

**Foundations: In the Beginning... REMEMBERING THE COVENANT
Genesis 9:8-17 (June 25, 2017-Lord's Supper)**

The ability to remember is a wonderful thing. The older I get, the more I realize this. It's a gift from God—to remember.

Think about this: In a flash, we can be children again, skipping rocks across a pond, or playing with our favorite childhood pet. We can fall in love, get married, and have our children all over again. It all happens up here, in our memories.

Of course, memory is important in some very practical ways. If we couldn't remember that a red light means "stop," we'd be in trouble. If you can no longer remember that, please stop driving!

If you've ever been to the British Isles or other places where they drive on the wrong side of the road—they drive on the left there—when you return home, you have to remember to drive on the right side of the road. It gets confusing. Even worse, though, if you can't remember not to text and drive!

Failing to remember causes all kinds of problems: say, you forget your anniversary or your special someone's birthday. Some of you know this from personal experience, don't you?

As wonderful as this ability to remember is, it's not a perfect system. Sometimes we forget things that we really need to remember.

Have you ever wracked your brain trying to recall that fancy password you came up with? No one would ever be able to figure that one out—not even you! Been there and done that.

Or how many times have we said, "I don't need to write that down--I'll remember it." But then we couldn't.

Have you ever known someone who would tie a string around their finger, thinking that would help them remember? Sure it will. We do all kinds of things... stick-it notes, "To Do" lists—but sometimes we still forget!

It's not just us, friends. The problem is quite old. I looked to see how many times the words "remember, remembering, and remembrance" occur in the Bible. It's too many times to count.

Here's a well-known example. Two weeks ago, we read about the Great Flood found in Genesis 6. Today, we come to the ninth chapter of Genesis. The flood has subsided. The ground is dry, and everyone is off the ark.

God chooses to enter into a new covenant with His people, and with the rest of His creation. We find this account in **Genesis 9:8-17:**

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will *remember* my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

God says: "I will remember.... I will see the rainbow, and I will remember this covenant between us."

Josh has been leading us in a study of the book of Joshua this summer. I don't know why he's so partial to that book.

Anyway, we looked at the story of how the waters of the River Jordan stopped flowing as the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the water. They stood in the middle of the

riverbed until all the people had crossed safely into the Promised Land.

Joshua then told twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, to go into the middle of the riverbed and select twelve large stones. They brought those stones to the bank of the river and used them to make a monument.

Then Joshua says to them, **“In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 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.” (Joshua 4:6-7)**

A memorial is something that helps us remember. Some things ought never to be forgotten. There are special days and times in the Bible designed to help us remember specific events. God knows He needs to jog our memories.

The Lord’s Day—the Sabbath—for instance. We looked at this text a few weeks back. For six days, God created the heavens and the earth; then, on the seventh day, He rested.

God consecrated and blessed that day—the Sabbath--a day for God’s people to rest and worship and thank the Lord for His blessings. **“Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy”** God’s commandment says. This is another way they would demonstrate their covenant relationship with God.

Remembering is an essential part of worship. We come here to remember what God has done for us. We come here to remember that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, that He’s conquered sin and death, and gives us victory over them. (Baptism pictures this for us—death, burial, and resurrection. Every time we see...)

We come here to celebrate the majesty and goodness of God and to rejoice in His love for us. We sing about His faithfulness and holiness, His mercy and grace.

We gather here today to remember all that God has done for us. We come to re-examine our lives, and renew our commitments.

The Lord’s Supper is spread before us. *It’s* here...to help us remember—sort of like a monument set up before us on this

table—a memorial made not of stones, but of serving trays. It's like that rainbow in the sky, or a string... tied around our hearts.

It was on the night before His crucifixion that Jesus gathered with His disciples in the Upper Room. As they celebrated Passover, He gave them the bread and the cup, and said, "Do this in remembrance of me." It was essential that they remember this moment, and remember what it was about.

Today, as we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper, I want us to consider this passage from the New Testament. Paul was concerned about a divisive spirit in the church at Corinth.

Evidently there were some in the church there who felt superior to others. Paul lets them know of his concern, and then relates these concerns to the Lord's Supper. Listen:

I Corinthians 11:23-25--For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

"Remember me," Jesus said, "when you eat this bread and drink this cup." The bread and cup are on-going reminders of Jesus, memorials to His broken body and shed blood, reminders of His sacrifice and love. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

And when Paul wrote about this, he added, "**Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes**" [I Corinthians 11:26].

Do you understand what this means? When you and I partake of this meal, we're remembering—yes—but also proclaiming to all those who are sharing this meal with us, "I believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am cleansed by His blood; I have the promise of forgiveness and eternal life in Him."

We may not be able to speak eloquently or always express our beliefs clearly. But we can proclaim the Lord's death by gathering

around this table and sharing in this meal. Friends, there's so much to remember when we do.

As we partake of the bread and cup, we remember that we are one in Christ. The church in Corinth was struggling with this—they seemed to be forgetting about their unity in Christ.

I find it interesting that when Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper here, it's just after he's written this: **"I hear (dear friends, dear fellow believers)... I hear there are divisions among you."**

He goes on to express deep regrets over these conflicts. And he's very intentional—very purposeful—in calling out this disunity before he talks about Holy Communion.

The Lord's Supper, you see, focuses on the "holy communion" our Lord intends for us to experience in the church. It speaks to the unity our Lord looks for among His people—among us.

Paul says that "Those who share together in the body and blood of Christ should never allow such divisions to exist among them."

Earlier Paul writes: **"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." (I Cor. 10:15-16)**

Coming to the Lord's Table reminds us that our unity in Christ is a precious blessing; and here's why. It's sin that separates us from God. And it's also sin that separates us from one another.

So we're told to examine our lives. Before we share this meal together, we're to look for any sins that could divide us—from God, or from each other. Paul told us not to partake of this meal without first examining our lives.

Receiving the Lord's Supper makes a statement. It says that we "get it" that we're sinners. We "get it" that we're died for--every one of us—and we understand fully why this was necessary.

We also "get it" that no one among us is better than anyone else. Nor is anyone above anyone else.

When we say that “the ground is level at the foot of the cross,” we know this to be the Gospel truth. We all need God’s mercy and forgiveness... equally.

So now, as God’s word teaches, let’s examine ourselves. If there’s anything in my life or yours today that separates us from God or from one another, now is the time to confess it.

Now is the time to let that sin be crucified with Christ—so that we can be ONE—one with our Lord, and through Him, one with each other: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all--one Body in Christ!

The Church’s One Foundation in Jesus Christ her Lord...

For Bulletin:

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Read them again and pray as the offertory is played.**

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will *remember* my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." ¹⁷ So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth." (**Genesis 9:8-17**)

"In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 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." (Joshua 4:6-7)

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this

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