Pentecost 26 – November 17, 2024 (2nd Last Sunday of the Church Year)
Text: Hebrews 10:11-25
Theme: Our Forgetful God

I was once sitting in a waiting room and they had Oprah on the TV. She 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 the same thing that Oprah asked – 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 evading the truth. I'm sure he remembered just fine but he didn't want to remember more by talking about it. War is enthralling to little kids but not so much to people who have experienced it. So far, I have never found a soldier, airman, sailor, or Marine, 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 forever, slowly fade from our memory. When I was graduated from High School, I thought I would never forget my best friends. We were the three musketeers and we would be best friends forever! And then, about 30 years after graduation, 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 a demon. Demons remember. They like to remind us of everything we have ever done wrong. He crashes in and, 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 that demon and we remember the guilt and shame all over again, sometimes just as intensely as we felt it in the beginning. I know how horrible it feels but understand this. That is the work of Satan and his demons.

Guilt and shame are not supposed to be part of our lives my friends. Oh, I know, I have heard the preachers who 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 their justification for their paycheck. They know that if you ever truly believe that guilt and shame are not part of a Christian's life, they might have no control over you and be out of work.

Contrary to what might be said by certain enclaves of Christianity, 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, truly forgets. The problem is, we do not.

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 am a forgiven child of God and I am learning to forget. I have seen a noticeable improvement in my forgetting. And I attribute this improvement to God. God's grace put down roots in my life and I understand that God's Word does something to me. His Word is not just information to be managed, but a tool that molds and shapes my whole life. Baptism is not just an historic day for us but an epic event that changes our earthly lives. If those Baptismal waters are washing away sin every moment, then sin no longer exists for us. It is gone, washed away as quickly as we commit it. Why would we feel guilt or shame over something that is no longer there?

Sadly, the consequences of sin remain. We live in a broken world, but while consequences must be faced, we 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 is happening. This is the place where you are repeatedly faced with the reality that your sins have been forgiven and if your sins have been forgiven, there is no guilt and no shame.

The author of Hebrews quotes the prophet Jeremiah:

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write

them on their minds…I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

God says this through Jeremiah. This is not something that human beings are saying about God. This is a direct quote from God. So, if God says that he doesn't remember your sin, what more is there to be said? He does not remember! So, if He doesn't remember your sin, why do you? Why do you care if anyone else does? God is the only one who ever mattered anyway.

I know that sounds hard because we like to believe that everyone matters, and everyone does, but only because of Christ. Were it not for Christ, none of us would matter. We would just be a mass of cells on the way to Hell. I just went to see a show where Mandy Patinkin and his wife, Kathryn Grody were interviewed by their son, Gideon. They're all Jewish. I was struck by what sad outlooks they have on life. They were all reactionary, acting as though this election was the end of the world. They seemed to think that the election of Donald Trump would be the end of civilization. I honestly think that people who become that upset over an election, are uncertain of their election.

I believe God when He says, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." So, I never get too bothered by who is elected because I am absolutely certain of my election. People who

are furiously screaming and crying and acting very foolish over an election are doing so out of fear. People who are certain of their own election into Heaven might be mildly annoyed by worldly events but we get over it rather quickly because we know that this world is not the end for us. Not so for Jews like Patinkin and Grody. They don't believe there is a heaven so this life is all there is. No wonder they get so upset. In fact, if I believed that this life was all there is, I would be in a deep depression all the time. This is it? Not enough time. Not enough money. War. Violence. Hunger. Disease. And then it's over? How terribly sad.

I encourage all of us to proclaim the truth to those who are in mourning. Help them to know that Donald Trump will come and go. He might do some fantastic things. I hope he does. He might be a total failure. But either way, God is in control and He has decided that we are His children regardless of who happens to be sitting in the White House. He has decided to forget our sins. He has decided that we will eat at His table for eternity. That joy supersedes all disappointments on this earth and honestly minimizes every sadness.