



“EVEN SO, WE REMEMBER”

SCRIPTURE: 1 THESSALONIANS 2: 9-13

GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC

Sunday, November 5, 2023

The Rev. Dr. Marcia Whitney Mount Shoop, Pastor

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13

You remember our labor and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.

As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

The Word of the LORD

Thanks be to God.

Even So, We Remember: A Poem for Souls and Saints

Memories of labor and toil

He invites them to recall

To remember it all. What's done

as a bid for connection, for fidelity.

Remember the nights and the days,

He says, in a letter he had to write

To unburden himself. Paul,

finding his voice, his place in

The current, the chaos, the contested space.

Remember my love, my encouragement,

he says. I'm a mother, a father,

a child of yours.
Remember I tried to take care of you,
he says. And remember
how I needed you to take care
of me, too.

Remember how we listened to each other,
delighted by the sounds, tones,
droning on—words, ideas,
admonishing belief, acceptance.

Remember how things made sense
to us. How we tasted
those moments of clarity and
courage together.

What is more intimate, more powerful
than sharing a memory with
another?

I remember my
Grandfather's kitchen when
I taste the round, gold
flavor of honey. He
offers it for french toast
while I sit at the
table across from the stove.

He tells the story of the pan
my grandmother was
holding when she died
as she prepares breakfast
for him in the kitchen
she knew for only a few days
after their move for retirement.

He unpacks this next phase
of life unexpectedly alone.

I remember that story now
more vividly. He fed my

imagination, and taught me
some contours of life's
continuation, disorientation,
adaptation, and loss.

You and I, we remember moments, sensations,
the way it feels to
be imprinted with life's
magnitude, and minutiae.

We remember the arrangement
of furniture, a phone number,
a bend in the road.

We remember the sounds of
someone coming home and
someone leaving.

We remember quiet and
chaos, proper to our own
path, shaped by the
aftermath of things that hang on
for us to heal, to finally deal
with the ancestors' bequests
to us.

They give many times without
knowing the weight, the
ways our bodies carry their
freight, their habits, their hearts,
their broken parts and their
breakthroughs.

We are heirs to each other's
possibilities—found and lost
to the mystery of whatever
happened to...

Those blanks get filled in, those
stories get told, retold, refashioned,
unrolled like a scroll dusty and damaged
by the elements

by the wear and tear of life, death, forgetting
and remembering.

God depends on our memories,
on our re-remembering
bones, on our tears, our
prayers reduced to groans–
to words lost, hearts broken,
mended, repaired

God made us for evocation
for purposeful recollection
for reminiscence that can be
both risky and protection.

When we remember
God plays with time,
with place, sublime
and mysterious, shaping,
forging, merging and more.

We are born and reborn in
the primordial waters of
what was and what can be.

Memory can set us free
just as it can shackle us in
delusion, disease, colluding with
chilling ease with the ways
God calls us to leave behind

To unbind ourselves from in
the footsteps of Jesus
himself: the Great Re-memberer–

The body that keeps the score
For all of us, forevermore.

He is the one who teaches us
the power we have to
remember, to re-member,
to tend to the embers,
the still burning, smoldering,

the still glowing, showing us
where we come from and how
to find our way.

Today we remember with
bread, with good fruit
with elevating tones of flute.

We remember with fire, with bells tolling,
with the faces of saints scrolling
before our eyes, with the cadence
of names and with sacred
ground, with the sensations
and sound of marking time
and honoring the dead.

So we, as the living, can
remember the thread
that connects to
infinite truths, the
cords of love that stand
the tests of time and
sorrow—that connect us
to yesterday and to tomorrow.

Remember, faith family, that
we come from a long
line of recipients of God's
most precious strand—
the love that will never, ever end.

Thanks be to God.