

“I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME:
V – ‘REMEMBER!’”

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Genesis 35:1-15

Luke 22:14-20

Last year, when I did “the great purge” at the parsonage, one of the things I was overwhelmed by was the number of pictures I had. I must have twenty photo albums with pictures dating all the way back to the late 60’s/early 70s, then several other boxes of loose pictures, not to mention the hundreds now stored on electronic devices. I’ll bet a lot of you have the same thing – album after album of pictures, pictures and more pictures.

I’ll have to admit that I don’t take them down off of the shelf and look at them very often, but oh, when I do, they take me back to wonderful people, places and memories. You know what it’s like. You look at a picture and immediately you remember who the people are, what the occasion was, where you were. Just looking at the picture connects you with something in your past.

Remembering is important. It does bring to mind people, places, occasions in our lives that helped to form us, to make us who we are today.

Pictures surely do that, but other things do as well, as is evidenced in both of the scripture passages today. In the lesson from Genesis, it’s a pillar of stone, put in a place where God had acted powerfully in Jacob’s life.

I don’t know if you remember Jacob’s story, but he was one of the sons of Isaac and Rebekah, a grandson of Abraham and Sarah. Not only that, but he was a twin – his twin brother was Esau. You might recall that they had a rather contentious relationship. Why, the scripture says that even in the womb of their mother they wrestled, and that when they were born, Jacob had ahold of Esau’s heel! A sign of what was to come.

All their lives they competed, and to make it worse, their mother sided with Jacob, while their father sided with Esau. They were always competing, always jealous of one another, and finally, it got to the point where Jacob feared for his life, and took off, to get away from Esau.

And when he got to the place of safety where God had told him to go, a place where he felt God had spoken to him and cared for him when he needed it the most, there Jacob put the pillar of stone, so that he would always remember that moment.

And for generations after that, whenever anyone saw that monument at Bethel, they remembered what God had done for Jacob, and how faithful God is to all of his children, and that he is there when you need him the most.

Remembering.

Today, we're going to be invited to remember another special place, a place where God has been speaking, and has cared for his children and been there when they needed him the most for hundreds of years – this church. And we're going to be taken on that journey of remembering by a woman who, quite likely, has been attending this church continuously longer than anyone else. She just celebrated her 90th birthday last Monday, so turn now to the screen as we listen to Mary Jane Rambo remember.

Video of Mary Jane

Before I go on, I need to say three things about the video - first, Mary Jane made me promise to tell you that in the list of people who were special to her, she wanted to mention me, but I wouldn't let her, so now I have. (I had to, because she told me she would stand up and say it if I didn't!) I'm grateful that I'm special to her, because she sure is special to me. I have known her since I was 7 years old!

At any rate – moving on – I wanted to say “ditto” to her statement that Methodists have all the fun! That surely was the case in the 1930's and that's absolutely the case today. Whatever else you say about us, one thing is for sure, and that is that we know how to have fun!

Thirdly, you heard Mary Jane talk about the birthday bank that was so special to all of the Sunday School children. After we finished the taping the other day, I asked her more about that, and the more she spoke, I got chills. Here's why: she told me the bank was a little church, and the kids would put their pennies into it. Well, when my office was being renovated last year, a lot of things turned up in the closet and other little hiding places, and take a look at what one of them was! The birthday bank!

Oh my, remembering!

Jesus, as well, knew how important it was for us to remember, and that's why, on the night he had his last supper with his disciples, he took the bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and told them that whenever they broke the bread, they should remember him. Then he took the cup, gave thanks for it, and told them the same – remember.

And so we do. When we eat the bread, we remember Jesus – the bread of life, the bread of heaven. When we drink from the cup, we remember his blood shed for us and for our salvation. When we share in holy communion, we remember God's gift to us in Jesus Christ and all that he did and does for us. We remember, like Jacob did at Bethel, that God spoke. For Jacob, God spoke a word that saved him

from his brother. For us, God spoke a word of love in Jesus, that saved us from the burden of our sin.

So come to the meal today and remember. Remember God's love throughout the ages, remember God's love made manifest through this church, but most of all, remember, in the bread and cup of communion, how much God loves you, so much that he sent his only begotten Son that you might live. Thanks be to God!

Amen.