

Reminiscere

13 March, Anno Domini 2022

Psalm 25

Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

I have not been given the spiritual gift of remembering. Many of you, unfortunately, can attest to the truth of that statement. All it takes me is about five steps in the other direction and I have completely forgotten what I was doing or looking for or the name of the person I was just talking to. It certainly causes a lot of problems but sometimes it turns out to be a blessing in disguise. It's terrible to forget a commitment that you made or a prayer request someone brought to my attention, but it's great to forget some of the pain and sorrow of the past or even to be able to forget the sins I myself have done. If you ask someone who remembers everything, something we probably wish we could do, they will tell you that to remember everything is to remember EVERYTHING, the good and the bad. There are just some things you don't want to remember - things you have seen or heard or experienced or done.

God, on the other hand, has a truly perfect memory. Not only does He see everything, He remembers it all. He is not forgetful like we are. And that can be truly wonderful. He does not forget any part of His creation and tends to everything from the tiniest amoeba to the furthest star. He remembers the sparrow when it falls to the ground. He most certainly remembers your name - both the one you received from your parents and the one He Himself gave you at your Baptism. He remembers, O man, that you are dust and that you need daily bread. He remembers your prayer requests and to be present when two or three are gathered together in His Name around His Word and the blessed Sacraments. God remembers you when you are at your weakest and most vulnerable and what some may consider most useless moments. He remembers the poor and the widow and the orphan and provides for them. He remembers the captive and prisoners though they have long been forgotten and cast aside by men.

But God's perfect memory is also horrifically terrifying. The thought of God holding in His holy mind until the Day of Judgment every one of our vile thoughts, cruel words, and loveless deeds ought to shake us to our very core because that can mean only one thing for us - certain eternal damnation. What we desperately want to forget as though it never happened - our idolatry, our covetousness, our adultery, our anger, our haughty pride, our lies - God remembers with perfect clarity as

though it just happened. All we can do is cry out with the psalmist “O Lord, remember NOT the sins of my youth or my many transgressions! Instead, O God, DO remember Your mercy and Your steadfast love. Look away from me and remember who You have declared Yourself to be. Remember the promise You made to redeem me. Remember that You baptized me and washed away my sins. Because if You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” None. Not a single one. Just the thought of the sin that we can remember should cause us to recoil in shame and humility. Now realize that those things you remember are only symptomatic of the underlying wretched condition of your heart. They are the definitive proof that what Scriptures says of all those born of flesh and blood is most certainly true - there is NOTHING good in you.

Whenever we find ourselves in need, when our weakness and powerlessness are exposed and we realize that we are nothing more than beggars before God, terror suddenly leaps upon us because we know, we remember. We remember how we have treated God with contempt, treated Him as little more than a gum ball machine who pops out treats for the right price. We remember how often we have forgotten the Sabbath Day and profaned it by not gladly gathering to hear the preaching of His Word and not gladly and daily learning it, neglecting to gather with our fellow Christians in the house of God to be cleansed and receive the gifts Christ freely gives. We remember how we have allowed lustful thoughts to run rampant through our minds unchecked and unresisted. We remember how mercilessly we have dealt with others who sought our mercy and aid, pretending as though we didn't know or simply couldn't help. We want our sins forgotten but lock the sins of others in a steel cage where they can run through our minds constantly so that the offender doesn't simply get to walk free. We do unto others exactly what we pray God never does to us - remember our sin.

Repent and pray that the Lord would not remember, that He would not draw up before His eyes all the evil that we have most certainly done.

What is truly astounding is that God actually chooses to forget. He chooses to cast our sins behind His back so that they are no longer before His face. When the Father turned His back on Jesus on the cross, He turned His face away from the One who became sin on your behalf to die, to be forgotten and rejected. Not only has our Lord taken our sins away from us but He has also put them out of His mind because they have been paid for. Your sins were remembered against Jesus and in so doing, God no longer has them to look at when He looks at the baptized. Remembering instead His mercy and steadfast love, remembering His promise of redemption, God sees in the penitent believer a dear and holy child, unstained by

sin. God remembers the covenant He made with you, the new testament which He affirms in the Holy Supper with the Blood of sacrifice. Hear the beautiful words which God has spoken through the prophet Isaiah “I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” (Is. 43:25) And through Jeremiah the Lord says “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:34)

Dear people of God, you who seek His mercy and forgiveness, rejoice. The Lord in His mercy for the sake of Christ, does not remember your sins against you. He remembers Jesus whose robe of righteous you wear. And He commands you to remember Him - to remember the word of absolution that He spoke to you, to remember Him as the One who willingly suffered the death of the cross to make atonement for your sins, to remember that in your flesh Christ rose from the dead that He might be only the first of many who would rise to eternal life on the Last Day. He commands you to remember the Sabbath Day so that you might remember that He has remembered you in mercy and in steadfast love, so you might be reminded that He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and so that you might be reminded that you have been redeemed and set free from everlasting death.

In the Name of +Jesus.

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keeps your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.