

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
Trinity Sunday, May 30, 2021
John 14:18-26
“Try to Remember” by Rev. Sue Trigger

SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 14:18-27

NRSV

18 “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. **19** In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. **20** On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **21** They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” **23** Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. **24** Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. **26** But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. **27** Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Audio of Try to Remember by Josh Groban

I could just keep listening to this song, it draws me back in time to when life was so tender that love was an ember about to billow. When dreams were kept beside my pillow. The song is “Try to Remember” by Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jones.¹ It is the opening song from the Off-Broadway musical, the *Fantastics* that ran for 42 years. The longest running musical to stay in it’s original theater. The song is full of imagery that sparks memories – when grass was green and grain was yellow, when no one wept except the willow. Each verse of the song ends with the message, “try to remember, and if you remember, then follow.” While the song is considered to be a classic love song, the lyrics create a picture of the importance of remembering.

This weekend, people around our nation are remembering. “On Memorial Day we remember and honor those who have given their lives in service to our country, and we honor the

¹ Schmidt, Harvey and Jones, Tom, “Try to Remember”, From the *Fantasticks*,

fact that our collective identity today is rooted in their sacrifice.”² In Tulsa this weekend, the city is commemorating for the first time, the horror of a white mob that decimated the community known as Black Wall Street. In Louisville, people are gathering to remember the death of Brianna Taylor who was killed by police. Memorials are important as they help us remember our collective identity. As Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, said, ‘Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future.’”³ I would add one more thing to his list, without memory there is no faith.

Remembering is a strong theme throughout the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation the people are reminded to remember their relationship with God, to remember the stories of their ancestors – both their suffering and their restoration, the consequences of their sin and God’s redemption. The first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy teach that remembering should be a spiritual practice. Chapter 4:9 sums it up well saying: *“⁹ But be on guard and watch yourselves closely so that you don’t forget the things your eyes saw and so they never leave your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.”* Remembering is a practice that not only shapes our soul, but the soul of the generations that follow.

George Bernard Shaw once said, “If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must humanity be of learning from experience.”⁴ Sadly, his insight is often affirmed in the daily news. Learning from experience is, after all, a process of remembering and then changing our behavior in response. Certainly this is what the Bible is for, right? Remembering the history of our faith, growing in our understanding and being transformed by God’s love. When we remember the many stories of what God has done throughout history, we can more clearly understand who God is. In order to remember, we have to learn the stories. In

²Stoner, Scott, The Importance of Remembering, <https://www.livingcompass.org/wwow/the-importance-of-remembering>, May 26, 2017

³ Stoner, Scott, The Importance of Remembering, <https://www.livingcompass.org/wwow/the-importance-of-remembering>, May 26, 2017

⁴ Shaw, George Bernard, www.brainyquote.com/topics/history-repeats-itself-quotes

order for our learning to have meaning, we have to engage with the stories of our faith; from the historical stories of the bible to our shared experiences today.

Today is Trinity Sunday. The Trinity is a doctrine that is intended to help us remember three of the ways God has been made known to us. Jesus spoke of the trinity when he instructed his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But we tend to overlook this special Sunday that begins a new season of the church year. Part of the reason is that we struggle with this doctrine. How can God be three and yet one? It is a question that has perplexed scholars and believers for centuries. The Nicene Creed grew out of a 4th Century council that met in Constantinople to tackle the question. There are volumes of theological wrangling with what it means that God is one in three persons.

Today, I encourage you to think of the Trinity as a tool to help us remember and understand God. Sarah Urban, an author for the magazine *Deeply Rooted*, suggests that we adopt a practice of remembering as a spiritual discipline. She wrote, “By remembering my mistakes and the ones made by the characters in the Bible, I can grieve the sin that runs rampant in humanity. By remembering the sin and assumed safety in circumstance, I am humbled and reminded of my need for a Savior. By remembering the joyous and healthy seasons I’ve experienced, I can sit in awe, even if those blessings are around no longer. And by remembering what God promised humanity from the beginning of time, I can rest knowing I am secure.”⁵

Urban continues on saying, “I am guilty of forgetting often. Every time I allow fear to lead me into irrational thinking, I’ve forgotten. Every time I hold the approval of others higher than the approval of God, I’ve forgotten. Every time I try to muscle my own way to the top, I’ve forgotten. I forget what God’s voice sounds like, my discernment tanks and I feel like I’m underground in an avalanche without the awareness of which way is up or down. When I forget, I give the enemy room to feed me lies. It isn’t until I remember again that I can find my way back to God.”

⁵ Urban, Sarah, *The Spiritual Discipline of Remembrance*, <https://www.deeplyrootedmag.com/blogs/blog/remembrance-as-a-spiritual-discipline>, COPYRIGHT © 2021 DEEPLY ROOTED MAGAZINE.

In the book “Holy Spirit Power”, Charles Spurgeon writes about different characteristics of the Holy Spirit—one of which is our Comforter. “It is not by any new revelation that the Spirit comforts,” writes Spurgeon. “He does so by telling us old things over again. He brings a fresh lamp to manifest the treasures hidden in Scripture. He unlocks the strong chests where the truth had long been, and he points to secret chambers filled with untold riches. However, he mints no new coins, for enough is done. There is enough in the Bible for you to live on forever.” Spurgeon argues that remembrance is the ultimate form of comfort and that God never gives any new knowledge but instead, through the Holy Spirit, fixes and makes fresh in our mind what God has already done.

Jesus described this when he said, “But 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.” (*John 14:26*)

When you think of the Trinity, try to remember the God who created all of life and has guided generations. Try to remember Christ who walked among us to teach us and show us the way of salvation. Try to remember the Holy Spirit who is present with us to comfort and guide us. Try to remember that these three are one and if you remember, then follow.

Trinity sermon closing video