

**REMEMBER**  
**Exodus 20:1-4; 7-9; 12-20**  
**Preached buy Dr. Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, November 2, 2014**

An old rabbi had the habit of always telling a story whenever one of his students asked him a question. Finally one day one of his brighter students asked, "Rabbi, every time we ask a question you always answer with a story?" Naturally the young man then braced himself for another story.

The old rabbi thought for a moment before he said, "I always answer with a story because in remembrance there is salvation."

One of the great gifts God gave humankind is memory. We can remember our past especially those key moments that for better or for worse impacted our lives. We can remember our family stories, where they came from and why they came here and what contributions they made on the way. We can remember our nation's story, the history of a people who came here from all over the earth seeking freedom from oppression and the desire to build a new life. But most important we can remember those foundational sacred stories found in the scriptures revealing how God is forever intervening in our lives so we can know the salvation he brings to the world.

On the night before he died Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it and said, "Do this to remember me." Then he took the cup and after blessing it he said, "This cup is the New Covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink this remember me."

Jesus did and said these things at the Passover meal, a sacred ritual of the old covenant the Jews practice each year so they'll never forget and always remember how God delivered them from bondage in Egypt and brought his redeemed children into the Promised Land, which is certainly a geographical location, but more than that the state of being in a covenant relationship with God.

Had Peter, James, John and the rest of those in the Upper Room not known and remembered the story of the Exodus, including the instruction to slay a lamb and smear the lamb's blood over the doorpost of their homes so the Angel of Death would pass over, Jesus' command to "take, drink and remember me" would have been lost on them. If the disciples never heard about and remembered the stories of the Patriarchs, beginning with Abraham who was promised his descendants would multiply and become a blessing to all the nations of the earth, as well as the story of Moses, God's chosen one to liberate the Hebrews and lead them into the freedom to love and serve God, the disciples would never have been able to recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to bring salvation to the world.

So what are we supposed to remember when we gather together at the Lord's Table? We remember the ongoing sacred stories starting with Abraham, Moses then moving on to King David and the prophets, culminating in the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who commands us to remember him and then pass on his story to others so it will continue to be remembered.

The old covenant, or contract between God and the Jews, was made at Mt. Sinai on the heels of the Exodus or exit from Egypt and over four hundred years of bondage.

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

This was one of the conditions of that binding contract between God and the children of Israel. "I will always be your God and you will always be my people." That was God's side of the bargain God would be faithful, an ever present help in time of trouble, our loving God who made a plan for our good before the beginning of time. And God has kept that promise.

On the other hand, we don't always keep our part of the bargain and that's evident when we measure our faithfulness against the terms agreed to found in this sacred covenant based on the Ten Commandments. But from God's point of view the Commandments aren't a straight jacket, keeping us in another type of bondage, but a way to help us enjoy all the benefits and of having and enjoying a relationship with God.

So, as long as the Israelites and their descendants, including you and me, remember (there's that word again) to keep these commandments so our relationship or better still, our friendship with God will remain healthy and strong. But if we ever forget to keep these commandments, there are dire consequences, until we repent and then remember again that our God is God.

Unfortunately, our human nature being flawed both Pharisees of yesterday as well as Presbyterians of today make the mistake of thinking that keeping the Commandments is the only way of showing we are worthy. Hopefully in time that notion is knocked out of us when we fail over and over again until we come to our senses and realize we're not saved because we are good but only because God is good.

That's why it's important to remember God never said, "If you keep these Commandments, I will take you to the land of milk and honey." Instead it's essential to remember that even before God sent Moses to bring the people out from Egypt he said, "I have seen the misery of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters...and I have come down to deliver them...and to bring them...out..." (Exodus 3:7-8)

So we remember the sacred stories of the Exodus and Jesus' passion because these stories tell us about God's grace, God's full acceptance of who we are today, warts and all, coupled with God's promise of who we can become tomorrow. We remember these stories of

the Passover, the Last Supper and Christ's passion because in remembering we experience salvation.

But you may challenge, "I can understand how remembering these salient stories in the scriptures bring me to the source of our salvation, but also keeping the Commandments. Isn't that sneaking back into the mix that brand of legalism which brought about the Pharisees undoing?"

It shouldn't be. Why? Because it wasn't God's intention for the Commandments to be the framework of a legalistic religion of "dos and don'ts." But we still make it that way don't we? Why? The answer is simple. Whenever God gives us something for our good, we tend to turn it into something that isn't good. The Ten Commandments aren't supposed to be a binding legalistic contract between the party of the first part and the party of the second part with penalties in the fine print spelling out the dire ramifications for reneging.

Instead the Commandments are meant to be a set of helpful guidelines guaranteeing the quality of our relationships with God and each other. That's why it's important to see the Ten Commandments in the context of what Jesus called the Greatest Commandment which was the theme of last week's sermon.

Remember?

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...you shall love your neighbor and yourself." (Matthew 22:37)

It can be said the Ten Commandments are commentary for the Greatest Commandment. The first four Commandments deal with our primary relationship with God.

The first two Commandments identify our need to keep fidelity with God. God isn't only our ultimate governing authority, God is especially our savior and friend. ("I have come down to bring them out of bondage," God said.) So put God first in all things. Don't cheat on him by worshipping idols like your bank account or your loyalty to any other entity that conflicts with your relationship with God.

Second, don't abuse God's name. Certainly it means not dragging God's name in the mud. It also means don't use God's name as a weapon against others to justify or promote yourself at someone else's expense.

Next, keep the Sabbath. Sure go to church. Worship and praise God, but on the Sabbath also take time to rest in God's presence. The Lord's Day is meant to be a day off from the stress and strain of work. Give yourself a break. Spend time with God. Didn't Jesus say, "Come to me and I will give you rest?"

That's the first four Commandments. The next six are all about keeping good and healthy relationships with each other:

You shall not murder, commit adultery, steal or lie. Last but not least, don't be envious of what your neighbor owns, or your neighbor's spouse.

In other words the last six Commandments are basically the same rules to live by we teach our children.

- \*Don't hurt others, physically, emotionally or spiritually.
- \*Don't insert yourself in other people's relationships in any way that could damage or destroy their sacred friendships.
- \*Always tell the truth, even if it hurts, it's good for the soul.
- \*Never take what doesn't belong to you. Put things back where they belong.
- \*Don't envy what other people have or who other people love. Instead be happy for them and bless them.

So you see the Ten Commandments are a code of behavior that will not only elevate your quality of life but also free you up from frustration, worry and want so you can freely share your quality of life with others by loving God, your neighbor and last but not least, yourself.

As I said, the Ten Commandments were given after the first Passover, the celebration of remembering God's act of salvation for his people.

Two thousand years later Jesus reinterpreted the Passover, putting himself in the middle of it by becoming the new Passover Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world.

And today, around this table, we remember.

Why? Because our salvation is found in our remembering.