

APPRENTICES OF JESUS – Remembering

Psalm 77

Meditation for Peace Church

Apr. 10, 2009 – Good Friday

PURPOSE – to teach people to re-member themselves in Jesus, as we go through the Passion Story.

MAIN IDEA – To remember the passion of Christ is to continue to seek our justification and sanctification in the story of his suffering & death for us.

I. INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles to Psalm 77.

1. Through Lent I've been teaching on a series titled, "Apprentices of Jesus" – learning to live as He did in the reality of God's Kingdom.

And the apprenticeship skill I want to comment on now is the very one we're engaged in practicing this evening – REMEMBERING.

(i) At the meal we just received, I quoted Jesus' words: *This is my body given for you. Eat it in REMEMBRANCE of Me ... This is my blood shed for you. Drink it, as oft as you do, in remembrance of me.*

(ii) For the rest of the service this evening, we REMEMBER the fateful events of Jesus' suffering and death.

2. Typically, when we use that word "remember", we refer to bringing to mind the notion of an event:

I.e. – "Oh, I just remembered ... I have a doctor's appointment this afternoon."

= an upcoming event comes to mind

... or we remember past events / people / situations.

(i) But Biblically, to REMEMBER is a much deeper, richer, stronger matter.

Victor Shepherd writes, *“The Biblical understanding of remembering can best be understood from its Biblical opposite – to forget.*

To forget – Biblically – is not simply having an idea drop from one’s consciousness. To forget someone is to annihilate that person, obliterate, destroy him. When the Israelites cried to God not to forget them, they didn’t mean, “Be sure to think of us once & a while”. They meant, “Don’t annihilate us. Don’t blot us out.” To forget, therefore has to do not with ideas & events, but with living relational realities.

In the same manner (Shepherd continues), to remember has to do NOT with recollecting notions but with living realities. In a word, to remember, Hebraically, is to bring a past event up into the present so that what happened back then CONTINUES to happen right now – and is therefore the OPERATIVE reality of our existence. What unfolded back then, altering forever those who it touched then, continues to be OPERATIVE now, altering forever those who “remember” it now.

(ii) For example, “Remember the Titans” – did you see that movie? – about a football team, back in 1971 – from Virginia – consisting of blacks & whites learning to work together as a team – great movie, starring Denzel Washington.

Now it’s one thing to remember “Remember the Titans” say, if a bunch of you were sitting around & someone says: Want to watch a movie? What should we watch? ... Remember the Titans.

As opposed to, say, a predominantly white & predominantly black church seeking to work together in Christ – but struggling to understand each other, ready to throw in the towel ... until someone says, “Remember the Titans”.

THAT is the type of remembering that is Biblical.

A. To remember is to literally RE-MEMBER our selves into the realities of God.
= to RE-ATTACH ourselves – like an arm which may be DIS-MEMBERED, but then RE-MEMBERED into a living, operative reality (my body).

II. PSALM 77

A good example of this Biblical meaning of re-remembering is evident in this PSALM 77.

The Psalm is written by a person who is distressed, overwhelmed, depressed, suffering, despondent.

Read Psalm 77:1-9

(i) Those 6 questions are ones WE ASK at times & in the rough conditions of life in this age:

- Will the Lord reject forever?
- Will He never show his favor again?
- Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
- Has his promise failed for all time?
- Has God forgotten to be merciful?
- Has He in anger withheld his compassion?

Can you recall the times you've asked those questions?

Even Jesus asked them on this day of his life: Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachtani?)

2. But then the Psalmist RE-MEMBERS: **Read Psalm 77:10-20**

3. In the Old Covenant, the central EVENT of God to which his people RE-MEMBERED themselves to Him was their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, then through the wilderness into the Promised Land.

- That's where our psalmist re-members to deal with the conditions of suffering & struggle that he's in.
- That's where the psalmist re-attaches himself to the living, operative realities of who God is.

(i) He calls those events the "YEARS OF THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD MOST HIGH"

- The right hand being the "hand of strength & action":

- A. Judging Egypt for its sin – the plagues
- B. Opening a path through the sea - the waters part
- C. Delivering His people from their captivity.

4. In the New Covenant, the central event by which God's people are RE-MEMBERED to Him is the suffering, death & deliverance (resurrection) of Jesus. It's connected to the exodus:

- Jesus is called God's RIGHT HAND ON EARTH
- He is the display of God's power
- God's judgments were unleashed on Him – at his trial, suffering & crucifixion – even the sky darkened & the earth quaked!

- So that by His sufferings & death a PATH WAS OPENED for us through the Sea of Death. We are delivered from the captivity of sin, Satan & death – for Jesus endured God’s judgments against those powers.

- Coming up out of the Sea of Death, Jesus leads us into new life ... toward the Promised Land.

(i) THE TWO CENTRAL EVENTS of RE-MEMBERING for the people of God are CONNECTED, just as the Lord’s Supper is the fulfillment of the Passover.

By the blood of the animal lamb we entered this sanctuary to re-member ourselves to God in the story of Jesus’ suffering & death ... through the blood of the Eternal Lamb, whose story we now remember, we will exit the sanctuary.

III. RE-MEMBERING

To remember therefore is to RE-ATTACH ourselves to God & His living, operative realities in Jesus:

1. This man’s sufferings & death reveals the just judgment of God against my sin.

There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1)

(i) When we ask those 6 questions of the psalm, in the back of my mind we wonder:

“Is God holding my sins against me? ... Am I really forgiven ALL?”

Re-member tonight – this judgment told covers all of my sins – past, present, future.

2. This man’s sufferings & death reveal the LOVE of God ... from which nothing can separate us (Rom. 8:39).

(i) Has his unfailing love vanished forever?

Re-member yourself to God ... IN JESUS

3. The obedience of faith in this man, Jesus, was PERFECTED through his sufferings & death.

> “Where will I gain the faith to remain obedient through my trials?” – is a 7th question we ask in our distress.

In Jesus – God’s Right Hand – is such faith to persevere & grow in obedience. It is imparted by the Spirit, as we REMEMBER.

4. This man's suffering, death & resurrection reveal the suffering & end of this age, and the promise of another to come.

> "What sense does life make?" is an 8th question we ask in our despondency.

Tonight we RE-MEMBER to attach ourselves to a God who is Sovereign & Triumphant.
= a God who is WITH US in Christ Jesus.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. Having remembered "the years of the right hand of the Lord Most High", the psalmist concludes his psalm with this line:

"YOU LED YOUR PEOPLE LIKE A FLOCK ... BY THE HAND OF MOSES & AARON."

It's a statement of PEACE & TRUST.

- He has RE-MEMBERED himself into God's flock & shepherding.

2. As we now recount the "DAYS of THE Right Hand of the Lord Most High (Jesus our Savior)", may you find yourself RE-MEMBERED into that same flock – its PEACE and its TRUST.

AMEN.