

**JOKE:** Memorial Day was coming up, and the nursery school teacher took the opportunity to tell her class about patriotism.

She began to explain the sacrifice that so many had made and how we should honor them because of that.

She said, "We live in a great country, and one of the things we should be happy for is that, in this country, we are all free."

Little Billy came walking up to her from the back of the room. He stood with his hands on his hips and said, . . .

"I'm not free. I'm four."

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## **We remember - Memorial Day 2024**

### **Show Memorial Day video**

As I get older there is something that I struggle with. Honestly, I have always struggled with and that is I have to work hard to remember things, even some of the things that matter to me.

Birthdays, I know mine and Joys, and John's as well, I think I know the months of the others. If I think long and hard I can probably come up with the dates. As for the years they were born that I would have to give some thought to, maybe even search their Facebook profile and hope that the info is there. My anniversary got that one down pat, that's Tuesday. But I'm sure I'm not the only one that struggles with dates, or remembering those moments or

events that took place, the people or pets, the list could go on and on of the things we forgot about.

We often forget the things that matter to us. Not because we want to, not because we're heartless, but simply because we're human. And in my case older.

We need help remembering. And if you're like me and struggle in that area take heart, it's been that way for a long time.

God knows that we often forget as well. . .

Psalm 106:21 - They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt,

We forget. . .

I can remember one incident Joy and I were in a park in Saugatuck years ago and out of the blue someone yells out, "Hey George." I looked over say him. He looked familiar, but for the life of me to this day I have no clue who it was. I'm pretty sure I went to school with him, but all I could say in that moment was hey dude been a long time.

And in the Old Testament we're introduced to one of the tools used in ancient times to help people remember. These tools were called Altars of Remembrance. The book of Joshua gives us a great example.

Joshua 4:1–7 (NIV): When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” 4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

The memorial stones were to be a reminder of their own personal experience. And in verse six it mentions that this memorial will cause the children to ask; “What do these stones mean?”

As the family passes by dad is asked, “what do they mean to you you?”

I was at work Friday and one of my co-workers asked if I believe in healing and of course I said I do. He personally has never seen it, oh he’s watched a few YouTube things clips, but unfortunately some of those aren’t all that accurate. He asked me what my experience has been. So, I shared a few. As I mentioned he personally has

never experienced anything personally. He even said hard to not believe in it if you have experienced it. He understood it's hard to argue with a personal experience. When you have had an altar of remembrance established in your heart

And these stones were to be a reminder to all those who were present of their personal experience, what they saw, heard and felt.

It went on to say that it will serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?'

In other words, tell your story, Keep a clear memory of what God did for you. Keep on telling your stories so that you never lose your own sense of awe and wonder of what God has done in your life.

I want you to consider a moment: "What kind of memorials do you have in your life?" Whether you realize it or not we all have memorials in our lives, no not a monument of stones, but one built of memories.

There are memories, places that trigger memories just as the memorial stones in Gilgal. There are some significant places in your life, experiences that you've had that evoke memories.

In Deuteronomy 6:12 Moses issued a final warning to Israel just before they entered the promise land. . .he said, "be careful that you do not forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt..."

The meaning of word for memorial is "to remember."

There's another aspect of this memorial and that was to show God to those who did not yet know him.

Joshua 4:24 (NIV): He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.”

Not only were these stones a time of remembering what God had done, and a sign for all the people that would pass by but it also says this. . .

Joshua 4:19–20 (NIV): On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. 20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

And church this is significant that it happened on the tenth day of the first month, this is exactly forty years, since Israel marched out of Egypt.

Leaving the edge of the river, the Israelites went to a place called Gilgal to make their camp.

Gilgal means, rolling

And hear this church, because of what Jesus did for us our reproach has been rolled away. We are a new creation.

in Joshua forty years of spiritual defeat and failure have been rolled away. It was the dawn of a great new beginning in a new land. The

days of complaining was ended, hopeless wandering in the wilderness was behind them. They were now a people with a new sense of purpose, determined to take new territory with God.

For us today we need to look back and see those monumental occasions which stand out as times in which God has changed our directions and give us new hope and a new sense of purpose.

Because our reproach has been removed, rolled away, because of what Christ did on our behalf.

Jesus died, sacrificed Himself, took our place, so that we can live. So that we can have life abundantly, and walk out the destiny He has called us into.

Paul tells us. . .

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (NIV): For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Of what importance? First importance, why?

Skipping down to verse 17. . .

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NIV): And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

If the stone placed in front of that tomb had never been rolled away and there was no resurrection we would have no purpose in being here.

So, It's important to remember the resurrection. It is really the basis of the New Covenant. Of our new life.

And the good news is we never have to go back to visit our reproach because what Jesus did he died once for all.

Hebrews 9:25–26 (NIV): Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And then in Peter's first letter he writes:

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV): For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

We need to remember Christ. He made the ultimate sacrifice.

I honor our fallen men and woman because they have allowed for my freedom here. But I was bought with a price and that was Christ.

And it's in Him that we are made truly free.

God saw value in me, in you, in each of us. And sent His Son to die on our behalf that we could become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We must never forget.

The monument that was built with those twelve stones that we looked at in our text was to serve as a visible reminder of the faithfulness of God.

And church know this Philippians 1:6 tells us,

Philippians 1:6 (NIV): being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God will finish in you what He started. Nothing in your current circumstances caught God off guard. He will work all things out for your good and His glory.

Remember Paul Harvey? I always loved his news bits and he had a piece called the rest of the story and one that he shared was called, "The old man and the gulls." Let me share it with you. . .

It is gratitude that prompted an old man to visit an old broken pier on the eastern seacoast of Florida. Every Friday night, until his death in 1973, he would return, walking slowly and slightly stooped with a large bucket of shrimp. The sea gulls would flock to this old man, and he would feed them from his bucket. Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour



which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life.

Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean. For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark. . .ten feet long. But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain them. And a miracle occurred.

In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B-17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off."

Now this is still Captain Rickenbacker talking. . ."Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food. . .if I could catch it."

And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish.

The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it.

And now you also know. . .that he never forgot. Because every Friday evening, about sunset. . .on a lonely stretch along the eastern Florida seacoast. . .you could see an old man walking. . .white-haired, bushy-eyebrowed, slightly bent. His bucket filled with shrimp was to feed the gulls. . .to remember that one which, on a day long past, gave itself without a struggle. . .like manna in the wilderness.

And now you know the rest of the story.

And church. . .

Galatians 5:1 (NIV): It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

And what this Scripture was talking about is that many others besides the Jew were coming to Christ and the church in Galatia was struggling with it all.

They were saying they needed to be circumcised, but Paul came along wrote this letter telling them, no you don't. Paul was reminding them that the Law doesn't save. It's only ny God's grace.

It's not about religion it's about relationship.

And Church truth is there are so many bond by religious duties. Thinking they need to perform.

And listen, I'm not against religious disciplines I believe they are important.

We need to read the Word for in it is the bread of life.

We need to pray, Jesus told us ask and it will be given seek and you shall find.

We need to come to church and be in community because Scripture reminds us forsake not the assembling of yourself together. It's how we learn, how we grow, we were made for community.

But if you think that doing those things are your ticket to eternity you are greatly mistaken. If you think those things gets God to love you more, please Him more, well that's not the case either.

It's a relationship with Jesus not religious duties, it's because of what He did not what you do. It's His grace not obeying a bunch of laws.

And here's the thing when you are in a relationship with Him it causes you to walk different you begin to walk according to the Spirit. Your new nature and because you are the righteousness of God that righteousness produces the fruit of holiness. And you do things not to be in God's good graces, but simply because you are God's child.

And let me say this grace that is not leading to transformation is perversion. Grace is God's ability and empowers us to say no to sin.

Hear this church, it's not about you, it's all about Him and what He did.

So, today as we remember, we also know that we have an immeasurable hope for the future. Jesus wins, end of story. And one of the specific ways we keep this reality at the forefront of our minds is by sharing communion together.

Communion, just like the altars we discussed, is a powerful tool of remembrance. By sharing in communion with one another we remember the sacrifice of Christ as we look forward to His return.

Let's be honest as soon we wake up before our feet hit the ground there are a thousand things competing for our attention.

We can scroll Facebook, send out emails, see how many likes our posts received in just a couple minutes.

And when Jesus walked the disciples through the first Communion, He commanded them to remember. After both breaking the bread and taking the cup of wine, Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me"

God doesn't need to remember; Forgetfulness isn't something He deals with. God doesn't have amnesia. Oh, there's one thing he chooses to forget, do know what that is?

Hebrews 8:12 (NIV): For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

So, this remembering thing it's for us. We seem to forget something as soon as we turn around. We get distracted, busy with less important things.

We just looked at a few verses in the Old Testament and when I read of the Israelites forgetting the miraculous way God showed up for them just a few chapters prior, part of me wants scream at the pages and yell, hey remember how God did that thing for you. . .but then I think about my own life.

In Deuteronomy, the Israelites are about to enter into the Promised Land. They've wandered the desert for 40 years, having been supplied for and guided supernaturally the whole journey. Almost an entire generation has passed away, and the children of those who fled from Egypt are about to walk into the "land flowing with milk and honey"

But first, Moses gives them some instructions from the Lord. In the first verse of Chapter 11, he says. . .

Deuteronomy 11:1 (NIV): Love the Lord your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.

But then he clarifies the commandment.

Moses says that the people who have seen the miracles of the Lord, the ones who lived through the parting of the Red Sea and the provision of manna, are the ones with the responsibility.

In other words those that had the encounter, the experience, that saw it happen. They are the ones that need to remember.

So, it continues. . .

Deuteronomy 11:2–5 (NIV): Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the Lord your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; 3 the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his whole country; 4 what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the Lord brought lasting ruin on them. 5 It was not your children who saw what he did for you in the wilderness until you arrived at this place,

Watch this. . .

Deuteronomy 11:7 (NIV): But it was your own eyes that saw all these great things the Lord has done.

He's telling them, I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen all the Lord your God—His greatness, the signs and His works which He did. . .”

I can imagine Moses trying to get through to them, “Guys, please, no more of this idol business. Remember who God is and whose you are. Tell your children. Talk about it all of the time. Use any memory tool that will help you. Whatever it takes, pit down your stones, write it on your forehead, if you think that will help!”

And when we take Communion “in remembrance” of what Jesus did on the cross, we are stewarding the greatest testimony in history.

The Israelites escaped Egypt after ten supernatural plagues occurred. They walked through the Red Sea on dry land. They were led by pillars of cloud by day and fire by night. They were fed supernaturally with manna from heaven, they never got sick, and think about this one, they wore the same clothes for 40 years.

Yet they didn’t have Jesus. They didn’t have the cross or the resurrection. They didn’t have a Savior that took away the sins of the world. Or the Holy Spirit in them. We with better promises. You and I, we get that honor.

In our past, we have what God has done—all of the stories of His faithfulness and His grace. and in our present, we must remember those testimonies, they help us to build trust in God, and to build faith in others. Listen if He did it for me, He will do it for you. If He did it for you He will do it for me. If He did it once He’ll do it again.

So, let’s pray then do communion together and remember all that Christ has done. And let us come with thanksgiving, honor, and praise for what He did for us.