

Acts 16:9-15

⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ¹¹Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; ¹³and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Psalms 67

Revelation 21:10, 22–22:5

¹⁰And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; ²⁶they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. ¹Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; ⁴they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

John 14:23-29

²³Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

²⁴He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. ²⁵"These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, 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. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.

Revised Standard Version of the Bible

Remembrance

I feel really lucky that I get to preach today, because today is Mother's Day - the day we celebrate every year to honor our mothers and all that they have done for us. And it is really an honor to have so many mothers here with us today. I know we have several mothers in the congregation this morning because many of you got the gifts that were handed out earlier in the service. You wouldn't have taken them otherwise, right?

I have so much to be thankful for my wonderful mother and all the things she taught me as a child. Let me tell you about some of the things she taught me.

My Mother taught me about ANTICIPATION...

"Just wait until your father gets home."

My Mother taught me to MEET A CHALLENGE...

"What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you! Don't talk back to me!"

My Mother taught me LOGIC...

"If you fall out off that swing and break your neck, your not going to the store with me."

My Mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE...

"If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to freeze that way."

My Mother taught me HUMOR...

"When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

My Mother taught me about GENETICS...

"You're just like your father."

My Mother taught me about my ROOTS...

"Do you think you were born in a barn?"

My Mother taught me about WISDOM OF AGE...

"When you get to be my age, you will understand."

And my all time favorite... JUSTICE...

"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you.... Then you'll see what it's like."

And Mother was right about all those things, you know.

There were three sons who left home, went out on their own and over the years each of them became wealthy. As Mother's Day approached, they got together to discuss the gifts they had gotten to give their elderly mother. The first son said: *"I built a big house for our mother."*

The second said: *"I sent her a Mercedes with a driver."*

The third said: *"You remember how our mother enjoys reading the Bible. Now she can't see very well. So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took a minister 12 years to teach him. All Mama has to do is just name the chapter and verse and the parrot recites it."*

Soon thereafter, their mother sent them thank you letters.

"Milton," she said, "the house you built is so huge. I live in only one of the rooms, but I have to clean the whole house."

"Gerald," she said, "I am too old to travel. I stay at home most of the time so I rarely use the Mercedes. And that driver is so rude!"

"But Donald," she said, "the little chicken you sent was delicious!"

I sincerely hope that you have a wonderful Mother's Day and get the gifts you have been wanting today.

This morning's Gospel reading comes from the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. Let me orient you a bit. Jesus and the disciples are together at the Last Supper, in Jerusalem, on the evening before his crucifixion. After they have all eaten, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, and then he begins speaking to his them, trying to explain to them what is about to happen and what will come after he is gone.

As he is speaking to them, he tells them: *“and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. ²⁵“These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, 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.”*

In talking to the disciples, Jesus is explaining about the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost - who also he refers to as the Counselor. And he is explaining to the disciples that the Counselor will be with them, even after Jesus has gone, and will help them to remember all the things that Jesus has said to them.

I came across the following story by THOMAS G. LONG as I was preparing the sermon.

Many of you may have stashed away in a drawer somewhere around your home some old 45 rpm records. If you have some from the 50s and early 60s you might have Elvis' grinding out "Hound Dog," Buddy Holly and the Crickets' hiccupping "Peggy Sue," Chuck Berry's joyful "Maybellene," the Coasters' slapstick "Charlie Brown," the mournful "Tears On My Pillow" by Little Anthony and the Imperials, or the impenetrable "Louie, Louie" by the Kingsmen."

Here and there in these dusty stacks, one may find an occasional recording by the great blues master Jimmy Reed. A share-cropper's son, Reed brought the harmonica-and-guitar, black rhythm-and-blues of the Mississippi Delta to popular rock-and-roll mainstream. Many of us, when we were in high school, fancied ourselves a budding rock band. My friends and I did. We would play and replay our 45s attempting in vain to capture the sound. But how do you imitate someone like Reed. The pain-soaked cries of his mahogany voice could not be imitated by our too-tight, too-white, suburban throats.

There's an interesting story behind the Jimmy Reed records. In placing the phonograph needle again and again in the grooves of Jimmy Reed's records, you began to notice something curious. If one listened very carefully, there could sometimes be heard, ever so faintly in the background, a soft woman's voice murmuring in

advance the next verse of the song. The story that grew up around this -- and perhaps it is true -- was that Jimmy Reed was so absorbed in the blues beat and the guitar riffs of his music that he simply could not remember the words of his own songs. He needed help with the lyrics, and the woman's voice was none other than that of his wife, devotedly coaching her husband through the recording session by whispering the upcoming stanzas into his ear as he sang.

Whether or not this story is accurate, Christians will surely recognize a parallel experience. Jesus tells his followers that the role of the Holy Spirit is, in effect, to whisper the lyrics of the gospel song in the ears of the faithful. When Jesus was present, he was the one who taught them the right words, coached them through the proper verses, taught them the joyful commandments. But now that Jesus approaches his death, now that he draws near to his time of departure, now that the disciples will be on their own without him, that task is to be handed over to the Holy Spirit: *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth ..."* (John 14:15-17).

It seems we need to be reminded. We hear - but we forget. That's why we come to church - and hopefully keep coming to church - to hear and re-hear the words we need to hear.

You may have heard of that old story of the preacher who was invited to be a guest preacher at another church. He preached what he thought was a good sermon, and when he was done, stood at the door of the church to greet the worshipers as they left. One by one, the people shook his hand, exchanged the usual pleasantries, and went their way. One teenage boy came through, shook hands, looked the preacher square in the eye, and said, *"You preached too loud,"* and then walked off. Now that's not the kind of thing ministers are accustomed to hearing.

It upset the preacher, but he was able to shake it off and go on greeting the worshipers. Very soon, however, the same young man appeared in the line. He looked the minister in the eye, shook his hand again, and said, *"And you preached too long."* Well, this really upset the minister. But he

pulled himself together and continued to be as responsive as he could to the people who were greeting him. But here came the young man again. He shook the minister's hand, looked him squarely in the eye, and said, *"And what you said wasn't worth saying."*

A woman of the congregation had been standing close by and had heard all of this. Trying to be helpful, she approached the minister and said, *"Now don't pay any mind to that young man. You see, he's mentally disabled. And all he knows to do is just repeat what he hears other people saying."*

The reason we need the Holy Spirit murmuring the gospel in our ears, of course, is that we are notoriously forgetful. As one commentator has pointed out, "an early Christian definition for being lost ... was 'to have amnesia.' " We are amnesiacs who cannot keep our calling clearly in mind. Like the great Jimmy Reed, we are caught up in the rhythms, but we forget the lyrics. We know that we are created to serve and love one another, but the pressure builds and the temptation to stray is strong and we simply forget who we are and what we are purposed to do and be in life.

THOMAS LONG has a great example of the Counselor - the Advocate - who reminds us of what we need to know:

A friend who is a minister related her experience in taking communion to a woman in a nursing home who had Alzheimer's disease. When she arrived in the woman's room, she attempted to carry on a conversation with her. Even though she was a member of this minister's church and the minister had known her for years, meaningful communication was nearly impossible. The woman was confused and disoriented. She simply could not remember anything, including who she was or who the minister was.

When the minister set up the communion elements, the woman's confusion increased. Seeing the bread and the cup on her hospital table, she furrowed her brow and tried to push them off the table with her hand, "What's this? What ...?"

But as the minister began the familiar communion liturgy, the woman grew calm. The Holy Spirit opened a pathway into her memory, deeper than any disease, more profound than any confusion.

"On the night that our Lord was betrayed ...," the minister said, and the woman began to follow along to the words silently with her lips. "This is my body, given for you," the woman was now quietly speaking the words along with the minister, the Spirit whispering the lyrics in her ear. When the bread and the wine were offered, the woman eagerly took them in her hands -- the gifts of God for this daughter of God.

In the final analysis, none of us is able to do it all by ourselves. We must all be given a story and a narrative not of our own making. Where we have no faithful memory, God remembers, and by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit whispers the lyrics of the saving gospel in our ears.

Amen.