

Sermon 2009 Pentecost 24
11-15-09
Text: Hebrews 10:11-25
Theme: "Our Forgetful God"

I recently was getting ready for work and an Oprah episode was on TV. Now understand that I DO NOT WATCH OPRAH! But I was watching the news before I took a shower and when I got out, Oprah was on. So anyway, Oprah was talking to this person who had been through a horrific accident and she asked,

"Do you remember anything about the accident?" Now I find that to be a very strange question to ask. Why would anyone want to remember things about a horrific accident in which she was horribly maimed? I have never really understood Oprah anyway but that set me to thinking...what is it about remembering that so fascinates us because there was some sick part me that wondered too – what did she remember about the event?

When I was little, I would try to get my father to tell me stories of his time in the South Pacific fighting the Japanese in World War II. He always said he didn't remember much anymore but I knew he was lying. He remembered just fine but he didn't want to remember. War is enthralling to kids but not so much to people who experience it. So

far I have never found a soldier who was in real battle who wanted to remember it or talk about it.

It seems that the things we would rather forget tend to hang on in the recesses of our brains and the things we would love to remember, slowly fade from our memory. I never thought I would forget my friends in High School. We were the three musketeers and we would be best friends forever! And the other day, I could not remember the last name of my best friend in High School. I had to go look her up in the yearbook. Isn't it odd how we have so little control over what we remember and what we forget?

Just when we think we have everything nicely cleaned up and squared away, in comes the demon, crashing into our lives like the Kool-Aid man comes crashing through the wall. HEY KOOL-AID! Except instead of a delightfully sweet and fruity beverage, he pours out grief and shame and guilt all over our heads. That's how sin is. We do something wrong – sometimes something that seems to be the logical choice – sometimes it seems like our only choice – but we know it is wrong. And years later, after all the chips have fallen and after consequences have been paid and after all parties have moved on – in

comes the demon and we feel the guilt and shame all over again, sometimes just as intensely as we felt it in the beginning. Understand that that is the work of Satan. He loves his work and he is very good at it.

Guilt and shame are not supposed to be part of our lives my friends. Oh I know, I have heard the right wing whackos too. They proclaim guilt and shame and declare that we need guilt and shame so that we know when we have sinned for how will we know that we have offended God without guilt or shame? That's just the right wing's justification for living. They know that if you ever truly believe that guilt and shame are not part of a Christian's life, they will be out of work.

Contrary to what the whackos say, you and I were forgiven of every sin the moment Jesus suffered the torments of Hell in our place. At that moment, not only did God forgive your sin. He forgot it. God does not work the way we work. He is not held at bay by demons that constantly taunt and torment. They stay away from him because they wilt in his power. They cannot withstand his light. So when God forgets. He really forgets.

Do you want to forget too? Would you like to walk out of here today and honestly have completely forgotten not only every sin you ever committed but also every sin ever committed against you? I sure would. I would love it if those demons could never hold anything against me again. I would love to never again feel that old surge of guilt and shame over something I have done to another or said to a brother or sister.

I generally sleep pretty soundly, and Dänya has accused me in the past of having the conscience of a dog. I prefer to think of it as having the conscience of the redeemed. What worry should keep me awake? What concern should trouble my sleep? I am a forgiven child of God and over the years, I have learned to forget. I have seen a noticeable improvement in my forgetting. And I attribute this improvement to God. About 24 years ago, I really heard the Gospel for the first time. I had heard it before of course, but 24 years ago, it finally began to really grow. God's grace put down roots in my life and I began to understand that God's word did something in our lives. It was not just information to be managed, but a tool to mold and shape my whole life. About that same time, I began to understand that

Baptism was not just an historic day for me but an epic event that changed my earthly life. If those Baptismal waters are washing away sin every moment, then sin no longer exists for me. It is gone. Washed away as quickly as I commit it. Why would I feel guilt or shame over something that is no longer there? So the consequences remain? Yes, sometimes they do because we live in a broken world, but while consequences must be faced, I have no need to feel anything about them. They just are.

So I cannot guarantee that you will walk out of here today with no guilt and no shame, but I can guarantee that this is the place where that can happen. This is the place where over and over again you are faced with the reality that your sins have been forgiven and if your sins have been forgiven, there is no guilt and no shame. AMEN