

Remembered and Remembering

Last Sun. of Church Year – 11/24/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Jude 20-25 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 21 [Jude directs our attention as we look to Jesus' return, saying,] **“keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”**

Introduction

- ⊗ It doesn't take long to forget all kinds of things, whether they are trivial or matters of great importance. We've all been there, whether we're young or old. By the time you get out to the garage, you can't remember why you went out there in the first place. Just days or weeks after a major event, like hurricanes or terrorist attacks, most of the world forgets all about it and moves on to the next big thing.
 - ➔ Though you know you are baptized into Christ, and you've heard God's Ten Commandments, as well as Christ's promise of forgiveness through His blood countless times, you and I daily forget who we really are in Christ and we fall to the temptations and deceptions of this world and our own desires; living, acting, speaking just like those around us who know nothing at all about Jesus and the fact that He is coming again at any moment.
- ⊗ This is Jude's concern, the author of our Epistle Reading today. He begins his little letter of only 25 verses saying that he is “a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,” whose mother and father were Mary and Joseph.
 - ➔ So, though his little book is often forgotten among the other “big-name” authors of Scripture, Jude raises a major concern today about the Christians not only in his day, but in every age including ours.

I. The Church forgot who Jesus was.

- ⊗ You see, the problem that Jude raises is that apparently those in the Christian Church of his day were forgetting who Jesus is and what He taught them.
 - ➔ It had only been around 35 years after Jesus had died on the cross, been raised in victory over sin and death and ascended to the right hand of the Father. But as I've already mentioned, it doesn't take us very long to forget even life-altering events like that.
- ⊗ Most of the apostles had already been killed because of their faith. John is the only one we know for sure was alive when Jude wrote this letter. But he says in verse three, “I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” by those apostles before him.
 - ➔ So, why are they needing to “contend for the faith?” Because, Jude says, “ungodly people” “have crept in” to the Church, “perverting the grace of God” and “denying...Jesus Christ” (v.4).
- ⊗ For this reason, Jude says in verse five, “I want to remind you” of two important truths that “you once fully knew” but apparently were now forgetting about Jesus. First, that Jesus both “saves” those who believe, and second, that He “destroys” those who do not.
 - ➔ And what's interesting is that Jude affirms Jesus' eternal existence because he backs up this truth by using two examples that date back before Jesus took on human flesh. He references the people of Israel in slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt – how Jesus saved the people but destroyed Pharaoh's army, and the angels from the time soon after Creation who rebelled against God – who Jude says, Jesus “has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day” (v.6).

✘ Now Jude says these and others are to “serve as an example” to all of us. Why? In verses 10-11 he says that “these people” sneaking their way into the church “blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they...understand instinctively” in their corrupt sinful nature. “Woe to them!”, Jude says in verse 13, for they are “wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.”

→ And that’s not the end of Jude’s harsh warning. He describes these people’s actions and characteristics so that we can all identify them – or maybe even see if we ourselves are turning into one of them. Verse 16, “These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.”

✘ Then in verse 17 Jude turns the corner from calling the Church, who has fallen into the sin of following these unbelieving influences and are forgetting Jesus, back to the truth when he says, “But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

→ They already told us that “in the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions ... who cause divisions.” They are “worldly people” without the Spirit, meaning they do not have or have lost their faith.

II. God/Jesus never forgets you!

✘ “Wow Pastor,” you’re probably thinking. “Those are some pretty tough warnings; some pretty difficult accusations against the Church of Christ.”

→ And you’re right. But remember, they come straight from God in His Holy Word. Why? because even if and when His people within His Church have forgotten Him, God never has, and never will, forget you!

✘ There are so many examples in Scripture, from the beginning to the very end. Looking at the people of Israel in Egypt again, Exodus 3:7 tells us what God said when He called Moses to represent Him and lead His people, “Then Yahweh said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings.’”

→ And further back, after Noah and his family had been floating around for 150 days, likely thinking they were all alone on the ark, Genesis 8:1 says, “God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.”

→ More than once, King David, who was prone to depression and despair, tells us things like this in Psalm 18:6, “In my distress I called upon Yahweh; to my God I cried for help. From His temple He heard my voice, and my cry to Him reached His ears.” And in Psalm 40:1, “I waited patiently for Yahweh; He inclined to me and heard my cry.”

✘ But perhaps the greatest, most comforting and reassuring evidence that Jesus remembers those who believe and call upon Him is found in Luke 23:42-43 where the convicted thief hanging next to Jesus came to repentance and faith based purely upon what he was witnessing there on Mt. Calvary and said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ And [Jesus] said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

→ As Jude says in verse 25, the only One who has all “glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever” – He remembers you by calling you; loving you; and keeping you with Him in His Church (v. 1). Yes, Jesus always has been, and always will be mindful of you.

→ He’s the One who called you through the waters of Baptism, joining you to Himself and adopting you with all other believers into His Christian family.

- He continues to love you and feed you with His Word and sacramental fruits.
- And He promises to keep you in the one true faith; in His protective hand as His beloved sheep until the day you see Him face-to-face (Jn. 10:28-29).

III. The Christian Life, remembering Jesus.

- ✘ Until that day – whether it is the day of your earthly death or the day of His promised return, Jesus led and inspired Jude to leave us seven activities; seven things to guide us in remembering Jesus so that we will remain spiritually “awake” until that day, as Jesus tells we must in our Gospel Reading (Mk. 13:35-36).
- ✘ The first four of those activities are things that we believers must be doing in our own lives.
 - 1) verse 20: “Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.” Faith always has an object, otherwise it’s nothing but a word. So, in what or whom do you believe? The only true Triune God, right? as He has revealed Himself and shown Himself to us in Scripture and through the Holy Spirit. Left alone or influenced by beliefs outside of the Bible, this faith will likely be forgotten and die. So friends, we must daily listen to God in His Word, gather together in His Church for worship and Bible Study each Sabbath and thereby continue to grow in our faith until the end.
 - 2) continuing in verse 20: “pray in the Holy Spirit.” Prayer is nothing more than having a heart to heart conversation with the One in whom our faith is based. And it’s the Holy Spirit who leads us to pray according to God’s Word as we confess our sins to Him and receive His forgiveness in Jesus and seek His guidance for how we are to live for Him.
 - 3) Verse 21, “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” This is the call for us to do anything and everything that we can, with God’s help and grace, to stay in the faith that God so loving gave to us at our Baptism.
 - 4) continues in verse 21, “Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Mercy is what happens when you do not get what you deserve. Though we have already received Christ’s mercy in His forgiveness and faith, this is the call for us never to doubt or grow tired or discouraged as we “wait” for Jesus to come. He has promised we will see the fulfillment of His mercy in eternal life and He never goes back on a promise. We may not deserve it, but it is ours because of Jesus!
- ✘ Now, having offered encouragement as to how we believers ourselves should live, Jude then adds three ways that God intends for us to live with and show His love to others, especially as verse 22 says, to “those who doubt.”
 - The first is that we are to “have mercy on those who doubt.” As Jude said earlier, you and I are not the ones in charge of a person’s final judgment. Even Jesus allowed Himself to be rejected by the world. So when you and I share Jesus and His message of Law and Gospel with this world, He allows sinners the free will to still reject His gift of salvation. Our job, as Jude says, is to keep on showing them the same mercy that Jesus has shown to us, no matter what.
 - Second, in verse 23, “save others by snatching them out of the fire.” Jesus saved us from God’s deserved wrath, snatching us from the very destruction we earned in our sin. Now, as those already snatched from judgment by His grace, God wants us to be the example to others; to let Him use the story of our undeserved salvation as the catalyst for Him to graciously snatch and save others from destruction.
 - And third, in verse 23, “hating even the garment stained by the flesh.” At your baptism, Jesus clothed you in the robe of His own righteousness. So, why would any of us or our congregation knowingly and willingly soil that precious gift with unrepentant sin? Instead, Jude takes us back

to verse four and he warns us not to “pervert the grace of our God” as some were doing in his day, but instead to righteously hate all sin out of love and respect for Jesus.

✘ That’s a lot for us to remember as we wait for Jesus, isn’t it? So, here’s a way to boil it all down to one key point: Remember Jesus!

➔ Now, remembering always assumes there is a past to remember. So daily live in God’s Word, recalling and celebrating what God has already done and promises to do for you in Jesus. He gave His life for you. He conquered death for you. He sent his Spirit to grant you faith, forgiveness, life, and salvation. And He has promised to return in glory for you and all who believe in Him at the same time that He promises to destroy those who do not.

➔ In John 14:26, Jesus promises, “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” You see, Jesus remembers you, and that’s how you and I remember Him.

Conclusion

✘ “Now to Him,” Jude says, “who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (vv. 24–25).