

Reminiscere (Second Sunday in Lent): March 17, 2019
“Remember? Remember!”

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. On this Reminiscere Sunday, we will focus on our Gospel Lesson Matthew 15, especially these words, “**Matthew 15:26-28.**”

Last week we focused on call, today we shift to remember. Remembering is important. So much so, Jesus said, “***The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.***”¹ Remembering is of such significance that One Person of the Trinity is devoted to that task. Remembering is a work of God.

So the question is what should one remember? We could argue about many important things to remember. We commit many things to memory, and task our children to do the same. Above all, the Scriptures proclaim there is one thing needful, and the Canaanite woman in our text is a great example.

To fully appreciate this text, remember last week’s text. Jesus was tempted by the devil to have another God. Last week we see how trials and temptations are sent by God through the face of the Evil One. Today, we behold another picture. In some ways, the other side of the coin. This morning, we see how trials and testing can be seen through the face of God. Again, remember Deuteronomy, “***You shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.***”²

Last week we heard the faithful work of Christ and the place He went for strength. Today, we see the same in the life of His saints. When all signs point us otherwise, we must hold God according to His Word. We cannot search the hidden mind of God. We cannot guess at what He is thinking. When it seems as though He is concealing His grace from us, we cannot understand God by looking at our feelings, or our thinking, we must only see Him according to His Word, and hold Him accountable to it.

¹ John 14:26

² Deuteronomy 8:2

The Word seems so simple, and it is. It is written for children to hear and strengthen their faith. ***“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”***³

Because of its simplicity, it often gets mistaken for childish, or foolish. Many men fall into the lack of reading and constant study of the Scriptures. Many men fall away from the hearing of the Word. It is no secret that more women than men are taking responsible leadership roles of faith in the home and in the church. The worldly man and the Biblical man do not exhibit the same qualities today. To need faith, to rely on someone else, is seen as weak in the world. A child must rely on others, not a man.

Men don’t like to be told what to do, right guys? To be fair, women don’t either. Now, if I were to ask you what I have talked about it the first page and a half, what would you say? I would bet many got stuck right about the part where I divided men and women; not many would remember the text, which is about the often hidden face of God.

Brothers and sisters, that’s the point. There are many things that will cause us to become offended at one thing or another. There are many things that will cause us to stop our listening, and cloud our remembering. The temptation is to remember the sin, and not remember forgiveness. There is even times when we are tempted to forget God’s forgiveness. Like the Canaanite woman, it seems as though God turns His face away, God’s servants turn us away, and we are designated as dogs; not nice and friendly pets, but those who are outside the people of God. Our thoughts and feelings may lead us to see ourselves as animals, merely subjected to our baser, natural instincts of pleasure. There are times when God seems to have removed His gracious hand from us.

Don’t misunderstand, God is not our enemy. With St. Paul in Romans 8, we must confess that we are His enemy, or rather, our sinful flesh is. Our sinful nature seeks to do everything against God and His will. Like dogs, we have to be trained. Like the woman, what else can we say but, “Yes. I am a dog. I need a master. I need a home. I need to be fed. I need to be trained.”

³ John 20:31

Even when God looks like this woman's enemy, she confesses Jesus as Lord. She takes Him right to the mat. She acknowledges Him as the Son of David, the Christ, the Savior promised by the prophets. She begs Him for mercy. She says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David." She is a Christian!

Then in a great act of God, Jesus ignores her. He ignores her Christian confession and plea for help. That's the reaction of Jesus to this woman's heartfelt prayer. When she persists, His words appear to exclude her completely. He tells her that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She was a Canaanite. She was not of Israel. She was not a descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. She was a Gentile – a dog.

That's what he called her: a dog. If that's not rejection, what is? Prayer doesn't work. Jesus is not merciful. See? She begged him, she honored him, she confessed him as Christ and Lord, and He rejected her, calling her a dog.

What is Jesus doing? This is the God who is all about love. This is the gentle, loving, merciful Jesus. With her we cry, "Jesus, what have you done? We confessed your mercy. We called you Lord. We confessed you as our dear Savior. You promised! You promised, 'The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.'⁴ You promised, 'come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'⁵ But you are tossing her out! How can we trust anything you say? You aren't so gentle; you aren't so merciful; you aren't so compassionate as you claim. You're cruel and heartless!"

Is this what the woman thought? This hurting woman, this insulted woman, this woman who came to Jesus crying out for help – what did she do? What could she do? She knew that Jesus would answer her prayer. She knew that Jesus would be merciful to her. She knew. She fought with God. She wrestled with Jesus until she pinned him on the mat.

Like Jacob, this faith held on ever-tightly to the Word of God. She confessed God's Word right to God. "Yes, you call me a dog. That is true. I agree. Now, give me what belongs to the dogs. You cannot deny me that."

⁴ John 6:37

⁵ Matthew 11:28

So many fancy, hifalutin prayers, with flowery language, extolling God, praising Him with many words, prayed with perfect diction and eloquent speech – and what are they but empty noise compared to the prayer of this Christian woman. Faith holds God to His word. It is vital for every Christian to know and pray the Psalms of Lament: 6, 22, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. That’s how you fight with God when He appears to be your enemy. You hold him to His word. These are prayers of faith, calling God to remember and they expect God to be faithful. He is not a fornicator. He is the faithful Bridegroom.

You don’t hold Him to what He hasn’t promised. The name it and claim it health and wealth gospel is a lie. It tries to bind God to what He hasn’t promised. This woman prayed as a Christian. She understood how to pray. She humbled herself. She persisted. She prayed by holding God to His promises. She prayed according to God’s word. The Holy Spirit brought to her remembrance the very Word’s God Himself had spoken.

If you want to know how to pray according to God’s word, pray the Lord’s Prayer. Pattern your prayers after it. God has promised to hallow His name among us; to bring us into His kingdom; to do His good and gracious will for us: to provide us with what we need to support this body and life; to forgive us all our sins; to lead us away from tests that would destroy us; and to deliver us from the evil one.

While we live on this side of heaven, the reality is we are saints and sinners at the same time. To sinners, it often appears that God is our enemy. David confesses, ***“But I, O Lord, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you. O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.”***⁶

Job cries, ***“I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me. You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me.”***⁷

⁶ Psalm 88:13–18

⁷ Job 30:20–21

If this is the reality of God's Children, is it any different for the author and perfecter of our faith? Jesus Christ, the righteous one, the innocent, sinless, spotless Lamb of God had quite a struggle. In His state of humiliation, Jesus prayed earnestly for another way. He prayed so hard for a change of life circumstances that He sweat drops of blood. He prayed and prayed, and it seemed as though God did not give an answer.

Or did He? God remembered His Holy Covenant, and for the New Covenant, the restoration of the people of God to be done, blood had to be shed. So holy blood was poured out on the cross. Justice for sin was leveled out upon Him. All of the sins were remembered upon Jesus to be killed and remembered no more.

Even though God turned His face, look and see. Remember what is done. The Father loves his Son. He is well pleased with Him. The Father's love for his Son is so great that it embraces all those for whom His Son died. The wrath, the woe, the pain, and the suffering that Jesus suffered on Calvary – where is it now! It is removed from you. God delights in Jesus because He died for you. God turned His face away, and Jesus held God's Word to Him. Jesus called God to be faithful.

You know how the Psalm starts, "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***"⁸ Do you remember how it ends? "***All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.***"⁹

He has done it! Remember? He has defeated death. Remember? Here is His blood poured out for you to drink, Here is His body for you to eat? Remember. When it looks as if God is your enemy, read again. Behold His mercy, and His Word, here on the cross for you.

⁸ Psalm 22:1

⁹ Psalm 22:29–31

Behold Christ and Him crucified for you. Sing the Psalm, “*O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*”¹⁰

Confess with Luther, “*Lord, it is true, I am a sinner and not worthy of thy grace; but still thou hast promised sinners forgiveness, and thou art come not to call the righteous, but, as St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15, ‘to save sinners.’ Behold, then must [You], God, according to [Your] own judgment have mercy upon me.*”

Let us pray,

“O from our sins, Lord, turn Your face;
Absolve us through Your boundless grace.
Be with us in our anguish still;
Free us at last from ev’ry ill.”¹¹ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Church
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¹⁰ Psalm 130:7–8

¹¹ When in the Hour of Deepest Need LSB 615:5

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. Remember, Lord, Your mercy and steadfast love toward us. Be gracious to us. Create in us humble and contrite hearts, that we might always cry out to You for mercy. Consider our afflictions and troubles, and forgive all our sins. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, Matthew, our Synod president; Brian, our district president; Sam, our circuit visitor; and all pastors in Christ. Forgive their sins, strengthen their faith and empower them to always and steadfastly proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Christ's name. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, our nation and its leaders. Guide them in the direction You would have them go, that peace and prosperity, truth and justice, religion and piety may dwell in our land. Remember also those who serve in our armed forces, that they would serve with integrity and honor. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, all those experiencing harmful addictions. Be merciful to them, and graciously provide them with the help they need to break free of the chains that hem them in. Strengthen all those whose vocations put them in a position to assist them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, those who are sick, hospitalized, in treatment, undergoing surgery or recovering, and all who are in need [*especially Phillip, Larry, and those we name in our hearts*]. Comfort them with Your presence, sustain their faith through Your gracious promises, and bring healing to them as You will and know to be best. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, those who celebrate another year of earthly life, especially ***Dewey, Ann, Carole, and Tom***. Grant that *they* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen *their* trust in Your goodness all the days of *their* life; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Remember, Lord, Your promise that all who believe in Your Son shall not perish, but have eternal life. For all those who have gone before us and now rest from their labors, we give You thanks and praise. Bring us, with them, to the day of our Lord's glorious return, that we may all receive the eternal inheritance You have prepared for us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**