

Remember What You Were Told

Luke 24:1-12

Holidays are full of memories. The sights and sounds and smells bring us back to earlier celebrations. The sound of a Christmas carol, the sight of snow gently falling, can bring you back to a white Christmas of your childhood. The smells of turkey roasting and pies baking can bring you back to a joyous family Thanksgiving. And the smells of Easter lilies, the sight of colored eggs, and the sounds of Alleluia can bring you back to Easter.

Smells are powerful. While smells go to the emotional part, words go to the thinking part of our brain. Along with other memories evoked by our senses are the memories of the words spoken to us, the words we heard. Maybe it was at one of those holiday family gatherings that you first learned you'd be a grandparent, or an in-law. Maybe it was at one of those that you received some sage advice from an older relative that set your course for life.

But not all of those memories are joyful. Remembering family gatherings can remind you of those who aren't there anymore, when death or dissent keeps families from reuniting. Remembering harsh words that came up when life choices or politics came up can cause rifts that may not be healed. Remembering is not always happy and helpful.

That first Easter, as the women go to the tomb, their minds would have been full of sorrow. They'd remember what they'd seen; Jesus, beaten and bloodied. Jesus, dying on the cross. Jesus, dead, carried into the tomb. They'd remember the hopelessness they felt, and were still feeling. All that they'd hoped for, gone. There had been so much hope, so much promise. But now, it had all come to what? Nothing! The famous teacher, their friend? Dead. His disciples? In hiding. Other

followers? Scattered. One—Judas Iscariot—has even killed himself. That great, joyful, unexpected news, that message they'd been told of what would happen, had been forgotten in their grief.

And so they head to the tomb, to see their friend again. They'd offer one last act of love, preparing his body for burial properly. They could smell the spices they carried, hear the sound of each other's weeping. Those sounds and smells of death that were so familiar to them were surrounding them once again.

But when they get to the tomb, something changes. Instead of seeing what they expected, they see something different. They see angels, and a stone rolled away. They see the tomb, empty. They see two angels, blinding and dazzling. And then they hear the message: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."

The message of the angels sends them back to what Jesus had told them. Luke's Gospel records three times where Jesus predicts his death and resurrection during his ministry. Jesus had told them what was going to happen, that he was going to be betrayed, die, and rise three days later. In the midst of their grief and sorrow, though, they forgot. They didn't understand, though they hadn't understood at the time, either. The reality of death overshadowed any memory of what Jesus had told them.

Once they hear the message of the angels, once they remember the words of Jesus, their grief turns into joy, and they run off to share that

good news. Jesus has risen, just as he said! They hadn't seen him yet, they didn't know all that it meant, but they knew it was good news, and that it had to be shared.

Their message is greeted with disbelief, though. Although doubting Thomas gets a bad reputation for doubting Jesus' resurrection, the rest of the disciples aren't much better. Like the women, they'd heard Jesus predict his suffering, death and resurrection. Like the women, they've forgotten that message in the midst of their grief. Like the women, they doubt that death could be overcome. They think the women are speaking idle tales, are delirious, have just made the whole thing up. They don't believe the message. It will take Jesus appearing to them, reminding them in person of what he had told them, to get them to remember and believe.

Jesus' followers needed reminding because they were resigned to death as they looked for the living among the dead, with spices to mask death's stench. Then they were perplexed by the missing body and frightened by the angel's announcement of the resurrection. They were resigned to death because they had forgotten that Jesus not only predicted his betrayal and crucifixion, he predicted that his resurrection would bend even that unthinkable evil to serve life and salvation.

But like the disciples, like the women, we sometimes forget what Jesus said. We let the sin and suffering, darkness and death, overwhelm our memories. We see a world full of war and destruction, disease and suffering, and wonder if anything changed. We forgot what Jesus promised. We forget what Jesus did. We forget what it means that Jesus was raised from the dead. How could someone have risen from the dead? What does the life and death of someone two thousand years ago have to do with my life? And so we despair. We grieve,

and mourn. We look out at the world and think sin and death have won. We forget what we have heard.

When we forget, we are reminded. We hear the words of God preached and read. We can reread the promises of God, and see how Christ is present through the whole story of the Bible. We see Jesus come to us in fellow believers who encourage us, care for us, and remind us of how God has been present and active in their lives. We remember the words we have heard. We remember that death and darkness will not, do not win. We remember that sin has been defeated. We remember that our redeemer lives.

Remember what he said. Remember what you have heard. Remember the stories you heard, of God coming to earth, dying, and rising. Remember that Jesus died for you, and rose for you. "Remember what he said" reminds us that reality has, from the beginning, bent to Jesus' words. Creation and resurrection declare the truth that reality bends to Jesus' words. For us to remain rooted in reality, we too must repeatedly remember what He said.

What's it all mean? What's the message of Easter we need to remember? It means that there's more to our lives than what we think. It means that there's more to our story than what we see. It means that there's more than just death and taxes. One thing's for sure. We have a song to sing! And we sing it with our lips and with our lives. What's the song called? Our song has six words. What are they? We sang them earlier, and we'll sing them again. *I know that my Redeemer lives!*

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