid - also called "boxes", "blocks", "regions", or "sub-squares" - contains all of the digits from 1 to 9. The puzzle setter provides a partially completed grid, which typically has a unique solution. It is a great mental exercise that simulates the brain and keeps it healthy. Elsie does it with a cup of coffee every morning as soon as the LA Times arrives.

I would rather memorize. Select Bible passages or hymns and commit them to memory: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds, the Beatitudes, the names of the 12 disciples, the names in order with correct spelling of the 66 books of the Bible, Martin Luther's explanations in the Small Catechism, the 23rd Psalm, the 1st Psalm, the 100th Psalm, Luke 2:1-21, John 1:1-14 and John 14:1-6. I also like to memorize the poetry of the liturgy and hymns through the repeated singing of the liturgy and the hymns from the various hymnals.

Now, in high school when we studied Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales under Mrs. Faggart, she made us memorize the first 18 lines of the Prologue in Middle English. This is how English was spoken at the time of Chaucer:

**WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote,
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth 5
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth**

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The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages,
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende 15
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

Ok. Now, it's your turn! What do you remember? What is today? It's the Sunday before Memorial Day, the day on which we remember and give thanks to God for the sacrifices of our dear loved ones who gave their lives in military service for their country. What is today? It is Sunday, the day we celebrate Our Lord's saving Death and Resurrection by eating bread and drinking wine and remembering.

As a Pastor, I need to rely; I really need to rely on your ability to remember. You do have a good memory, don't you?

In your faith journey thus far, what would you say are the most important things to remember?

I urge you to remember two things and two things only.

So, what are the two things everyone here should remember? (Pause) Now, I remember!

The first is: Jesus Christ is Lord!

That is the basic faith story we are entrusted with as Christians. It is the basic faith story into which we were baptized. It is the basic faith story which we are called on to confirm for ourselves. It is the basic faith story we hold up here for all who are members or would be members here. Jesus Christ is Lord!

A man I met one night years ago in Riverside who eventually won the Nobel Peace Prize, a man named Eli Weisel, as a Jewish lad, went with his parents during the Holocaust to the internment camp at Auschwitz. He saw his mother and his sister go to the incinerators and he alone of the family survived. Eli Weisel has written stories about Jewish faith and the Jewish past and he has one story I want you to hear today.

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It is a story about the Jews in Eastern Europe. During the terrifying centuries when they were constantly persecuted and whole Jewish communities, mostly by the Christians, were annihilated, it was the custom that when a particular disaster confronted the Jewish community that the Rabbi would go into the forest to a certain place, say a certain prayer, light a fire and tell the story and the disaster would be averted. And it was. And a hundred years later another threat came and Rabbi Ben Ephriam was called upon by God to do the same thing. And he said, "O my Lord, I know the place, I can light the fire, I forget the prayer, but I remember the story." And the disaster was averted. And then in another generation, another threat came and Rabbi Ben Ezer was called upon. He said, "Oh, Adonai, our Lord, I know the place but I have forgotten how to light the fire and I've forgotten the prayer but I remember the story." And it was sufficient. And then, finally, there came another disaster and Rabbi Asbauch had to go into the forest and he said, "Lord, I have forgotten the place. I have forgotten the prayer. I can no longer light the fire, but I remember the story." And it was sufficient.

When those of you who are present here come to the end of your Christian lives, and as you go through your Christian lives from this day forward, I hope you remember the story.

Jesus Christ is Lord! It will be sufficient.

The second thing I urge you to remember is that the Christian faith is a faith that never gives up, because we believe in the ultimate victory in the Resurrection to Eternal Life through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a lot of death and death dealing in this world. Memorial Day brings that home to many of us. And as we confront death there is always the temptation to surrender to depression and despair. But we remember today that we are born of The Water and The Spirit and we believe in the ultimate victory of Resurrection!

In the early days of the Second World War when most of Europe was overrun by the Nazi armies, a little story went around among the peoples of defeated countries. It was not a true story but it was one that gave people hope and helped them to look forward to a better day. It renewed their faith in the victory of the allies one day and upheld the edict of Winston Churchill that they would never give up.

According to the story Prime Minister Churchill of England was invited by Hitler and Mussolini to a villa in Paris. They had lunch together on a patio and nearby there was a pool with fish swimming about. After lunch, over tea, Hitler came to the point and said: "Now look Churchill: Your armies are defeated, we have overrun Europe, and the only sensible thing for you to do is surrender." Churchill thought for a moment and then he said, "I don't believe we are defeated, but I'll tell you what let's do. Let's have a contest and the winner of the contest will be declared the winner of the war." "What kind of contest?" snapped Hitler. "Well, said Churchill, "Let's have a contest to see who can catch any of these fish in this pool without using any regular fishing equipment." So Hitler and Mussolini agreed.

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First of all Mussolini jumped into the pool and tried to catch the slippery fish with his hands. But at last he pulled himself out of the pool gasping for breath. Then Hitler took his turn. Taking his pistol he began to fire at the fish swimming around but bullets had no effect at all. Finally his pistol was empty. With Mussolini glaring, Hitler angrily turned to Churchill and said, "Your turn." Churchill said nothing but took his tea spoon and went to the pool and began to dip the spoon into the water. With each dip he would throw the water over his shoulder. After a time Hitler and Mussolini could stand it no longer and said, "What in the world are you doing?" Churchill kept dipping and throwing water over his shoulder, and without turning his head to them said, "It's going to take a long, long time, but we are going to win the war."

Remember that. We are going to win the war. Death and all death dealing, despair and all depression will be defeated. The ultimate victory in the Resurrection is assured. And that is all the assurance we need or really can have for living our Christian lives in the present and from this day forward. We are going to win the war.

Remember then these two things and these two things only:

Jesus Christ is Lord!
We are going to win in the Resurrection!

May the Holy Spiritbring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Amen

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