

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019

EVERY STEP AN ARRIVAL

REMEMBERING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Scripture Reading Joshua 4:1–8, 19–24

FROM THE SERMON

The Passover Seder is ordained in the Torah: 'This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord. . . . You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt: therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as an ordinance forever' (Exod. 12:14,17). The Passover is to be observed as a 'memorial day.' Biblically understood, this is a world removed from what we usually mean by 'memorial.' Memory (remembrance) in biblical thought does not mean 'calling to mind.' 'Remembering' means present and active. That is the reason for the statement in the Passover that it was not our ancestors who were brought by God out of bondage into freedom, [217] but we ourselves. The Seder supper is not a memorial of God's saving action in the past, but an appropriation of that same saving power in the present.

This whole matter of remembrance is very important for biblical understanding. The exodus story begins this way: 'The people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition' (Exod 2:23-25).

This passage has sometimes been made to seem ridiculous, as though it meant that God had forgotten--the Israelites had just slipped his mind somehow--and now he has suddenly recalled them. Similarly, prayers asking God to 'remember' have been misunderstood--as though God needed us to remind him of something that he might otherwise forget! That was never the meaning of remembering in the prayers of the church. Remembering in Scripture refers to present action. If a woman prays to God to remember her mother, that does not mean 'please think about my mother from time to time.' It means, 'Take action on behalf of my mother.' Similarly, if we say that the Lord's Supper is a 'memorial,' we do not mean that we are simply thinking about Jesus' last supper. When we repeat Jesus' words, 'do this in remembrance of me,' in the communion service, we do not simply call Jesus to mind. Jesus is actively present with power in the communion of the people. Disputes about the Lord's Supper have divided the Christian church but understanding the biblical concept of remembrance can help us. We are not just thinking about Jesus' actions in the upper room; we acknowledge that he is present and acting with the community gathered at the table in the present time.

Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*

DEVOTIONAL FOR THIS SERIES

Through the remainder of the year, we will share a message series based on Eugene Peterson's devotional book *Every Step An Arrival*. In this series, we'll take the time to

contemplate the truth of God—and enjoy the presence of God—in the small moments of our lives. Though it is not a requirement, we encourage you to pick up Peterson’s book and follow along with your own 90-day devotional. We invite you to journey with us this fall, as we learn how to make every step an arrival.

If you would like to prepare for each sermon, we will be discussing:

- 11.03** Day 17: A Spiritual Skill That Can Renew Your Life
- 11.10** Day 19: Memorializing God’s Work in Your Life
- 11.17** Day 28: Make Our Needs and Wants Known
- 11.24** Day 33: A Character That Counts
- 12.01** Day 60: God Became Human to Elevate Us
- 12.08** Day 84: God’s Gracious Way of Invading Our World
- 12.15** Day 85: God’s Coming Salvation
- 12.22** Day 90: The Offended Initiates Forgiveness