

Remember: He Has Risen!

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.”

It is Friday night. You just got home and it was a very rough week. You don't feel much like making dinner. Your husband reminds you that you have gift certificates to the Arlington Haus. “Get your coats,” you tell your husband and kids, “we are going out to eat.” You have a big biology test coming up. You study and study and study. You make out flashcards and go through them until you can answer each one perfectly. A few days later the grades are posted and you aced the test. It is good to remember things. It is good to remember you have gift certificates to a restaurant. It is good to remember the answers for a test.

And that is what church is all about. If you are looking for brand new ideas, church is not the place to find them. You will not hear anything “new” today. It will be the same message you heard last Easter. It is the same message you hear every Sunday. Christianity is about remembering things. When Paul spoke to a group of Greek philosophers in Athens, he noticed how they had a temple to the “Unknown God.” The Greeks had a sophisticated religion, but they didn't know what they worshipped. You don't get that with Christianity. We are not on a pursuit to unwrap the mysteries of the supreme being. No. We spend our time remembering who God is and what he has done for us. Martin Luther didn't invent a new religion. He just rediscovered the simple gospel that had been forgotten.

That is the encouragement we have in our text from 2 Timothy. Paul is being used by God the Holy Spirit. He is telling us not just celebrate Easter today. He is telling us to remember. Remember what? He has risen.

I. Remember who he is.

“Remember Jesus Christ.” Jesus is his name. Jesus means “God saves.” Of course many people have the same name. Know anyone named Joshua? That is the Hebrew version of Jesus. Many people may share his name, but no one accomplished what he accomplished. Sure, he drove out demons. He healed the sick. He even raised the dead. But he literally saves us. As true God Jesus came to the world to do battle with the forces of hell. Last Friday we let the Bible tell us how bad it was. It was a struggle to the death. And in the end, Jesus won that struggle. Life conquered death and death died.

He did so because he is the Christ. Christ is his title, not his name. It means the “anointed one.” Many people have been anointed throughout history as kings and priests and prophets, but there is only one “Anointed One.” In a world full of religions, how can we know ours is the right one? How do you know the meat you buy is safe? Look for the USDA label. How do we know Jesus is the real deal? Look on the label. Jesus is the one God has been speaking about all these centuries. We don't follow some religious leader. We follow the one God chose. Jesus is the one.

II. Remember what he has done.

Remember who he is. Remember what he has done. ***“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead.”*** I could take you on a world tour and show you many sites. We can fly to Russia and see the body of Lenin still encased in glass. We can fly to Mecca and see the dust that once was the prophet Mohammed. All the world's great leaders are all dead and we can visit their graves. But we couldn't do the same with Jesus. We could scour the Holy Land and we would not find a trace of him. That is because he was raised from the dead. He is alive and well. We follow a living Savior, not a dead leader.

That means, of course, that Jesus experienced death. He didn't have to. As God he doesn't die. Even when he became a human he didn't have to die. People don't die because they are human. Death is not natural. Movies like the Lion King try to make us acceptable of death, a circle of life thing. Deep down we know that death isn't a circle of life thing. We know it is a sign that something is terribly wrong. We are suppose to live in harmony with God, but all we can do is rock the boat and cause disharmony. Death is a verdict on man and his sin. But it doesn't end at death. Sure, we can carve on a stone the day when a person died. But that is only a date. Death is eternal. Ask the rich man in the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. He was living a conscious, eternal death.

So, naturally, when Jesus became sin for us, he died, too, not because he is human, but because he became sin. But the circle is broken. He came out of that tomb. He carried our sins to the cross and he left them there in that tomb. Your sins, or better, the guilt of your sins are gone. Sin is dead. Sin is buried.

But remember, Jesus rose from the dead. That fact has an effect on us. We watch sports. We root for certain teams. We enjoy watching them. But in the end we just go home and life doesn't really change. Now imagine if some starting pitcher pitches a complete shut out. Sure our team wins, but what if he was playing for you. What if his victory is your victory? What if the million dollars he makes in a game gets transferred over to you because he won? I bet you will be really interested in that game. You'd go to see it. I bet you cheer louder than anyone else. I bet you get really involved. Jesus didn't die and come back to life. He did it for you. His is not the only grave that will be empty. So will yours.

And, ***“Remember ... descended from David.”*** That's interesting. Why did Paul add that here? Well, it is true. Jesus is descended from David; that is why Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem for the census. No, he wasn't an earthly king. But

he is a king. His kingdom is not of this world. If his kingdom was earthly, it will disappear some day. No his kingdom will last forever, and you are a part of that. Later in this letter Paul confidently told Timothy, ***“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.”*** Please understand that 2 Timothy is Paul’s last letter. He will be executed soon. How can he get away with a statement that God will rescue him from every evil attack when he will be executed? Sounds like God couldn’t save him from the Romans. But he did rescue him if you consider the big picture. Yes, the Romans had their way with Paul, but Paul still got home to heaven. God did rescue him.

We pray in the prayer, “deliver us from evil.” The cynic may laugh at us and question how God delivers us. Christians have troubles like everyone else. Christians get sick and die. They grow old and feeble. They experience depression. But God is delivering us from evil. Christ the King is ruling all things for us, his Church. He will take us home to heaven. We actually thank God when he gives us a little time on earth so we can let people know what it means that Christ has risen.

And Paul finally adds, ***“This is my gospel.”*** No, Paul didn’t invent this. He didn’t make it up. It wasn’t the product of his imagination. This is his gospel because it included Paul. It meant Paul. God wasn’t just telling the good news of Christ to the world. He told Paul that Christ saved him. And it is your gospel. “For you,” Jesus says in Communion. “God so loved the world,” that means you, too. “Whoever believes will not perish but have everlasting life.” That “whoever” includes you. Jesus isn’t just a Savior. He is my Savior and your Savior. His resurrection is my resurrection and yours. This is my gospel. It is your gospel.

For us it is the door to the microwave. If we want to remember something, we jot it down on one of these sticky notes and stick it to the door of the microwave. For others it may be a sticky note on the coffee maker, or the door, or the mirror in your bathroom. My father-in-law used to jot reminders on his hand.

Christianity is about remembering, and it helps if we had something to help us remember. We could use sticky notes. My wife jots a passage on a sticky note and puts it someplace where she sees it every day. But God has another special kind of sticky note. It is called weekly worship each Sunday. During any week we are bombarded by all sorts of things that demand our attention. Some are good as we are involved in the kids or grandkids events. Others are time consuming and hard like work. Then we have to take care of family, ourselves. And to top it off, maybe we are anxious, stressed, depressed, tired, sick.

Paul has a remedy for us. Remember: he has risen. Yes, work will still be there on Monday. Yes, all that stuff still needs your time and attention. But what does his resurrection do for you? This all will pass away. A Sabbath rest is coming when we no longer have to labor, wear out, suffer, cry or feel pain. Remembering his resurrection helps us deal with the coming week with the confidence that no matter how you measure your week, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful, we will rise someday and take our inheritance in heaven.

So, don’t just celebrate Easter. Remember: He has risen. Amen.