

“Love Is Forgetful”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Did you hear about the married couple in their 80's who were having problems remembering things, so they decided to go to the doctor for a checkup. The doctor tells them that they are physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember.

Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. His wife asks, “Where are you going?” “To the kitchen for a drink,” he replies. She asks, “Will you get me a piece of cake?” The husband says, “Sure.” She gently reminds him, “Don't you think you should write it down, so you don't forget it?” He says, “No, I can remember that!”

Then the woman says, “Well, I'd like some strawberries on top. You'd better write it down because I know you'll forget it.” The man replies, “I can remember that! You want some cake with strawberries.”

She adds, “I'd also like whipped cream on top. Now I'm certain you're gonna forget that, so you'd better write it down, ok?” Irritated, he says, “I don't need to write it down woman! I can remember that! Cake with strawberries! And whipped cream!” He then grumbles into the kitchen.

After about 30 minutes the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs.

She stares at the plate for a moment and says, “Where's my toast?”

The curse of forgetfulness. Of course, it isn't just the older generation that tends to suffer with forgetfulness – we can all be guilty of it and forgetfulness isn't something that is usually thought of as a positive trait in someone's character.

But there is a time when forgetfulness becomes an absolute necessity. Paul says that ‘LOVE – KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.’ He says that love is forgetful.

Our challenge is to forgive and forget. We don't keep records of wrongs. God does not keep that score in heaven, and we're not supposed to keep that score here. It's the way of God and it's the challenge of Christians.

But is it really possible? Is it possible to remember people without remembering their sin? Is it possible to remember people without remembering the wrongs that they have committed, against the world, against society, against you?

What do you think of when I say the name BRUTUS? – He was the one who stabbed Caesar.

What do you think of when I say the name JUDAS? – he was the one who betrayed Jesus.

What do you think of when I say the name PILATE? – He was the one who washed his hands and said, 'I'm going to let you kill him – I want nothing to do with it.'

What do you think of when I say the name HITLER, or STALIN, POL POT, SADAM HUSSEIN?

We remember people and we always remember the mistakes that they made, the hurts that they caused.

That's the way we are. We keep those records. Not only do we keep them, but we make sure that they are written with permanent ink – and in triplicate! It's hard for us to forgive and forget. But love, true Christian love, keeps no record of wrongs. True Christian love is forgetful. Now it might not be easy – I'm not suggesting that it is for one moment - but it is possible.

I was thinking of some examples where 'no records of wrongs' had been kept and my mind went straight to the story of Joseph. You know if anyone ever had a right to hold a grievance against his brothers it was him.

For the first 30 years of his life, the adversity he faced was incredible. We all know the story of how Joseph was the favorite of his father and was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. How he worked as a slave for Potiphar. Then falsely accused of attempted rape by Potiphar's wife and he ended up in jail for two years. But through his ability to interpret dreams, he managed to rise up over all his adversities, all his troubles, until he became second in command to

Pharaoh himself. And then the famine that is so intense brought Joseph's family down to Egypt to purchase food.

And as his brothers (those who were the original cause of all his woes) stood in front of him – this was his chance to get even. This was his opportunity to get back at them. This was a chance to make them pay for what they had done to him all those years before. Revenge would be sweet. This is it – payback time ‘AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT TO HARM ME, BUT GOD INTENDED IT FOR A GOOD PURPOSE, SO HE COULD PRESERVE THE LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE, AS YOU CAN SEE THIS DAY. SO NOW, DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE CHILDREN.’ Then he consoled them and spoke kindly to them.

Did you get that! He never rubbed their noses in it. Regardless of how he was treated, in spite of unfair accusations, even though he was rejected, abandoned, abused, maligned, and forgotten, he refused to become resentful or bear a grudge or succumb to bitterness. Because love keeps no record of wrongs.

Often people are treated really unfairly, and they get hurt by the actions of others. Others in their family, others in their workplace, others in their church, and some people never get over that hurt. Instead, they grow bitter toward those people for the rest of their lives. But Joseph did not choose the bitter path. If anyone had a right to be angry and bitter, it was Joseph. He had every right to punish his brothers like they did him. But he didn't. And I know that for some of you, life has been unfair. People have been unfair, even cruel. People in your personal family, people in your church family. But don't let bitterness and anger lay hold of your life.

In *Hebrews 8:12* says ‘I WILL FORGIVE THEIR WICKEDNESS AND WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE,’ *Hebrews 10:17*. God says, ‘THEIR SINS AND LAWLESS ACTS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.’ That's the way God is. The great missionary E. Stanley Jones said, ‘GOD BURIES OUR SINS IN THE SEA OF HIS FORGETFULNESS AND PUTS UP A SIGN THAT READS, "NO FISHING." He forgets our sins and remembers them no more.

Time and time again, over and over in Scripture we see this timeless truth demonstrated, enacted, lived out “LOVE – KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.”

Now, it is important to understand something here. Something I just want to clarify. God never puts a stamp of approval on evil and sin. It was wrong for Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery and lie to their father that he was dead.

These things were WRONG, they were SINFUL, they were EVIL. They caused HEARTACHE, they caused GRIEF, they caused PAIN. But in it all and through it, God was able to work for good. What was it Joseph said to his brothers? 'YOU MEANT TO HARM ME, BUT GOD INTENDED IT FOR A GOOD.' You may not understand how or why people have done what they have done. You may not understand what possible good can come out of the pain and hurt that has been caused – but remember this – 'OUR GOD IS ABLE.'

"LOVE ... KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS" (v. 5) - that means, it doesn't hold any grudges, nor does it keep a list of the names of the people who have hurt you.

I heard a story about a man who had rabies long before a cure had been invented. He was taken to the local hospital and the doctor examined him, ran some tests, and broke the bad news to him.

He said, "I'M SORRY BUT YOU HAVE CONTRACTED RABIES AND THERE'S NO HOPE FOR YOU. WE CAN KEEP YOU COMFORTABLE DURING YOUR LAST DAYS, BUT THAT'S ALL. I SUGGEST YOU WRITE OUT YOUR WILL AND SET YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER."

The man asked the doctor if he could have a writing pad and started writing. When the doctor returned several hours later. He caught the man still writing and said, "I'M GLAD YOU TOOK MY ADVICE. IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT YOU'RE WORKING ON YOUR WILL."

The patient looked up and said, "WILL? THIS ISN'T MY WILL. THIS IS A LIST OF PEOPLE I'M GOING TO BITE BEFORE I GO!"

But love isn't like that. Love lets the past die. Love wants to wipe the slate clean and start all over again. Because of love it is possible to make a new beginning. But the Apostle Paul puts it, quite simply, 'LOVE – KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.' Amen.