

**When Memories Matter -**  
“Do this to remember me.”  
Maundy Thursday 2022

**Slide: Do this in memory**

Memories...have you ever thought about how often our minds move to them? If you were to ask someone who cares for another with Alzheimer’s or other Dementias, the answer is probably a lot more than we think. Ruminating about the past is often a part of our daily living. In mindfulness practices and in our prayer practices and traditions, we often find our minds naturally wander to memory.

If we are not planning the future or sitting in the present moment, we are likely reminiscing about the past. This is a normal part of being human. It’s how God created our brains to function, to respond to the stimuli around us and to embody a life of becoming as the Holy Spirit helps us discern along the way. We have good memories and bad memories. We have short

memories and long memories. But, whether we may have our memory mixed up or crystal clear, all of us have in common the fact that we have them. These things we call memories, put altogether, make us essentially who we are: Our sense of history, identity, roots, belonging, and our sense of self.

Take a moment and remember a family memory, one that took place on Easter. What memory first comes to the front of your mind? Mine remembers a robin egg blue dress my mother made me for Easter Sunday, a basket of goodies at the fireside to peek in, a Father hiding eggs in the grass outdoors, a joyous church proclaiming alleluias, me so proud to wear that pretty new dress as Christ triumphant entered our lips yet again.

In a moment, a memory floods your mind, and you remember something, perhaps something that you haven’t even thought of for years. Sometimes a smell

grants you a memory of someone. Maybe something you see reminds you. The touch of something, something you hear. All of these things cause memory to be triggered. And, when a loved one dies...blessed memory...it's how they continue to live with us still.

My mind can see it as if it were yesterday. We made the trek every year to Lake Kachess for the annual church campout. My sister Carol and I would sit in the back of the old blue pickup-truck (acceptable in those days!) and watch the Cascade Mountains of the Pacific Northwest loom bigger than life. On those trips, I could eat whatever I wanted, I had my own tent, worship was in camp style, I led the worship with our youth minister on guitar, and my Dad would make his famous pancakes on the big camp griddle for almost the entire congregation.

Memories...it's like they are living beings themselves. They conjure up feelings,

facts, and reactions. They bring sudden joy and sudden pain...and they make you who you are. They are powerful. They are sacred. They are holy shards of love, despair, joy and regret.

“This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me.” Jesus must have known the power of memory. He would have. It was Passover. The people of God remembered that great day when they were liberated from slavery in Egypt, fleeing hurriedly across the red sea, Miriam with tambourine in hand. That memory none of those who followed our Lord experienced firsthand, but they might as well have for their memory was now steeped in that holy meal, of lambs slaughtered, of the prayers said and the wine taken, or the bitter herbs and unleavened bread eaten.

Jesus must have known how valuable it would be to give his followers a new holy meal to embody, to continue to remember his sacrifice by having the meal over and

over and over again, so much so that it becomes our memory of being there, of encountering the saving gift of forgiveness. They could not have known what it would mean. And, what a powerful, sacred memory it is...shards of the grief, nails, betrayal and death given for us in ordinary bread and wine.

In the Holy Supper, which is also called the Last Supper, the Holy Eucharist, or Holy Communion, we are given a tangible, physical sign, which grants us a memory of Christ even though we never knew him like his first disciples did. But, we do not just remember him. We also experience him in the meal and in the simple act of sharing it, he becomes present with us. We are actually given Jesus Christ in our hand. Christ is there for us in the physical, tangible sign that bring about memory: bread, wine, word, taste, smell, touch, sight, and hearing.

Memory is so deeply associated with Holy Communion. No doubt Jesus saw this as a necessary part in celebrating this meal together. I have seen so many times how someone with memory loss, with Alzheimer's or Dementia, unable to remember me or a loved one, still knows Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

For some reason, there have been occasions when I place that wafer or piece of bread in their hand or mouth saying the words of Jesus "This is my body, given for you", that they somehow instantly know what that means. They can't always understand, nor put it in their mouths themselves, but somehow, somewhere in the depths of their mind, a memory, perhaps fleeting, a sacred memory that, even though they may only say "I should eat that, right?" it is enough for them to see Jesus as the reason for it. For me, that is a powerful thing to see and experience.

There are many important reasons why Jesus commanded us to share this meal in his memory. Not only when each time we receive the meal, we also receive Christ's Body and Blood, the forgiveness of sin, and salvation; not only do we share this feast with all the saints until such a day that this feast will be ours in the goodness of the eternal now; not only are we made bread for the world as we are sent out after the meal to be Christ for others. But, this holy meal, this Holy Communion, molds us into a family here on earth, a family whereupon all of us share the same memory.

We share the memory of Jesus Christ as our Savior. This powerful memory causes us to be the people we are. It is what makes us disciples. It is what brings us over and over again to the cross, knowing in our memory that we cannot rely on ourselves but can only rely upon the saving action of Jesus Christ. And that is why, at least for Lutherans, this

meal is so central to Christian worship and why we celebrate it often.

“Take...eat. This is my body. Take...drink. This is my blood, which is the new covenant, shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in memory of me.”

This meal is a sacred memory and like all other memories we may have in our lives, this sacred memory meal gives us our sense of history, our identity, our roots, our belonging, and our sense of selves. This is why Christ was given for us, so that we may have this identity. And, that is why as often as we have this meal, we remember him. Amen.