

SAINT ANDREW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

WWW.STANDREWSASHEBORO.ORG ♦ ASHEBORO, NC 27203

October 2010

Dear Friends,

This past summer I had a brief visit with my grandmother, who is in the late stages of Alzheimer's Disease. Though she seems happy enough in her increasingly one dimensional world, those around her can see how her happiness is greatly diminished by her inability to remember. My visits with her have led me to think about how wonderful it is that God has seen fit to endow humanity with memory. Surely this is one of the most precious gifts that He has given to us. Let us briefly consider some of the benefits and potential dangers of the ability to remember.

Our love for others demonstrated by forgetfulness

Having begun by noting how terrible it is to have no memory at all, I now would like to point out how terrible it is if we insist upon remembering *everything*. Like any of the good gifts that God has given to us, memory may be abused or used inappropriately. We may, for instance, refuse to give up the memory of some wrong done to us in the past. Clinging onto such memories may lead us to become bitter and unforgiving, making it difficult to seek reconciliation and peace with those who have wronged us.

Thankfully, however, God is able to heal our memories, even sharing with us the gift of forgetfulness (see below on how God too is able to forget). Consider, for example, the testimony of Joseph (who was sold into slavery by his own brothers and suffered many hardships because of it). Later in life Joseph was able to forget the past injury and pain done to him, saying: "*God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house*" (Genesis 41:51b).

Not holding someone's past wrongs against them is an expression of what it means to love. Just as God has canceled the record of debt that stood against us, nailing it to the cross (see Colossians 2:13-14) so too we are called to love each other by not being resentful or keeping a record of each other's wrongs (see 1 Corinthians 13:5).

God's love for us demonstrated by forgetfulness

As long as we're on the subject of forgetfulness, let us not neglect to mention how thankful we must be that God is willing to forget about the sins of those who entrust their souls to Jesus. Consider the following promise from God, first recorded in the ancient prophecy of Jeremiah and then repeated in the New Testament book of Hebrews: "*I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*" (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17). On this subject the Anglican theologian Philip Edgecumbe Hughes wrote: ". . . the Holy Spirit testified through Jeremiah both that God would put his laws in the hearts of his people and that he would remember their sins and misdeeds no more; and this is the very essence of the new covenant. The terms of this new covenant make full provision for the past as well as the future . . . the rebellion of their past unregenerate lives is removed from his (God's) remembrance, their guilty consciences purged by virtue of the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offer himself without blemish on their behalf (Hebrews 9:14). For God to remember our sins no more is the same as for him to forgive them; and obviously, sins effectively dealt with in this way, full forgiven and put out of sight, have no need of further propitiation. The all-sufficient propitiation has been made, once and forever (1 John 2:2). At last the longing of the centuries has been satisfied: true forgiveness of sins is provided by Christ's one perfect sacrifice of himself on the cross."

Our love for God shown in a good memory

In some instances, a willingness to forget is a Christian virtue born out of allowing God's love for us to shape the way that we love others. But forgetfulness can just as easily be a vice as it can be a virtue. Over and over again, God instructs His people to keep their memories razor sharp in one very important area: the history of His past acts of grace and mercy towards them. "*Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! (. . .) Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.*" (Psalm 105:1-6)

Remembering what God has done in the past is essential if our prayers are to be offered with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1) and if we are to "abound" in thanksgiving (Colossians 2:7) as the Scriptures instruct us to. Some of the prayers in the Book of

Common Prayer that I most love are the various prayers of Thanksgiving, all of which lead us to give thanks to God based upon the remembrance of what He does done for us in the past. Consider this example, from the Family Prayers in the back of the prayerbook:

To our prayers, O Lord, we join our unfeigned thanks for all thy mercies; for our being, our reason, and all other endowments and faculties of soul and body; for our health, friends, food, and raiment, and all the other comforts and conveniences of life. Above all, we adore thy mercy in sending thy only Son into the world, to redeem us from sin and eternal death, and in giving us the knowledge and sense of our duty towards thee. We bless thee for thy patience with us, notwithstanding our many and great provocations; for all the directions, assistances, and comforts of thy Holy Spirit; for thy continual care and watchful providence over us through the whole course of our lives; and particularly for the mercies and benefits of the past day; beseeching thee to continue these thy blessings to us, and to give us grace to show our thankfulness in a sincere obedience to his laws, through whose merits and inter-cession we received them all, thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (pg. 591 in the 1928 BCP)

This prayer of thanksgiving begins with generalities (our being, our reason, etc.) and progressively gets more and more personal and specific, ending with references to the very day on which the prayer is offered. The daily discipline of praying in this way helps us to keep our memories sharp in regards to God's many mercies to us.

BRIEFLY NOTED

- Many of you had a **background check** completed last year so as to be able to serve in our Nursery and Children's Church ministry. Anyone who did not have a background check **MUST** have one before being involved in these ministries. Speak with Marlo Francis for more information.
- This past Sunday you may have noticed that **the choir sat with the congregation**. We are experimenting with this seating adjustment because I know that it has been difficult to hear the choir, thus making it difficult for them to "prompt us" in our own singing. I hope that with the choir sitting in the pews, it will be easier for everyone to participate in both the hymns and the sung portions of the liturgy.
- We continue to need volunteers to **help clean the church** every other week. Interested in helping? Speak with Fr. Patterson.
- Many thanks to Ben Morgan and Myra Markvart for **teaching Children's Church** this past month. There are still some openings for teachers for the remainder of the year – please see the serving schedule and consider volunteering!

ON THE CALENDAR

- The **Council of Advice** is scheduled to meet on October 10th.
- **Potluck Dinner**. Please join us on October 17th at 6:30 pm (immediately following our service) for a Potluck Dinner & an address by Father Patterson. RSVP to Pauline Urbane.
- **Operation Christmas Child** (Samaritan's Purse). Have you been collecting items to include in a shoebox for needy children? Please assemble your shoebox and bring it in to the church by October 17th. See Sara Patterson for more details.
- **Men's Fall Retreat** - November 5th-6th, 2010. Gentlemen - mark your calendars and please consider joining us for some time to rest and recharge, in beautiful Boone NC. Stay tuned for more details!
- **The Apostle's Mission Network** (of which we are a part) is hosting a retreat on Oct 25-28 at Young Life's Rockbridge Alum Springs, a beautiful retreat center nestled in Virginia's Shenandoah mountains (near Roanoke, Va). Visit www.apostlesmission.org or speak with Fr. Patterson for more information.
- **The AMiA Winter Conference** is scheduled to be held in Greensboro, February 9-11, 2010. Registration packets are available in the fellowship hall or you may register online at www.theamia.org.

In Christ,
