

The Ministry of Memory

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 10/06/19

At Crossroads United Methodist Church

Waunakee, WI

The second letter to Timothy speaks of remembering: "I remember you in my prayers." "I remember your tears." I remember the heritage of your faith."

Memory is a very powerful force in our lives. It is a power we ignore at our peril.

Consider your own memoirs. You have moved from one home to another. You may have moved from one home to another. Sometimes the move is only across the street or around the corner, sometimes it is across the country, or even from one side of the world to the other.

There comes a time in moving when all the boxes have been packed. The rooms are empty, the windows and the walls are bare. As you walk through the rooms that have been your home, you hear the echoes of your footsteps.

In your mind's eye you see the room full of furniture. You see people – family and friends sitting around the table at events like Thanksgiving or gathered near the Christmas tree.

You remember conversations. You know in these places life was lived. You know where the sick bed was; where promises were made; where secrets were shared.

And now you prepared to move. Your possessions have been packed. You can't see your memories (if you ever could), but they are real.

We also read of Timothy's tears. These tears seem to have been shed at the time of the separation with the writer of the letter. Life has such moments in the midst of loss and grief. Whoever was Timothy's mentor that wrote this letter, encouraged Timothy's faith on the journey of faith by focusing on the gifts of God in a spirit of gratitude.

In the face of tearful memories and tough questions, he gave thanks for the gifts of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. He gave thanks for Timothy's faith, and he gave thanks for the opportunity he had to ordain Timothy, through the laying on of hands.

In the midst of struggles, there seemed to be no thought of anger or anxiety, but rather gratitude. And that mentor's gratitude helped Timothy to see that he was part of something so much bigger – Christ's ministry.

And here we quietly come to one of the scripture's quiet truths of everyday living and spirituality: when we face setbacks, pausing to give thanks can make all the difference in the world. Gratitude puts things in perspective.

Underneath the green parament of the communion table are the words, "Do this in remembrance of me." Do what? Remembering whom? Take, eat the grain from the earth and drink the juice of the vine remembering the One who gave us the example of his life and the power of his Spirit. Remembering Jesus Christ is central to our life as a church, and our faith as individuals.

There is another word about these this gift that was given to Timothy. And that is to "Get in Touch with the Giver." That's why we are having growth groups this fall about the Bible 101 and Love Does & Introducing Christian Spirituality.

Chris Wiman was another terminal cancer patient –thirty-nine, newly married, newly published, and now facing sure death. He and his wife grieved deeply the shared life that would not be.

"Then one morning," wrote Wiman, "we found ourselves going to church. Found ourselves. That's exactly what it felt like ... so that we were casting aside the Sunday paper and moving toward the door with barely a word between us; and as if, once inside the church, we were discovering exactly where and who we were meant to be."

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Long walks talking of God, deep sadness that told them of God's own grief. In the face of death, Wiman found no trite and obvious glories, but rather the quiet scrapings that assured him of a Presence on the other side of the wall.

Timothy and Chris Wiman discovered that none of us will be able to avoid death. Because of our mortal, human bodies, that is a truth with which we all must come to grips. But in the face of that reality, our faith also give us the audacity to say that death does not have the final word!

And on this Sunday we celebrate as World Communion Sunday, we, along with countless others around the world remember that power. We remember to say Thank You. We remember that there are people in the world right now who suffer for their faith. We "do this in remembrance of Him."

And we know in our hearts that the gifts God has given to us, call us into relationship with God. "But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day, what I have entrusted to him."