

Sermon Notes



Sermon: Remember

Matthew 5:23-24

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

Monday: Read Romans 12:1-2

Worship is generally understood as the service that takes place around an altar, but here Paul cuts the word loose from its moorings in the Temple and the church. Far too often we try to confine worship to the sanctuary – to preaching, prayers, or hymns, but Paul is reminding us that our very living is an act of worship. And maybe more importantly, those faithful acts of life transform our living so that we more fully offer our whole selves – all we are and all we have – to God. Eugene Peterson in *The Message* words it this way: “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.” How can you offer more of your everyday living to God? What aspects of your life do you hold back? What would happen if we offered our whole self to God? Our economic selves? Our interactions with one another? Our time and gifts? How might we be transformed?

Prayer: God, help me to worship you with every breath, every step, every word. May I be a living sacrifice for you. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Genesis 12:1-9; 13:1-5, 14-18; 22:9-14

As we wind our way through the story of Abram, again and again we find ourselves pausing to at an altar as Abram “calls upon the name of the Lord.” These altars were simple rocks stacked on top of one another to mark a place, a moment, an experience with the divine. Nothing particularly special, yet it can’t be denied that each of these altars was built on holy ground; made holy simply by Abram’s intentional act of worship. They serve as milestones on Abram’s journey of faith. Each one calling him deeper into relationship with God, each one sending him forth on the next steps of his journey with God. How do our intentional acts of worship shape our faith story? When and where have you encountered God? In what ways do you recognize those moments and places? How do those encounters call you forward in relationship with God?

Prayer: May the experience of your divine presence shape me, God. Amen.

Wednesday: Read John 2:13-16

The story of Jesus turning over the tables is an emotionally charged one. Money changers and livestock vendors were necessary to the rituals of temple worship, so why was Jesus so angry? Perhaps it was because the system was corrupt, charging more than necessary to exchange money and to purchase animals for sacrifice, limiting the ability of some to worship. Perhaps it was how these “businesspersons” filled the outer courtyard, the Court of the Gentiles, blocking non-Jews from prayer and worship. Perhaps Jesus is challenging our tendency to become more comfortable with the trappings of religious ritual than with the relationships that define life with God and others. Our call is to examine every motivation when it comes to the intersection of faith and life, where all creation

is holy space. Are we focused fully on God and the way of Christ? What “tables” might need to be turned over in our church? In our lives? How might we create space that invites all to join us in worshipping God?

Prayer: Jesus, help us to see clearly that which prevents ourselves and others from genuine worship. Amen.

Thursday: Read Matthew 18:21-35

This passage reminds us of a core Christian conviction: Forgiveness is something we live, something we embody, in every moment. After all, the very foundation on which our identity as Christians is built is the gracious forgiveness of God in Christ. “Forgiven” is who and what we *are*. It is not simply a tool we need once in a while. Forgiveness goes with you, accompanies you, and is needed by you everywhere you go. It is a reflection of who we are and whose we are. It says something of what we believe and maybe something more of the nature of the One we worship. What does forgiveness mean to you? How might you practice forgiveness more fully this week?

Prayer: Holy God, forgive me as I forgive others. Amen.

Friday: Read Micah 6:6-8

Christianity is not a Sunday only experience. We all know this, but it is worth repeating. Christians are called to set aside our own narrow self interest in favor of God’s Kingdom. And frankly, we have a radical faith that often stands in tension with culture. When we put our own personal, social, or political agenda ahead of God’s Kingdom, our worship is hollow. God intends for us to be more than we often are, asking our relationship with God to move us into relationship with one another. What does it mean to you to “do justice?” How do you “love kindness or mercy?” In what ways do you “walk humbly with God?”

Prayer: Lord, may I pursue your justice, love with your mercy, and humbly journey with you by my side. Amen.

Saturday: Read Colossians 3:12-15

Is this passage simply an elaboration of the exhortation to “do good?” Paul’s words just before this text, a list of earthly don’ts, supports this theory, but Paul is reminding the church at Colossae that they are holy and beloved, and their lives should be a reflection of their identity in Christ. When we open ourselves to the reality that we too are a holy community, beloved by God, and called to live in response to that truth, we all are transformed. When we remember we are loved by God – each one of us, is loved by God – we are compelled to love one another to live together in peace, to seek together the way of Christ, to serve together in love. How do our own encounters with God change and shape us as a community? How do Paul’s words in this passage shape our communal life? What is our response to the abundant life we discover in Christ? How does that response guide our actions?

Prayer: May everything we do be a reflection of God’s love through Christ our Lord. Amen.