

## Lest We Forget

**Readings/Text:** Deuteronomy 8:6-18; Luke 20:41-21:4

Do you have trouble remembering things?

I think all of us can relate to that.

I think the easiest words that come from the mouths of my children are the words,  
'I forgot.'

I forgot to clean my room.

I forgot to feed the dog.

I forgot to put my shoes away.

The other response is, 'Well you didn't remind me.'

Being forgetful isn't new.

It's been around since the beginning of time.

In a world where we so easily 'forget' the call of Remembrance Day is to look at the past with fresh eyes each year.

By the time the guns fell silent in 1918

54,000 Australian soldiers had paid the supreme sacrifice,

137,000 were wounded in battles.

Seeing it is Remembrance Day it is good to probe a bit the words 'remember' and 'forget'

We need to ask how the Hebrew person, the person of the OT, used the words 'forget' and 'remember'.

To forget, in our understanding, is simply to have an idea slip out of our mind.

To forget a person is to no longer have an idea of that person in your mind.

But in the Bible, to forget someone is much more serious:

To forget is to annihilate that person, to obliterate, to destroy.

When the Israelites complained that God had forgotten them...

They weren't saying, 'God, you're not thinking about us;  
we've slipped from your mind.'

They were more concerned about God annihilating them, blotting them out.

In the same way, to remember is not just recollecting thoughts...

Like pulling out old photos which bring back the experiences to mind.

To remember, to the Hebrew, was to bring a past event into the present...

So that what happened back then continues to happen right now.

What happened back then altered forever those touched by it,  
and it continues to touch people.

When Moses urges the people to remember God bringing their parents out of slavery,  
they aren't being urged to just recollect the historical fact;  
Rather they are urged to live the same reality, the same deliverance.  
They are to express the same gratitude and praise to God.

Over and over the Bible insists that God remembers.  
God remembers his covenant;  
God remembers his holy promise;  
God remembers his steadfast love.  
God remembers his mercy.

In his own amazing grace and truth he has bound himself to his people.

He will never quit on us because of weariness  
Nor give up on us out of frustration; or desert us out of disgust.  
Our gratitude and thanks swing like our moods...  
His grace to us is unwavering.

Since God has such a good memory, is there anything he doesn't remember?

The truth is God is also supremely good at forgetting.  
He literally 'loves' to forget.  
If God's people humble themselves before God, seeking his forgiveness,  
God declares, 'I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my sake,  
and I will NOT remember your sins.' (Isaiah).

This doesn't mean that God has absentmindedly lost track of human sin.  
It means that God has wiped away those sins; blotted out;  
That sin no longer determines our standing before God.

God is fantastic at forgetting when he looks at repentant sinners.  
I only wish we were as good at forgetting.

The call of God through the Bible is for us to remember.

That was also the intent of Moses through the book of Deuteronomy.  
Moses farewell address.  
He is not going to enter the Promised Land,  
so has an important message to leave behind for the people.

40<sup>th</sup> year of their years in the desert...  
as they stand on the banks of the river Jordan, ready to cross over and possess.

Moses concerned the people would forget where they came from.  
Reviews their 40 year history; recounts the 10 commandments;  
Concerned the people should teach their children to obey and obey themselves.

The book of Deuteronomy is about remembering.

3 times in chapter 8 Moses tells the people 'do not forget', 'do not forget' do not forget'.

Twice he reminds the people that it was God who cared, guided, preserved, and fed the people.

The thing that scares Moses is prosperity.

People were about to enter a land of wealth and abundance...

after years in slavery and 40 years in the desert.

Be careful to observe the commands of the Lord.

Remember how the Lord your God who led you.

How do you remember?

See Chapter 6...all the time, with all your energy.

God's Word was to be central to their (and our) life.

Easy to forget to remember.

Remembering is something we need to be intentional about.

We are most intentional about that which is in our heart.

If we loved Jesus like we loved some other things in our lives...

How much different would our life be?

Moses says, remember, remember, remember. (see verse 3).

Don't forget, don't forget

What does it mean to forget God?

It's not like forgetting your keys.

Forgetting God means you live as if God doesn't exist.

You live as if God has no say in what you do.

You live as if you a never going to have to stand before God  
and give an account of our lives.

The prosperity of the Promised Land was likely to undo all that had been learnt through the desert experience.

Wealth is a tougher test than poverty.

When you've got nothing, you tend to hang onto God...

That's all you've got.

When you have stuff...

then you have options and you tend to loosen your grip on God.

You get other priorities.

Once God is not acknowledged as the supreme, generous giver, it becomes easy to look elsewhere for the source of wealth they had...themselves or other gods.

That can so easily happen.

What about you?

As you pray before a meal...is it something routine and mechanical...

Or is there a real sense of thankfulness for God's provision.

Or has it slipped from your thoughts because you have earned the money, pay the electricity bill.

Do you thank God for your health?

Or is it healthy lifestyle and exercise that keeps you going.

Do you thank God for your good marks you get at school and uni course...

Or do you put it down to your hard work alone?

Do you thank God for your sharp mind, skilled hands, clever business skills...

Or do you consider them natural traits lone.

Do you thank God for your salvation through death of his Son Jesus Christ, or ahs the joy and memory of that faded?

But that remembering flows into our lives too.

In **Galatians**, Paul tells the Christians that they must remember the poor.

To remember the poor, isn't to bring them to mind, or even to think charitable about them.

To remember the poor is to make the reality of their poverty an active ingredient in our lives.

Whatever you think of Mark Latham, I think he got it right when he said we, as a society, are driven by greed.

But that is not the way it should be in the life of a follower of Jesus Christ.

The poor are certainly the economically disadvantaged in our community.

At the same time it should be said that there is virtually no-one in Australia who is economically destitute.

We have a strong welfare system the supports people.

But there are still those who are doing it tough.

In ancient Israel the poor were commonly grouped in the expression 'widows and orphans and foreigners'.

They were the vulnerable/defenseless.

When Paul calls the people to remember the poor, he means those who are extraordinarily vulnerable.

They might not be the financially poor at all.

We are surrounded by those who are vulnerable and defenseless.

This means the Sudanese as they try and assimilate into our society,  
as they try to understand our culture.

It means the mentally ill people who frequent Cornerstone.

It means the lonely people who live in the caravan parks.

It means the physically vulnerable child who gets teased and tormented at school.

It means the single mum whose partner is in jail.

It means the elderly man who gets flustered and confused every time he goes to the bank.

It means the single person who lives on their own.

And the list can go on.

These are the people our lives must intersect.

These are the people who become part of our being.

That is why we read the story of the poor widow in Luke 21.

At first reading the story seems to be all about money...

Given the woman puts in money.

And there are some good messages about money in this passage.

It is good to give...in fact we in Dandenong are good at giving.

Just look at the support for the 40 hour famine.

If there is a need we give our support.

We put money in collection tins.

We help those in need with gifts and service.

Jesus' comments are addressed to the act of the woman in giving **all** she had...

Giving till it hurt.

Actually giving beyond hurting.

And I believe we need to look beyond money.

In one way, sticking to money makes it easy.

The picture isn't about generosity, or tithing, or donating...

It's not even about money.

It's about faith.

Faith to really risk...to really sacrifice...to really give all you have to God.

The soldiers who fought for our country were willing to give...even their lives.

To really give all they had for what was right and good.

We need to do that with our lives...that is the remembering of this day.

Giving our lives to God...trusting he will use our sacrifice and honour.

How much do you and I sacrifice for the work of bringing health and peace to the world?

What kind of faith do we have for it?  
The widow gave her last coins and trusted God.

In 'The Heavenly Man' Brother Yun talks of the time the people gave for him to travel across the country.

Jesus trusted God as he gave his life for us on the cross.

Today is Remembrance Day...and so we remember.  
The past event was sacrifice, enormous sacrifice, the costliest sacrifice for the sake of peace and justice.  
Justice and peace are never acquired without sacrifice...and they never will.

After all, our justification before God and peace (Shalom) with God were obtained through sacrifice.

The sacrifice of the cross.

So we too need to understand that, just as in the past, for us to tackle injustice, for us to try and bring peace in the place of hostility, will require sacrifice on our part.

If we want peace in our family relationships...  
what is the sacrifice that we need to make?  
Is it our pride that needs to give way?  
Is it our sense of right?

If we want to see injustice in society dealt with...  
what is the sacrifice that we need to make?  
Is it our reputation as we deal with those who are marginalized?  
Is it our money as we give to the needs of others?  
Is it our time as we make ourselves available to people who are hurt and lonely?

In times of world war, it was a call to arms to defeat a visible enemy.  
Today the call to arms will be less dramatic...but just as necessary.

### **Conclusion**

It was Christmas Eve 1914 somewhere in the battlefields of France.  
Allied soldiers were holed up in their muddy, water-filled, rat infested trenches, missing home and no doubt thinking of the Christmas food, and the warm beds at home.  
They also knew that those loved ones at home were thinking of them even as they celebrated the birth of the prince of peace.

Then, over the eerie quiet of no man's land there drifted the strains of a German song.

It was no patriotic tune, no war song, but a familiar tune in a foreign tongue, but eventually they put English words to the hymn which was actually written by an Austrian.

The German, Stille Nacht became “Silent Night” and they joined in.

As the story goes one unarmed German soldier ventured into no man’s land waving a white flag and was soon joined by others of both sides and there in the middle of no man’s land was celebrated what became perhaps the oddest Christmas ever - these soldiers, mostly boys too early forced to become men, singing other Christmas carols and songs, sharing chocolate, bragging over photos of loved ones and sharing Christmas spirits, even playing soccer, according to one version of the story.

It was, after all, Christmas- the birth-night of the Prince of Peace and the majority of soldiers on both sides shared a common Christian faith. Even though they resumed the war again, for that one brief moment they knew that the bonds that kept them apart and kept them fighting were weaker than the ones which drew them together. They knew that the message of Christmas could overcome the obstacles of war and politics and international diplomacy and serious issues of national sovereignty.

In a fallen world, full of injustice and unrest...

Justice and peace arise as sacrifices made on our behalf, and relevant today.  
To remember then is to ask what our sacrifice might be.  
Today is Remembrance Day...and so we remember.  
We remember the Prince of Peace who brought lasting peace.

## **Supplement**

We might know and rejoice that God has saved us from our sin and misery...

That he has brought us from death to life.

We may praise God for his grace and mercy.

We might rejoice in the knowledge that God has chosen and called us.

All these things may be very real to us when we first come to repentance and faith...

But these truths begin to fade as we continue in the Christian life.

There are things we take for granted.

We begin to presume on the grace of God

And may even begin to think that we deserve it because we are basically good and obedient.