

Does the Lord Remember?

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[0 : 00] We not? Okay, all right. Now we're on. Okay. Before we begin hearing from God's word this morning, I just want to open in prayer and dedicate a little bit of time in prayer to folks from our church who are going through loss and through grief. We received a word this morning that Jody and Stanley's father just passed away, and so she is obviously going to be preparing to work with the rest of their family and processing, sorting through these heavy things, and makes me think of the many other folks in our church who have lost loved ones recently, and so let me first start with a word of prayer for all those. Our father, we grieve right now with Jody, with Dustin, Cade, and Breton, with the rest of Jody's family. It is difficult to lose someone that we love.

We're glad to hear that they feel confidence that her father is at home with you. Lord, that is something that we, each of us, the farther we go through life, the more that we encounter a world set with death, a world in which it is inescapable, a world in which we ourselves are exposed as being just flesh, quick to pass away. Lord, how much more do we long to be with one who will never pass away?

And Lord God, we ask in this time of grief that Jody and her family may remember that you, our God, have not forgotten them, that you are compassionate, that your strength will sustain them each day.

Encourage them, Lord God. Give them continued hope even as they grieve. And we ask that, we ask that prayer as well for just the others in our church family. I think of, I think of many others, of Melanie and Kevin who both lost fathers, for Mary who's lost not only her husband but her mother, for many others who in the last few years have lost loved ones, parents, spouses, friends, close friends, children.

We think also of those who right now feel that they are in the process of watching a loved one slip away. Aging parents, I think as well of Jeanette and caring for her husband Colin as his memory goes.

[2 : 47] Even as his memory fails, Lord, may you remember him. And Lord, we cry to you in all these things. Knowing that even though the world tries to cover up death, tries to put a, pretend it's something that can be dismissed and locked away and not thought about, we know that you have spoken words of hope.

And may we dig deep into the promises that you make, into the hope that you offer, into the historical truth that Christ Jesus our Lord himself walked through the valley of the shadow of death, himself endured the cross, all the weakness, all the shame that it brought, and he himself rose again from the grave, has ascended to heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Most High God. Our hope is to be with him forever and ever. Our hope is to enjoy new resurrection life, not just soul but with a body that will never decay, never be subject to death, that will be strong and healthy forever.

This is our hope and our confidence before you, Lord. We come to you grieving and we come to you with hope. Sustain us, help us endure.

And now as we turn to you and consider the God who remembers, Lord God, may you guard my words from saying anything false or untrue about you, but only what is true and only what is helpful.

[4 : 24] May you give us all eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand and to remember. Lord God, may we be known as people who do not forget, but people who do remember our God and our Savior.

Amen. All right. Well, in all these things, we wish you a happy Thanksgiving. And many of us are, and I just encourage you, just in light of what we're just praying about, as you gather with friends and family, what better time to give thanks to God for the people that he has put into our lives.

We know that each one of us is here for a little while. And so it's helpful to look on one another as someone, all these people around you are people that God has put in your life for a season, for a time, as part of his gift, as part of his grace.

And we, thankfully, in Christ, have the hope that everyone who believes in him, everyone who puts faith in Jesus Christ, will be saved from their sins, will be saved from the power of death, and will enjoy resurrection, eternal life with him forever and ever.

May that be your hope and your trust. As we think through the process of remembering, I want to bring up a moment, I think that perhaps many of us have experienced, one of the most difficult moments of forgetfulness that I hear people often wrestling with.

[5 : 54] So imagine this situation. Imagine yourself shambling into church in a rush on a Sunday morning. I know that would never happen here. But let's just imagine that has happened.

You're all out of sorts. Once again, never would that happen. Right? I know you guys, you've got it all together. You come into church, and your family is all well behaved, and you've, you know, you just spent some just wonderful time with the Lord this morning, and you walk in, you know.

But let's just say that you're not. Let's just say you're all in a huff, and you're rushing in, and you're on your way across the foyer, trying to grab a cup of coffee, and you cross paths.

Let's say you cross paths with that woman that has been sitting a couple rows back from you the last few Sunday mornings, and she says, hi, and she uses your name. And in that moment, you realize that you're completely unprepared for this conversation because you don't remember her name.

No, that would never happen, would it? So let me throw this out to you. I invite feedback right now. If you've been in a situation like that, what are some, let's learn some pro tips.

[7 : 05] We can learn from one another this morning. What do you do? What do you do in that situation? Come on. What are your thoughts? Fake it until you make it, right?

Pretend you're okay. Say, hi, how are you? All right. What else? I'm going back to the soundboard. Don't have time. Just make a quick exit from the conversation. Okay, what else? Mark, what? Mark is deeply experiencing this as a Walmart greeter.

Yeah. What's that? Someone else got an idea? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. For me, it's great. It happens all the time because I forgot the name.

So I just had to say, like, hi, how are you? Sorry, where is your name? Tell me again. So Kelly's got a really good tip for us. Believe it or not, you can actually ask them again.

[8 : 21] And I confess that as a pastor who is constantly being introduced to new people, I do this a lot. So one of my favorite expressions I have to do is, remind me your name again.

Right? Remind me your name again. I have to do that quite a bit. So be bold like Kelly. It's actually okay to ask again. You'd be surprised how often people are okay with that when you think that they wouldn't be.

Another pro tip. Sometimes I go to somebody else who I think knows, hey, what was their name again? What? Who is that again?

Can you remind me their name? And then I take a note. One other tip that I can give, write it down. So, you know, some people talk about when you learn someone's name, use it a lot.

We're writing that conversation so you remember. One thing I actually do, and I thought this would be received really awkwardly, but almost everybody seems to appreciate it. You know, when I first introduced myself or maybe the second time I'm going to ask them their name, I'm like, okay, what's your name?

[9 : 23] And when they tell me, I'm like, can you give me a moment? I just want to write it down. Sometimes I'll ask, how do you spell it? And that might seem a little weird, but almost every time people seem really appreciative.

And you know why? Because they're always forgetting other people's names too. It's a common human experience. Why do we consider it so meaningful when somebody actually remembers their name?

Let me throw that question out to you. Why do so many people consider it meaningful when someone remembers their name? Yeah. Why do you think that's meaningful when someone remembers their name?

And probably most of us feel informed. Yeah. We struggle with a sense of insignificance. And somebody remembers your name.

And all of a sudden, you're noticed. You're remembered. What else? They're actually paying attention to you.

[10:30] Yeah. Yeah. Someone made an effort. Someone made an effort to pay attention to me, to see me as a person.

Because when you name someone, you're personalizing them. And all of a sudden, when I have carried questions and doubts about, is there significance to me or not?

That's someone's way of saying to me, yes, there is. Yes, there is. I remember you. I remember your name. Remembering is an important way of relating to one another.

And we all know that. Almost all of us carry an experience at one point in our life, or maybe it's a common experience throughout your life. A experience and the experience of being forgotten.

Being forgotten about. And that can be very painful. Typically, when someone forgets our name, it's not that big a deal. But when there's someone close to you who just forgets about you, that can hurt.

[11:32] Have you ever had a friend who just forgot to show up when they said they would? A friend who forgot to call in your time of need? A friend, perhaps, who simply forgot all about you?

Did that not make you feel discouraged and ashamed? Did it not make you feel like nothing that you were forgotten? That sense of discouragement that we are forgotten is a sense that Scripture talks about quite a bit.

It is something the Bible speaks of. And I want you to take a look at me in your Bibles at a moment of discouragement. A moment when people feel forgotten.

And it's in Isaiah chapter 49. So Isaiah chapter 49. Now, if you don't have a Bible with you, I'll invite you to just raise your hand. Our usher is sitting in the back and provide you with one.

And if you're using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers have to hand out, this will be on page 610. Page 610 is where we're going to find Isaiah chapter 49, verses 13 through 16.

[12:45] Isaiah 49, verses 13 through 16. And here is the word of the Lord. Just a bit of background before I read it.

The prophet Isaiah is delivering a message from the Lord. And he's delivering it to the people of Jerusalem, the city that's sometimes also called Zion. And he is delivering this message. He's preparing the people for a time that is coming.

A time when they will be suffering. A time when they will be in exile. A time when they will be tempted to think that the Lord has forgotten them. The Lord is not thinking of them anymore.

And here is what we read. And I'll start by reading verses 13 and 14. Sing for joy, O heavens, and exalt, O earth. Break forth, O mountains, into singing.

For the Lord has comforted his people. And will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me.

[13:50] My Lord has forgotten me. And so Isaiah begins with a call for the heavens and the earth, the mountains, to celebrate. The Lord is going to comfort his people.

After many years of oppression, years of exile, he is looking into the future. Isaiah sees the Lord, their God, showing up and caring for them with deep compassion.

And caring for all of their needs. But they just don't see it. They don't see it at all. They don't see that happening. They have trouble believing that things are ever actually going to change.

Their world is a mess. Their lives are a train wreck. And they have come to this conclusion. The Lord has forsaken me.

My Lord has forgotten me. So what does the Lord have to say to them? How does the Lord tell them that they have an interpretation of the events of their lives, the circumstances of their lives?

[14:54] They are seeing it. They're seeing these events and circumstances. And they are interpreting them. And their interpretation, the story they are telling, is all wrong. How does the Lord reassure them with the truth?

How does the Lord have to say to them?

How does the Lord have to say to them? How does the Lord have to say to them? The Lord is reassuring his people. He has not forgotten them. He remembers them. So does the Lord remember?

Yes, he does. So this brings us to a question. The Bible frequently speaks of the Lord remembering. What does it mean for someone to remember?

What does it mean for someone to remember? I suppose you get a neuroscientist up here to talk about how memories are stored in the brain, how recall happens, things like that.

[16:15] But we kind of know some of the obvious stuff. To remember is simply to call something to mind. To call something to mind. We talk about remembering in a very casual way a lot of times.

Memory can be a casual thing. We remember random trivia. We remember old jingles from McDonald's commercials. Sometimes we remember songs that we wish we didn't remember. That we can't seem to get out of our heads. Sometimes we don't remember things. We forget where we put our keys. But when the Bible speaks of remembering, it's usually speaking of something that's more significant than just a simple recollection of facts.

Than simple thoughts that pop into our head unbidden, unprompted. Look at the way that Isaiah 49 speaks of forgetting. Look at verse 14. Zion, the city is...

Isaiah portrays Zion, the city, as saying, The Lord has forsaken me, or abandoned me. My Lord has forgotten me. And those two lines are in parallel with one another.

[17:22] And that's the way Hebrew poetry works, is lines that are put in parallel with one another. And often, the two lines in parallel draw out extra meaning. They paint the same picture twice.

In the second line, the word forgotten becomes a substitute and an expansion of the word forsaken. So the idea is that remembering is the opposite of forsaking and abandoning.

Remembering is a form of loyalty. For the Lord to forget Zion is for the Lord to forsake or abandon Zion. And then in verse 15, the Lord responds, Can a woman forget her nursing child?

That she should have no compassion on the son of her womb. And notice there's parallels again. The word forget, there is a substitution here. Have no compassion.

Have no compassion. Remembering is a form of compassion, the way that the scripture speaks of it. Or at the very least, of attention. There are times when someone remembers someone.

[18:31] And what it indicates is they are paying attention. For the Lord to forget Zion is for the Lord to have no compassion to Zion. Or for the Lord to pay no attention to Zion and its situation.

Then finally, in verse 16, the Lord says, Your walls are continually before me. Speaking of the walls of the city. To remember someone or something is to have it front and center in your thoughts.

In your mind's eye, you see it. In your mind's eye, you see them. You remember what is important to you. You remember what really matters to you.

It is this active sense of remembering. This attentive sense of remembering. That is what the scripture speaks of. And so if remembering means to place somebody front and center in your thoughts.

If it means being loyal and attentive to that person. How is remembering done? How does a person remember? Well, perhaps as you've grown older, that has become a very pressing and significant question.

[19:40] How do I remember things? Your memory may not be quite what it used to be. I mean, I am not even in my 40s and already my memory is not quite what it used to be.

Right? Who knows? I wonder what things are going to be like when I'm twice my age. We tend to think of memory as something spontaneous. We tend to think, we think that to remember is recalling something easily and without effort.

Indeed, verse 15 would suggest this is an aspect of memory, of remembering. Can a woman forget her nursing child? So those of you who have been the mother of a nursing child, the mother of an infant at some point in your life, think back to that time.

How long were you able to go without your child coming spontaneously to mind? How long were you able to go? No time?

No time at all? Could you even go five minutes? Fifteen? Hour? Could you go a whole day? And just like, oh yeah, that's right, I have a kid. Forgot all about that.

[20:52] You can't. Even if you were to take a break, leave the house for a few hours, go get a coffee, run some errands, your child would always be on your mind, always popping back in.

You would not forget. So there is that spontaneous memory. We remember spontaneously. And we can also remember structurally. Not just spontaneously, but structurally.

Verse 16, notice how the Lord uses another metaphor to describe his remembering. I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Now this is, perhaps the saying sounds a little familiar with you.

In that hymn, before the throne of God above, we say, my name is written on his hands. And that is drawn from the scripture right here. I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

When you really want to remember something, when you want to make sure you do not forget, what do you do? Well, you certainly don't think, okay, I'm just going to try really hard.

[22 : 04] We all kind of know that doesn't always work. So we find other ways to remember. We write it down. Right? That's my trick for remembering names. I write them down.

That's how I remember. Perhaps you want to remember a friend's birthday, so you take it and you write it on a calendar on your wall. Maybe you want to remember your shopping list, so you put it down in your phone.

When I want to remember to take an object out to my car, I take it and I take that thing and I put it on the bench in my entry area so that I cannot miss it when I'm going out the door.

We create some sort of memory structure that is outside of our own brains to prompt us to remember people, to prompt us to remember things that are important to us.

You do that because it matters to you. It is important. Even if your internal, spontaneous memory isn't what it used to be, you still find a way to remember what's important to you.

[23 : 07] Let's look at the way that the Lord remembers in these verses. Verse 15. It is unthinkable, right?

It's unthinkable that the mother of a nursing child who is so dependent on her hour by hour, that that mother would be so uncaring as to forget that she even has a child at all.

But the Lord says that the ironclad memory of that mother is forgetfulness compared to how he spontaneously calls to mind his own people whom he loves.

Sooner would a nursing mother forget her child than that the Lord would forget his people. And the Lord speaks not only that.

He says, let me go one bit further. Let me talk about this structural memory. I personally have known people who compensate for a weak memory by taking a pen, and they write important information on their arms and hands, right?

[24 : 16] I've seen people who, like, it looks like they're covered in tattoos, but on closer inspection, no. It's just like, remember to get groceries, you know, tonight. And the Lord doesn't settle for a pen that can be wiped away easily.

Verse 16. Behold, look, look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Your walls are continually before me. The Lord speaks of engraving, carving you, inscribing Zion right on the very palms of his hands so they are always before him.

Permanently etched right where he is going to see it, never to be wiped away. That metaphor is how ironclad his memory is. He simply refuses not to remember.

In comparison, you and I aren't that good at remembering. The people we know aren't that good at remembering. But the Lord is very, very good at remembering. When he remembers, nothing can cause him to forget.

[25 : 31] So how does this truth help us? To answer that question, we need to know this. What exactly does the Lord remember? What does the Lord remember? Remember, let's take a quick tour of some scriptures.

One of my favorite places to start, usually when it comes to a word like remember, is when does it first show up in the Bible? That is usually going to set the stage for how it is used the rest of the way through scripture.

The first place the word remember shows up is during the great flood. When God had Noah and his family get on the ark with a whole zoo full of wild and domesticated animals.

The floodwaters, from Noah's perspective, he looks out, the floodwaters have destroyed everything as far as the eye can see. The people and the animals on the ark are left floating on that expanse of water.

They are alone. They are helpless. Perhaps it is easy to think they have been abandoned. But then we read in Genesis chapter 8, verse 1, God remembered.

[26 : 32] God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth and the water subsided.

So God remembered Noah. He remembered his family. He remembered the animals with him. And so the first thing that we know that the Lord remembers, the Lord remembers his creation.

The Lord remembers his creation. In the 18th century, there was a popular view among the intellectuals and this view was known as deism. And the central idea behind deism is this view. And yeah, God created the world. There's this God who made the universe and everything in it. But that once God made the world, once he set everything into motion, he then just let it go on its way. At that point, God abandoned the world. He's no longer involved. No more divine intervention. Everything just kind of keeps ticking according to natural law. God, in this view, was perceived as a watchmaker.

[27 : 35] A watchmaker who fashions an intricate watch, winds it up, and then lets it tick, tick, tick, tick, tick on its merry way with no more involvement. His attention has moved on to whatever else occupies God's attention.

To use the biblical sense of the word remember, the God of deism does not remember his creation. His attention is not there. But here we see a God who has never stopped being attentive to the world he has made.

He remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock. He remembered the world that he made. And then Jesus makes that clear that this is still true today.

Luke chapter 12, he makes a statement. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten. Before God.

Why? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. In other words, the Lord is deeply attentive to every little detail of his world. He is more attentive than you are.

[28 : 43] When is the last time you stopped to look at sparrows? When is the last time you sat down, watched a sparrow flitting across a parking lot, and thought to yourself, I wonder about that sparrow.

Where was it born? What was its childhood like? Does it have a mate? Does it have offspring? I wonder what that sparrow is concerned with right now. What's it been eating for dinner?

Where is it going to get its food from? Do you ever think like that? No, you don't. You don't even notice the sparrow. If anything, you're like, oh, get away. Don't poop on my car.

God remembers the sparrow. Not one of them is forgotten. When is the last time you stopped to count how many hairs can grow on your head?

As I've often joked, for some of us, it's easy. Right? For some of us, that number gets lower and lower with each passing year.

[29 : 50] But did you ever count them? How many hair follicles do you have? Anyone know the answer to that? Wow, you guys just aren't that self-aware, are you? The Lord knows.

The Lord knows exactly how many hairs there are on your head at every moment of your life. He knows you that well. He has not forgotten even the hairs in your head that you don't even notice have fallen out.

The Lord remembers his creation. He is deeply attentive. Now, in a moment, we'll talk about what a comfort that can be. But for us, if we are being honest, if we know ourselves well, and if we know the world we live in, what other people can be like well, the fact that the Lord remembers everything may not be such a comfort, nor should it be.

If the Lord knows everything about you, if everything that you do is under his gaze, under his attention, and he misses nothing, including things that you don't even know about yourself, what about the evil things you do?

What about the wrongdoing? Does he not see them all? Yes. He sees all of it, including things you do not even know about yourself. The Bible makes it clear that those who persist in doing evil, those who persist in sinning against the Lord, they will not escape his notice.

[31 : 18] So let me be clear. For those who have suffered tremendous evil, those who have suffered tremendous abuse at the hands of other people, this is very good news, because what this means is that the Lord has not forgotten what happened to you.

The Lord has not forgotten that person and what they did to you. That's why in Psalm 137, we have an exile from Jerusalem who is pleading with God to remember the enemies, who reveled in the destruction of his home and the murder of the people around him.

He says, remember, O Lord, against the Edomites, the day of Jerusalem, how they said, lay it bare, lay it bare down to its foundations. And he pleads, remember, Lord, don't forget them and what they said and what they did.

But if that is true for those who have hurt us, and the Lord is going to remember them, there is coming a day for each one of us. Everyone who persists in rebellion against God, everyone who rejects the Lord, who lives against his law, who forgets the Lord, lives in an evil and defiant way before him, everyone will have to stand before him and face the judgment seat of a God who remembers everything, including the things that you have forgotten or did not notice.

He remembers all of it. The Lord will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil, Ecclesiastes 12. We're reminded of this prophecy, Revelation 16.

[32 : 51] The Lord delivers this prophecy. The cities of the nations fell. God remembered Babylon the great. He remembered her to make her drink the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.

For those who have refused to honor him as Lord, for those who have walked in their own way and lived in rebellion and brought great ruin on the world he has made and on themselves.

The fact that God remembers is not a comfort. It is, in fact, a terrible warning. The Lord remembers evildoers. So what are we to do?

Knowing that the Lord knows you through and through in a way that you do not even know yourself, and he sees all of the sin, he sees all of the deep problems in your life, in my life, and he has no illusions.

We cannot pull the wool over his eyes. He remembers. The Lord has made a way so that even the worst of sinners can turn to him and be forgiven and have their sins remembered no more.

[33 : 56] Throughout the history of our world, the Lord has made covenants, these covenant commitments with his people. And through these covenant relationships, the Lord has shown mercy.

The Lord has shown grace. And he has rescued evildoers from the penalty of sin. He is in the process of rescuing us from the power of sin.

And one day he will rescue us fully from the presence of sin in our lives. And we are assured that the Lord remembers his covenants. The Lord remembers his covenants.

After the flood, God made a covenant with all created beings. And that covenant that he made, he agreed never again to send such a flood to destroy them all.

In Genesis chapter 9, God designates a sign of his covenant. He designates the rainbow to be a sign of his covenant. He says, When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember.

[35 : 02] I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

God remembers his covenant. And God not only made a covenant with his creation, but as we keep reading through the story that we find in scripture, we learn that God makes a covenant with a man named Abraham, with his descendants, to bless the world through them.

And even when Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel, were enslaved in the land of Egypt, even when they think they have been forgotten, In Exodus chapter 2, we read this.

During those many days, the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant.

With Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, God saw the people of Israel, and God knew. It had been hundreds of years since God had made that covenant with his people.

[36 : 28] How long can you remember the agreements that you make with the people in your life? The Lord remembers his covenant forever. We all have that person in our life who is not like that, right?

We can't take them at their word. We know people who make promises, who make commitments, but from experience, from painful experience, you have learned that they abandon their word when it's convenient.

Or you've learned that they mean well, they make these commitments and promises, but they simply forget them. They make no effort to remember what has come out of their mouth and what they have committed to.

But the Lord is not like that. When the Lord speaks, he means it, and he means it forever. The Lord is loyal and faithful to his word.

Everything that he has said, he will follow through with. Every promise that he makes, he makes it come true. And when he binds himself in a covenant to the ones that he loves, the Lord will stay true to that covenant, and he will stay true to the point of death.

[37 : 46] We know this because the night before Jesus went to the cross, the night before he was crucified, we hear how Jesus instituted a new covenant with everyone who believes in him.

Matthew 26, we read about the last supper. BK has been talking about this the last couple weeks. He took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus, the son of God, he went to the cross in faithfulness to his covenant promises. His blood was shed for that covenant.

His life poured out as a sacrifice for many. This is the means by which we are forgiven. This is the means by which God takes evildoers and welcomes them into his family.

Jesus Christ took the penalty of sin in our place. To be counted in covenant with Jesus Christ is to find forgiveness and new life.

[39 : 02] This is how God remembers us, not as enemies and evildoers, but as people of his covenant, a people for his own possession, his own nation, his own children.

The Lord remembers his covenants. Now, perhaps we may be tempted to think, though, that, sure, okay, God remembers his covenants. He's made these commitments.

He's made these promises. Does he now regret them? Maybe he remembers them the way we often do. We make a commitment. We make a promise to someone. And then later we think, oh, man, I've got to follow through with that, don't I?

Not for this person, Lord, please. We have that begrudging spirit. Oh, I made this commitment, but really, why did I make it with this person?

How many times have you made a promise, made a commitment? Okay, I will spend time with you, or I will help you. And then you found yourself later going, hmm, you're doing it with a spirit of irritation.

[40 : 07] You did it, and so you follow through. You follow through with your commitment, but you're doing it for your own sake. You're doing it because you're like, look, I'm a person of integrity. I keep my word and my commitments.

I'd feel guilty if I didn't do this, so I'll do it. You're not doing it for the sake of the other person. You're not doing it by looking at the other person and thinking, I am glad to do this for you.

Perhaps you think that the Lord is that way. Perhaps you have carried throughout your life this sort of low-level sense that God must be irritated with me, and I guess he is forgiving me because he has to.

He made a promise. He made a covenant. And so, okay, I guess you're forgiven. I guess you can come and live with me forever and ever. Just try not to make too much of a nuisance of yourself. Right? I built you a mansion. It's over in the corner of the city. Just go over there and try to stay out of my way. Perhaps you think the Lord is that way, that he keeps his covenants, that he does so with a begrudging spirit.

[41 : 17] But that is not the case. The Lord remembers his people. He doesn't just remember the covenants and the commitments. He remembers his people. He remembers them as people.

They are important to him. They matter deeply to him. Consider again those words in Isaiah 49 that we read earlier. Can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?

Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

Your walls are continually before me. Even when the Lord disciplines his people, he introduces hardship into their life to correct and to mature them.

Even then, even in the middle of that, he still speaks affectionately of them. In Jeremiah 31, he says, Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still.

[42 : 28] Therefore, my heart yearns for him. I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord. He remembers us in life.

He will remember us in death. Consider this exchange. In Luke 23, Jesus is on the cross. Next to him is nailed a thief, an insurrectionist who has been reviling him, but now has come to realize that

he has made a terrible mistake.

In Luke 23, we read, he says, Jesus, remember me. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. He remembers that man through death to the other side of the grave.

When we die, we are not forgotten. He remembers his people with affection. To be his means you are on his mind day and night.

[43 : 40] Once again, to be on the mind of the Lord may be a frightening thing. If we are truly self-aware, down to the very core of our being, if we are truly conscious of our sins, if we truly know who we are, we may fear what he is thinking of us.

We may fear that he sees our sins, that he is mulling over the evil and the wrongdoing in our life, that he is preoccupied with our transgressions, that he is resenting us for all of it, and he is just burning with anger and frustration.

But the Lord does not do that for his people. He makes it very clear, he is not dwelling on our sins the way that we so often dwell on the sins of others.

The way we get so preoccupied with how others have treated us. And just keep coming back again and again and again to what they did. The Lord is not like that.

He makes it very clear that he is not dwelling on our sins. He does not engrave our sins on the palm of his hand the way we often do. Rather, he says this in Isaiah 43, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake.

[45 : 02] And I will not remember. I will not remember your sins. Yes, he knows the fact that you have sinned, but it is not a fact that he keeps bringing up and like, I'm gonna hold on to this, I'm going to remember this.

Every time I see you, I think, sinner! That is not the way the Lord looks at us. That is not the way the Lord looks at those who have repented of their sins and by faith in Christ Jesus have been forgiven. He looks at us and too, in his eyes, our sins have been blotted out. We have been washed clean. And in Jeremiah 31, he says, No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. No more. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

The Lord remembers his people, but he does not remember their sins. And what is more, he does remember, and this is a very helpful thing for you, he does remember his people's weakness.

[46 : 28] Consider these words from Psalm 103. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him, for he knows our frame.

He remembers we are dust. Boy, we forget that sometimes, especially when we're young, feel young and invincible.

Death seems 100 million years away. The Lord doesn't forget. He knows how weak we are. He knows how frail we are, how subject to sickness and injury, decay and death, how weak our bodies are, how weak our minds are.

He remembers how powerless we are, how subject we are to these things. As Psalm 103 continues, as for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field, for the wind passes over it and it is gone, and his place knows it no more.

He's like the grasses that spring up in the desert after a quick rain. They just, out of nowhere, the hills of the wilderness of Judea would burst forth with these little, with these little blades of grass, the whole land would turn green, and just as soon as they appeared, when the hot winds came and blew, they would just wither away and be gone.

[47 : 51] Just like that. And that is how we are. And the Lord knows it. And so you must not think that the Lord is a God, like many of the people in your life, who see your weakness and they chide you for it, they berate you for it, they're always like, do better, do better, do better, try harder, work harder, prove yourself.

The Lord does not berate you for your weakness, for your lack of energy. He does not chide you for failing to do more, for failing to be more, for failing to earn more than you are.

The Lord remembers that you are dust. He knows that you need rest. He knows that you need help. He remembers his people's weakness.

And finally, the Lord remembers his people when they fail to remember him. He remembers his people when they fail to remember him. One of the lessons of the Old Testament, over and over again, and we'll talk about this more next week, is how quickly God's people forget him. How, over and over, they just forget him. They forget who he is. They forget all that he has done for them. It's just not even on their mind anymore.

[49 : 15] In Psalm 78, we read this testimony that is written against the people of Israel. They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.

We're told that they put the Lord and all that he did, they put them out of their mind. They put the Lord out of their minds. They forgot the covenant that they had made with the Lord. The psalmist continues, their heart was not steadfast toward him.

They were not faithful to his covenant. Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them.

He restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.

As we've already seen again and again, the Lord remembers, the Lord proves his faithfulness and shows mercy and compassion even when we fail to remember him.

[50 : 18] even when we fail to remember him. For who here can say with confidence, I never forget the Lord.

I never forget who he is. I never forget all that he's done for me. We forget all the time. We lose sight of him.

We lose track of him. And we need to be reminded again and again and again. But even when we forget, the Lord remembers. One author puts it this way.

We also find comfort in knowing that even in our forgetting, God doesn't forget. He continues to know us. In fact, it is far more significant that God remembers us than that we remember him.

This speaks to the reality that our salvation from beginning to end is by grace. In grace, God reaches out to rescue us, not the other way around.

[51 : 26] This is a deep comfort. When you turn away from him for a little while in disobedience, God remembers you.

God continues to welcome you back. Come home again. When you grow fearful, when you grow forgetful, he remembers you.

He invites you, come back and trust me again. And in old age, even if you lose all memory of your life, even if you, perhaps through dementia, forget your loved ones, forget yourself, even forget so many of the things that you learned about the Lord, yet still the Lord remembers who you are.

And he remembers that you are his own people and that you belong to him. You may fail to remember. You may be quick to forget.

But does the Lord remember? Yes, he does. Our God and our Father. We need to be reminded of this. Our thoughts and our hearts turn in a thousand different directions and so often away from you.

[52 : 45] This very day, it will not be long before each one of us for a time forgets you. We lose sight of you.

We forget who you are in all your greatness, all your goodness. We forget that you were present among us. We forget all that you have done, the covenants you have made, the work of salvation you've done throughout history.

We forget your promises. We forget your warnings. We lose sight of all these things and we get so flustered and so caught up in the momentary trials and troubles.

We become like Peter looking around on the Sea of Galilee, realizing he is standing on a stormy sea, no longer looking at Jesus, but seeing the situation around him and forgetting who it is who is sustaining him and welcoming him into the boat.

We forget, Lord, but you have never forgotten us. Hold us tight, Lord. Confirm to us your promise. Amen.