

Message: “Remember Me”

“A new way of life, free to all people”

What would you do at supper if you knew you were going to die tomorrow? It’s a timely question for a difficult period. We’re facing a threat we have no control over. How we live and what we do matters.

I was curious to see how people would respond, so I posted the question to Facebook in an impromptu survey this week. All the results are interesting and informative.

The first, and most common, response is that the question is heavy. Contemplating our mortality isn’t easy. Some people never were able to provide an answer. Others focused on the supper, wanting to serve a favorite, home cooked meal to their friends. All the answers were good.

A few people offered an amazingly detailed list of actions they’d do for others, particularly children. The activities went from preparing gifts and letters for the future to spending personal time with family members, doing their favorite activities with them. These responses were heart-warming. I gently urged those who responded to focus on one thing, asking a follow up question.

What’s most important? What I hear, over and over, is this: we want to spend time with our loved ones, loving them and being remembered.

We’re very aware of our mortality, particularly as we age and experience more of life. We see how fragile life is. We know how easy it is for the passage of time to erase faces, voices and memories we hold dear. Our failures pile up. Our pain and suffering accumulate. We’re carrying emotional baggage. We’re afraid we will disappear into history, a small footnote, lost and forgotten in the giant book of life.

You. Will. Not. Be. Forgotten. You. Are. Loved.

I say this confidently and with full assurance. The reason I do is found in our gathering tonight. Every year on the Thursday before Easter, people gather to remember what happened at the most famous dinner party of all time. What Jesus’ followers experienced that night transcends the moment. It’s part of us, here and now. It will be with us in the future. We’re connected by a golden thread of love.

What did Jesus do at that last supper with his disciples that had such meaning? Jesus' response was the same as ours. First, he wanted to spend time with his loved ones. Jesus arranged a special meal for his closest friends in a quiet, out of the way place. Jesus connected with them, one by one, as he washed their feet. In this way, their teacher and friend showed them what it truly means to live life in a new way.

Not everyone understood how Jesus was connecting with them. Their pride and ego got in the way. Peter is the poster child. If the teacher stoops to the most menial of tasks, isn't that dishonoring not only the teacher and the students? Passive-aggressive responses aren't needed, but it's the way some of us respond. The reason for Jesus' acts becomes clear only after the bruising, shocking events that follow have passed and the group has a chance to reflect on their experiences.

What Jesus does after the meal lies at the heart of the evening. In the second act, Jesus gives thanks to God, breaks bread and passes it around, "**Remember me.**" Jesus then passes the cup, makes a vow and repeats the words, "**Remember me.**"

Simple, yet powerful, Jesus' words shape the world then, now and in the future. They're repeated wherever people assemble around the Lord's table. We meditate on those words. They reflect our human desire to be remembered after our death, yet they carry within such greater depth. What is said, done and felt is grace in action, drawing our attention to the very One who creates and perfects faith in love.

Grace is the tangible, heartfelt expression of what we know in the very fiber of our beings, an invisible, spirit gift that rocks our soul. Grace won't let us be complacent. We're shocked into a response, but not harshly. Rather we become aware of a spiritual life with depths we couldn't see before. We feel nurtured and fed spiritually in a new way. God's hand writes the words of grace and love on our heart.

What does Jesus want to share with us? Jesus loves you. Jesus wants you to remember him and be in a relationship with him, today and always. Our lives are made better when we love Jesus.

The basis of a true relationship is the desire to connect to another soul, knowing we're valued; someone else cares for us. We connect and give each other life. Jesus makes a vow to be with us in that kind of relationship, now and for all time. The spiritual nourishment we receive from Jesus is so fulfilling we can pass it on and never feel hungry or thirsty again. God's blessing grows and passes on.

Jesus' final act brings their time to a close. At the end of the evening Jesus says, *"Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you're my disciples - when they see the love you have for each other"* (John 13: 35, MSG).

Jesus wants his friends to know how much he loves them. If they didn't get it from their time together or in what he's done, in case they missed it in the family squabble, Jesus wants them to know it and pass it on. They have. That's why we're here. Jesus' love for us is real. It's transcended 2,000 years and it'll carry us through what is to come.

What Jesus does, shares and reveals changes us for the better. The grace-filled experience of sitting at table, realizing Jesus is our Lord and Savior, shapes and forms our lives in ways hard to express with words. Through our shared experience of Jesus' grace and love, we're becoming who we're made to be, God's children.

The time in the upper room with Jesus is more than a memory. It's an experience that transcends. A glimpse of God's glory revealed in a grace-filled mysterious way. Each time we return is a moment at the table. Each moment touches our soul wholly and completely: our will becomes God's will, our mind aligns to God's mind, our body is at rest and our spirit is no longer needy, but fed.

From these moments, our life is shaped and formed. We go about our daily lives with a kernel of hope and love in our heart, waiting to be sprout and bear new life in relationship.

May the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, be with you always. Amen.

Let us pray ...

“O Christ Savior, like the seed fallen to the ground, you suffered death. United to you, our life will bear much fruit.

- We praise you, Lord!

O Christ, you went down to the lowest point of the human condition; you remain close to all who are abandoned.

- We praise you, Lord!

In your love you took upon yourself our sins; innocent, you accepted death to free us from death.

- We praise you, Lord!

By your love you conquered evil and hatred, and you live for ever at God’s side.

- We praise you, Lord!

You listen to us in your goodness and you visit us in our misfortune; fill our hearts to overflowing by revealing to us the light of your face.

- We praise you, Lord!

O Christ, you give everything, you give your life and also your forgiveness; it will never vanish. And we stammer our response: Christ, you know that I love you. Perhaps not as I would like to, but I do love you. Amen.”¹

¹ https://www.taize.fr/en_article5806.html

Exodus 12:14-16 (CEB)

This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the Lord. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time. You will eat unleavened bread for seven days. On the first day you must remove yeast from your houses because anyone who eats leavened bread anytime during those seven days will be cut off from Israel. The first day and the seventh day will be a holy occasion for you. No work at all should be done on those days, except for preparing the food that everyone is going to eat. That is the only work you may do.

John 13:1–17, 31b-35 (CEB)

Before the Festival of Passover, Jesus knew that his time had come to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them fully.

Jesus and his disciples were sharing the evening meal. The devil had already provoked Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew the Father had given everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from the table and took off his robes. Picking up a linen towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he was wearing. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I'm doing now, but you will understand later."

"No!" Peter said. "You will never wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't have a place with me."

Simon Peter said, "Lord, not only my feet but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus responded, "Those who have bathed need only to have their feet washed, because they are completely clean. You disciples are clean, but not every one of you." He knew who would betray him. That's why he said, "Not every one of you is clean."

After he washed the disciples' feet, he put on his robes and returned to his place at the table. He said to them, "Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do. I assure you, servants aren't greater than their master, nor are those who are sent greater than the one who sent them. Since you know these things, you will be happy if you do them."

...

When Judas was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Human One has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify the Human One in himself and will glorify him immediately. Little children, I'm with you for a little while longer. You will look for me - but, just as I told the Jewish leaders, I also tell you now - 'Where I'm going, you can't come.'

I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."