

“Remember Jesus Christ”

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Some of you remember Dave Mohr. He was married to Renita Mohr one of the teachers at St. James. He died from cancer in 2004. I got a call to go to the hospital as the end seemed near. A number of family members were gathered in the room. Dave looked at me and said, “Pastor if you were dying what passage would you read to your family?”

The last words of the dying often focus on what is significant, what is important, what they want for those left behind or what they want those who are left behind to remember.

2 Timothy is Paul’s last letter. He says to Timothy, “I am being poured out like a drink offering,” that is, I know my life is coming to an end. So it is clear in this letter to a young Pastor that he is sorting out and passing on the things that really matter. At the top of the lists of the things Paul wants Timothy to remember is, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

Would you be willing to suffer like Paul? Would you be willing to go to jail and spend your life in chains? Would you be willing to be sentenced to death? Would you be willing to be treated as a criminal? Would you be willing to endure all of that to be faithful to the task spreading the Gospel?

What is it that strengthens you, excites you, comforts you? What is it that leads you to pass on who you have heard so that others hear it. What would lead you suffer as a good soldier for Jesus Christ. In God’s kingdom what would lead you to work hard as farmer and to complete like an athlete?

Why would Paul go to jail and allow himself to be sentenced to death when he could have just avoided it by being quiet? Why was Paul willing to be stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19), robbed, whipped and imprisoned (16:22-23) Three times he was shipwrecked, and he was beaten many times (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

Why? Because Paul had only one commanding officer, only One who had risen from the dead.

Why was Paul faithful? The Good News of Jesus' resurrection trumped all the bad news in Paul's life, even death itself. Jesus Christ has risen that is why Paul did what He did.

There is no point to any of this if Jesus has not been raised from the dead. Because Jesus is alive, Paul will serve as a soldier, an athlete and a laborer. a hard worker. Because Jesus Christ has risen Paul is willing to be imprisoned and chained for the advancement of the Gospel.

Paul is faithful to his task because God is faithful. If we are faithless, He remains faithful. God keeps His promises. He was faithful when Adam and Eve sinned and brought death. He was faithful when His people were unfaithful in the wilderness. He was faithful when His people went after other gods and were carried into captivity.

Jesus was faithful when His disciples betrayed Him, forsook Him and denied Him. He was faithful when condemned before Pilate, when He was spit upon, whipped, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross.

It is because of God's faithfulness that we are forgiven. "If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." No matter how unfaithful we have been. No matter how self-centered we have been. The good news is that Jesus Christ died for sinners the worst of them. The good News is that He was raised so that we would be pronounced not guilty.

Where is comfort at the point of death? The resurrection is a game changer. It makes all the difference in this life and the next. It affects how Paul lives and how he died.

No matter how many stress factors arise in your life, no matter how many people desert you, no matter how alone you feel, no matter how unloved you feel – God is faithful.

The devil wants us to forget that message. Could the church forget Jesus Christ? The children of Israel forgot God when they got to the Promised Land. Could we actually forget Jesus Christ. It happened in history. That's why we will celebrate the Reformation later this month. The church forgot Jesus Christ and replaced him with indulgences, good works, and relics.

Could the church forget Jesus Christ? You can find churches today that have replaced Jesus with positive thinking, political activism, and promising prosperity.

I'm preaching to the choir here, but dear friends, Remember Jesus Christ, Offspring of David. Jesus was true man, descendant of David and born of the Virgin Mary. He was the man God commanded us to be. He never sinned yet he was put to death.

Paul continues, Remember Jesus Christ Risen from the dead. Paul was on death row. Death was near. Death was inevitable. Jesus Christ has dealt with our death and suffered for our sin. Now I'm victorious, alive forevermore and I am preparing a place for you.

The devil doesn't want us to remember Jesus Christ. He wants us to remember our sins. The devil was active in Paul's mind as he reviewed his life? Satan said, Paul remember the tears and the dying gasps of those Christians you persecuted and watched as they were stoned to death. Remember Paul, you have blood on your hands.

We know from first Timothy that these things were on Paul's mind. He did indeed remember them. That makes his last words all the more meaningful and important, Remember Jesus Christ.

Looking back on our lives are they one unbroken story of loving God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves? Satan works hard at whispering remember when . . . remember what you did. What are you going to do about it? That's why God inspired Paul to give us these last words. Remember Jesus Christ, even if we are faithless. He remains faithful.

Satan works in our lives as well. We respond by saying, "Satan, we have sinned and we have failed but we remember Jesus Christ." He has carried our sins to Calvary. He buried them out of sight in the grave. He descended into hell to proclaim His victory over you. He rose victoriously and soundly defeated you.

He has invited me to the Lord's Supper and said, Do this in remembrance of Me.

Sin is a constant struggle. Satan won't let us forget. But Paul has an antidote and a reply. Let it be the first word in the morning, the last word at the end of the day, the powerful word when you need assurance of your salvation. Of all that you could remember, Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

Remembering Jesus Christ risen from the dead that alone will comfort you, give you peace and lead you to suffer as a good soldier, compete like an athlete, work like a farmer and remain confident because God is faithful.

Gracious Lord, keep constantly in our minds the great work of salvation You have done for us through Jesus Christ. May His death and resurrection be the one part of our history that we may never forget. Amen.