

Memorials

May 28, 2017

Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

A while ago, I met a very interesting lady whose office was quite fascinating. She had framed pictures of her husband and children on shelves around the room and other mementoes. There were several rocks on her desk used as paper weights and rocks used as book ends on the shelves. There was a rock used as a door stopper and colorful rocks on the window sills. It wasn't difficult to figure out where her priorities were in life when I saw the smiling faces of family members attractively displayed but the rocks intrigued me. I asked her about her rock collection thinking that they might be valuable. She chuckled as she answered me. "No, they are not valuable to anyone but me. Whenever our family goes on an outing that is meaningful to me, I choose a rock that I like from the spot and write the place, the date and the occasion on the bottom of it. It helps keep me focused on life's journey that I have already travelled and also keeps the occasions fresh in memory. I look forward to travelling, spending time with my family, and the rocks remind me of how fast time goes by. Work is important to me and it is a priority, but I make my family time a top priority and surrounding myself with rocks and pictures helps keep me focused on the important things in life."

Memorial Day is upon us and the cities and towns will be celebrating with parades and other events to mark the days that our soldiers gave their lives for our country. For those of us who have suffered personal loss of a loved one, the day has special meaning. However, every day is "Memorial Day" for us and the pain of separation never goes away. Throughout the Bible, God has designed his people to use objects to keep memories alive and to place faith and hope in the hearts of people.

When the Children of Israel were travelling towards the Land of Canaan, the Promised Land, Moses appointed Joshua as their leader to finish the journey as God commanded. In Joshua chapter 2, you will find the details of the spies that had entered Jericho and had been hidden by Rahab, the harlot, and now they have returned with the news that victory is certain for the Children of Israel to invade this territory. In chapter 3:1 it says that at the end of three days, Joshua arose early in the morning and he and the Israelites packed up and left Acadia. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant and told the people that they would not know the way so they were to follow the priests who carried the Ark. They were warned not to follow too close; they were to stay a half mile behind. Joshua told the people to sanctify themselves in preparation for worship to the Lord because He was going to do some amazing things. Joshua told the priests to take the Ark and cross the Jordan River ahead of the people and they obeyed. God told Joshua that starting that day God would show the people that he had been God's choice for a leader of the people and they would know that God was helping Joshua just as he had Moses. Joshua told the people that as soon as the priests stepped into the Jordan River, the waters would part and they

would cross over on dry land. The group travelled to the edge of the Jordan River led by the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant on poles on their shoulders. The water in the river had overflowed onto the river banks as it often does in the springtime, but as soon as the priests touched the water, the water stopped flowing and started piling up at the town of Adam near Zerethan. No water flowed toward the Dead Sea and the priests stood in the middle of the dry riverbed near Jericho while everyone else crossed over. As soon as they all crossed over, God told Joshua to have one man from each of the 12 tribes to pick up a large stone from where the priests were standing and to make a monument at the place where they were to camp for the night. They returned to the middle of the riverbed and each one picked up a large stone and carried it to the camp where they were going to spend the night and there they made a monument as the Lord had commanded. Joshua told them that someday their children would ask, "Why are those rocks here?" Then they would be able to tell them how the water stopped flowing when the Ark was being carried across the river. Those rocks would always be a reminder of what took place that day. A monument was also made in the middle of the River by men and it was still there at the time this was recorded.

The 12 stones that were placed in the midst of the River Jordan was a symbol of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins. They were covered over by water so could not be seen and it speaks of the law of Moses and Jesus' burial after making atonement for our sins. The stones that were taken on the other side symbolize the resurrection of Christ. We have crossed over from death unto life when we accept Christ as our Savior and believe on him in faith. When we cross over Jordan River we lay hold of the spiritual blessings that await the believers. These verses picture the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and this memorial is to be passed down from one generation to the next.

This account depicts the power of God over the waters that would overflow us. God stands in the midst and we can walk over on dry land.

Isaiah 43 God spoke these words: "But now says the LORD that created thee O Jacob and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD your God the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

In Matthew 3:1-3. you will find the account of John the Baptist who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ crying out "Repent ye; for the kingdom of God is at hand." Just as the priests in the Old Testament carried the Ark of the Covenant ahead of the people, John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." People came to the Jordan River, were baptized by John and confessed their sins. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized, John rebuked them by calling them vipers and asked them who had warned them of the judgment to come. He told them to live in a way that proved they had given up their sins rather than just depending on the fact that they were

descendants of Abraham to give them favor with God. “God is able to turn stones into children for Abraham,” he said. He continued by saying that he baptized with water, but there was one that would come after him who would have the power to fill the people with the Holy Spirit with fire. He will separate the wheat from the chaff. *(This was a picture of farmers who after trampling out the grain, used a pitch fork to pitch the grain and the husks into the air. Wind blew the light husks and the grain fell to the ground to be gathered.)*

John stated that he was not worthy to even carry his sandals. *(This was a duty of a slave.)* In verse 13, Jesus left Galilee and went to the Jordan River to be baptized of John. John asked Jesus why he came to him to be baptized. John said that he should be the one to be baptized by Jesus. However, Jesus told him that for now this was the way it was to be because they must do all that God wants them to do. John agreed and when Jesus came up out of the water, the sky opened and John saw the Spirit of God coming down on Jesus like a dove. Then a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son; in him I am well pleased.”

In Luke 22:15, Jesus spoke to his disciples concerning the last Passover that he would share with them before his death. He told them that he had desired to eat this Passover with them before he suffered. He said that this would be the last time he would eat this with them until it would be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. When he served the cup to them he repeated the words to them with “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.” When he took the bread, he gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying “this is my body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me.” In 1 Corinthians 11:23 -26 Paul repeats the words that Jesus spoke to his disciples on the night of his betrayal when he took bread and wine and shared the Passover with his disciples. When he served the bread, he told them to partake of the bread in remembrance of him. When he served the wine, he said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death till he comes.”

He went on to warn people against partaking of the bread and wine without having the proper respect for the Lord’s body. We are to examine ourselves to be sure that when we partake of this ceremony that we have reverence towards the Lord. It is not to be taken as food to satisfy hunger, but to honor the Lord’s sacrifice for our sins.

In Mark 14, there is a beautiful story told of Jesus prior to his arrest. He was in Bethany in the house of Simon, the leper, and as he sat at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard that was very precious; and she broke the box and poured it on his head. There were some that had indignation within themselves and said, “Why was this waste of ointment made? For it may have been sold for more than 300 silver coins and the money could have been given to the poor!” And they murmured against her. Judas, the disciple of Jesus, spoke out against her. (John 12:5)

Jesus Said, “Let her alone; why are you troubling her? She has done a good work for me. For you will always have the poor and whenever you desire you may do good for them,

but you will not always have me. She has done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint my body for burial. Verily I say unto you wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this deed that she has done shall be spoken of her as a memorial to her.” The very next verse says “And Judas Iscariot one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests to betray him unto them.”

In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul addresses the Corinthian church because they were arguing over which leader they should follow. Some claimed to follow Paul while other claimed to follow Apollos or Peter or Christ. He asked them, “Has Christ been divided up? Was I nailed to a cross for you? Were you baptized in my name?” Paul went on to say that he had only baptized a few people and now he was thankful lest people claim that he used his own name in baptism. Christ had not called him to baptize but he was called to spread the gospel with simplicity so people could understand lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. The gospel is foolish to those who refuse to believe the truth.

Paul left a memorial to the church. The epistles were written while he was in prison for the cause of Christ. His writings under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will last forever and those who read the Scriptures have an opportunity to believe and have eternal life. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul states that he is ready to die and the time of his departure was at hand. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

How many people think about their legacy? Material things fade away, rust, break, crumble and money gets spent on things that have no eternal value. Time is the most precious gift you have on this earth. Are you spending it wisely or are you squandering it like the prodigal son who wasted all that had been given to him. See Luke chapter 15.

What will you leave behind when your name is called by the death angel?

Have you influenced others to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness that all these things will be added unto you? See Matthew 6:33.

We can share Scripture and talk about truth and error, but the life we live before the world is the Bible that people read. I pray that each one of us will leave a memorial to our families that will glorify and honor Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Prayers for loved ones, a life well lived, and words filled with faith, hope, love are some of the priceless treasures that we can use to build a strong legacy to be passed on to future generations.

This Memorial Day my thoughts go to my brother, Ivery Webber Jr., a soldier who proudly wore a military uniform and lost his life in 1971, while serving his country.