

Thanksgiving
November 25, 2020
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Deuteronomy 8:10-18
Remember the Lord Your God

Deuteronomy 8:10–18 (NIV84)

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” ¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Dear Friends in Christ,

October 28, 1929 December 7, 1941 November 22, 1963 January 28, 1986 September 11, 2001

Do you remember those dates? The stock market crash in 1929 began the Great Depression. I know it as a historical fact but I don't remember it well because it was before my time. But those who lived through the Great Depression remember it. I know about the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 but I don't remember it like someone who listened to the President announce that the United States was now at war. I've read about and learned about the assassination of JFK in 1963 but again, I don't have an emotional reaction to it like those who lived through it. However, I was in my 5th grade classroom when the school secretary interrupted and told us that the space shuttle Challenger exploded. The teacher turned on the television and we were silent as we watched the news coverage. I remember that well. I remember my first month of Seminary in the chapel when we were told that the World Trade center in New York had been hit by a plane.

Since I did not live through the Great Depression, it would be easy for me to forget. My life has been relatively easy compared to many who lived through those times. I did not have to watch my family members fight on the battlefields of Europe or the South Pacific in defense of freedom. Why try to remember such things? So we can thank those who persevered and sacrificed to give us what we enjoy today. So we can thank the Lord for all he has given in the past and continues to give today. It is easy to forget the Lord if life is going well. So Moses reminds the people in Deuteronomy to Remember the Lord Your God.

The people of Israel had been in the wilderness about 40 years at this point. The Lord was about to bring them into the Promised Land. But the adults who began the journey 40 years ago would all die in the wilderness (except Caleb and Joshua). Those born during those 40 years would not remember the 14th day of the 1st month of the year 1446 B.C. (approx). Only those who were children at that time would remember that date as something they personally experienced. For on

the 14th day of the 1st month about 40 years before Moses spoke the words of our text tonight, the people killed the Passover lamb and put the blood on their door frames. On that night the Lord struck down the firstborn males of the Egyptians but passed over and saved the firstborn males of those with the blood of the lamb over their doors. The next day, the Israelites exited Egypt and were freed from generations of slavery. Soon after the people would walk through the Red Sea on dry ground. The 10 year old child who lived through this would certainly never forget the Lord, would they? Not long after, the Lord provided water from a rock for the thirsty people. Who would forget that? And six mornings a week for 40 years, the people found bread on the ground. This manna sustained them. How would anyone forget the Lord's goodness to them?

Listen to the Lord's warning to his people as they are about to enter the Promised Land:

When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."

The Lord knows the sinful human heart is quick to forget about him. When the people and their children and grandchildren live in safety in the Promised Land, they won't need to depend on the Lord to protect them. When they have fine houses and build wealth, they won't need the Lord to provide shelter and resources for them. When they have large herds and flocks and can grow their own food, they won't need the Lord to feed them. Soon they will forget all the Lord did to rescue them and provide for them. The people will depend on themselves to provide all they need for life and then forget the Lord.

Our sinful heart is no different than theirs. If things are going well in our lives, the sinful heart takes credit. "I planned well for my future....I worked hard n my job..I took care of my body so I am not sick...I, I, I." The sinful heart forgets that every good and perfect gift is from God. But when something goes wrong, our sinful heart is quick to blame the Lord for not taking care of us. The sinful heart is not capable of gratitude or thanks, only pride and blame.

How are we to avoid forgetting the Lord our God? The same way Moses told his people.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you....¹⁴ the LORD your God,...brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you....¹⁸ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Moses tells the people to remember what the Lord has done for them. First, remember how the Lord brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Every spring, in the first month of

their religious year, they were to celebrate the Passover. They were to retell the story of how God rescued them, just as he promised. They were to teach their children through this special sacrifice and meal every year so that they would never forget the Lord. That Passover meal not only reminded them of God's deliverance of his people in the past, but also pointed ahead to the deliverance of his people from sin and death through Christ, the true Passover Lamb.

How to we make sure that we don't forget how Christ has rescued us from sin and death? We remind each other of Christ's sacrifice that paid for all sin again and again and again. We tell the story of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection every church year, beginning again on Sunday. We tell of how Christ gave his life only to take it up again on Easter Sunday after Sunday, for every Sunday is a reminder that Christ rose on Sunday morning. We remember the Lord Jesus every time we receive Communion as he gives his true body and blood again and again to forgive us all our sins. The sinful heart in each of us wants to forget Jesus, but that is all the more reason to remember Christ. We need his forgiveness every day. Continue to go to him where he promises to be found, in his Word and Sacraments.

And then we will also remember the Lord our God in all aspects of our life. We remember and thank him for the ability he has given us to work, to study, to serve, and to live. We thank the Lord for providing food for our tables and those who grow and produce and transport and sell this food. We thank the Lord for protecting us from snakes and scorpions, from illness and disease and for helping us endure accidents, injuries and illness when we are suffering. When we know that Christ has rescued us from eternal death and will one day give us eternal life, then every day is a day of thanksgiving. For his mercies are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness.

On the anniversary of the dates I mentioned at the beginning of this message, there are people who remind us of what happened. The calls of "never forget" go out. For never forgetting, remembering something important is not a one time decision. It must be reinforced again and again so that we and every generation remembers. This is important for our nation but even more so for our relationship with the God who rescued us from sin and death. Never forgetting what Jesus has done for you is not a one time decision or a one time event. We remember the Lord our God by continuing to tell the wonderful story of God's plan for saving us in Christ Jesus. And for all he has done, we give thanks.

Amen.