

Friends, it was in the middle of the summer when I planned out the series on the psalms – and created sermon titles to go along with what I THOUGHT I would preach. However, this week the Holy Spirit sent me in a different direction. So, instead of what may have come from the title “Signed, Sealed, and Delivered,” we have a sermon titled, “Remember Me.”

One of the incredible ministries that cropped up during the COVID pandemic was the scheduling of morning prayer to occur on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8:30am on Zoom. It has been an enduring way of meeting as a small group that is an extension of the congregation. On Wednesdays, we recall the prayers mentioned during our Sunday service, reading through each one, and offering updates as we know them. The recollection of prayers is like a gossamer thread that connects back to this time and space when we opened our hearts to share critical moments of our lives – and in the world – with one another.

At the conclusion of our time together, Candace Russell usually offers our bidding prayer. There is one in particular that is a favorite of the group. It goes like this:

May divine light surround you.

May you embrace the healing warmth of this light.

May you feel the love of all who are praying for you and all of your spiritual ancestors.

May you know how precious you are and the wisdom you have to share with others.

May you live in peace, hope, and serenity, being true to yourself always.

This blessing was composed by one of *Candace's* spiritual ancestors, Cici Miller. It is such a lovely prayer, and speaking for myself, it sends me enlightened away from that soul-filled gathering.

As we've led up to this worship service in which we remember the souls of the spiritual ancestors who have meant so much to us – the bidding to “feel the love of all who are praying for you and all of your spiritual ancestors” has been especially profound. In Friday's prayer time, we remarked on how each of us has been particularly attuned to our spiritual ancestors. And we noted that it may be human beings who have crossed our paths throughout our lives, but also includes the animals who have shown us unconditional love in their very unique ways. ...all of our spiritual ancestors!

Christian contemplative, Richard Rohr speaks of connections on days such as this when he writes,

What some call “liminal space” or threshold space (in Latin, *limen* means a threshold) is a very good phrase for those special times, events, and places that open us up to the sacred. It seems we need special (sacred) days to open us up to all days being special and sacred.... (emphasis added)

What became All Saints Day and All Souls Day (November 1–2) was already called “thin times” by the ancient Celts.... The veil between this world and the next world was considered most “thin” and easily traversed during these times. On these days, we are invited to be aware of deep time—that is, past, present, and future time gathered into one especially holy moment. We are reminded that our ancestors are still in us and work with us and

through us. We call it the “communion of saints.” The New Testament phrase for this is “when time came to a fullness,” as when Jesus first announces the reign of God (Mark 1:15) or when Mary comes to the moment of birth (Luke 2:6). We are in liminal space whenever past, present, and future time come together in a full moment of readiness. We are in liminal space whenever the division between “right here” and “over there” is obliterated in our consciousness.

[\(https://cac.org/daily-meditations/fullness-of-time/\)](https://cac.org/daily-meditations/fullness-of-time/)

Our responsive reading of Psalm 22 was an abridged version of the psalm. If you haven't read through the whole psalm, I encourage you to do so. It is a roller coaster ride of emotions as the author, presumed to be King David, wrestles with his understanding of the faithfulness of God. The psalm begins at the lowest of points - of feeling abandoned! - opening with “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” As a way of bringing themselves out from that lonely place, the psalmist transitions to recall the moments of salvation in which God delivered their ancestors. The psalmist then sinks into the pit of despair calling themselves a worm, sharing the derisive taunts of their rivals. Then remembering it was God who “kept me safe on my mother's breast,” before sharing their terror of those who “encircle me like bulls,” culminating with cries to have their soul “delivered from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion.”

Then something happens. We're not told what, but there seems to be a passage in time when some redemptive event has occurred, because in the middle of verse 22 the psalmist speaks of having been rescued. And from that moment of salvation they will go forth telling the glory of God to anyone who will listen:

brothers and sisters, the congregation, all the offspring of Jacob, all the way to the ends of the earth.

The psalmist heard from the ancestors the greatness of God. They experienced for themselves, and are prepared to do their part in sharing the glory of God as long as they breathe and as far as their word will travel. Whatever happened in that space in the middle of verse 22, it is one of those “fullness of time” moments that Richard Rohr speaks of when what God has done reverberates from the past and catapults the promise of God’s steadfast love into the future.

God has done it!

As Jim Christensen remarked in bible study this past Thursday, Jesus’ words from the cross of “It is finished” hearkens back to this statement that concludes Psalm 22, “God has done it.” Perhaps many of us read “It is finished” to mean that Jesus has given up on his quest to keep on living and it is now time for him to expire. However, harking back to Richard Rohr’s explanation of the thin places where past, present and future come together, Jesus is signifying in that moment that through the power of the God of creation and re-creation that Jesus’ earthly experience is concluding in order to open the portal of everlasting life for those who are open to it. Recall the two thieves in Luke’s gospel who were crucified on either side of Jesus. One takes the moment of crucifixion as an opportunity to deride Jesus about being a weak “King of the Jews.” The other, however, humbly asks Jesus to “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” To which Jesus replies, “I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43) Jesus promises this man, literally suffering for his sins at the end of his life, that he will be remembered.


“Remember me.”

Have many of you seen the Pixar/Disney film from 2017 called “Coco?” The film features a boy named Miguel, and the pursuit of his dream of being a musician against his family’s approval. Due to some trouble in an earlier generation, Miguel’s grandmother has sworn an oath that no one in the family will play music. Even though it is a clear gift and passion of Miguel’s.

The centerpiece of the film is the celebration of the Dia de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead – the Mexican celebration of All Saints and All Souls Day. It is a story about seeking restitution for broken relationships throughout generations of a family. There is a special altar for the Day of the Dead called an *ofrenda*. Pictures of the family’s communion of saints are placed on the *ofrenda*, along with flowers and candles, and it acts as a symbolic portal for the spiritual ancestors to commune with living family members.

Over the course of the film, Miguel becomes an accomplished guitarist who learns to play the lullaby his estranged great-great grandfather wrote and played for his daughter – the film’s namesake, Coco – who is Miguel’s great-grandmother. Through a series of events made possible by the magic of the Day of the Dead portal, Miguel is able to offer the song to Coco at a pivotal moment; which helps bring healing to the family.

Here’s the video of Miguel singing to Coco. You’ll see how he does so against his grandmother’s wishes; but, she soon softens as she begins to understand the power of generational love, and the way it can bring harmony through music.

 Anthony Gonzalez, Ana Ofelia Murguía - Remember Me (Reunion) (From "...

There is great power that comes to us when we grasp an understanding that our spiritual ancestors are not as far away from us as our world of bricks and mortar might imply. It is evident in the way King David understands his role of receiving the mantle of the power of God from his ancestors and passing it onto successive generations.

There is a reason why Jesus took the time at the last meal he would have with his disciples to pointedly take the elements of Passover, bread and cup, ...
give thanks over them, ...
and share them with his community,
saying to continue to “do this in remembrance of me.”

In this action, Jesus forged a generational connection with the faithful who came before, with those apostles – please notice that in verse 14 of this story Luke doesn’t call them “disciples,” he refers to them as “apostles” – those who would continue Jesus’ mission. Apostles are those who are called to REMEMBER the story of Jesus and carry it out into the world – ensuring that the good news of God’s lovingkindness is spread far and wide. It is a DIRECT connection back to the words of Psalm 22. Here is what we read:

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn again to you.

Families of all races will worship you, for you hold dominion over the nations, Even those who sleep in the earth will bow before you;

but how can these, our ancestors, serve you from the grave?

It is I – it is WE – who must live for you, O God! It is ~~my~~ OUR descendants who will serve you; the coming generation will be told of you.

And they will proclaim your deliverance to people yet unborn, saying,
These things God has done. (emphasis and changes added)

These things God has done. And Jesus reminds his followers at the table that these things God will continue to do.

Remember ... Remember ... Remember ... and when you don't, call upon your communion of saints to remind you and refresh your memory that God has done marvelous things and God will continue to do so.

Let us prepare to gather at the table with these our most recent spiritual ancestors to pass from this life to life eternal. But let us also call forth all of those who fought the good fight, kept the faith, and finished the race (2 Timothy 4:7), so that we too may pick up their mantle and carry forward the message: "God has done it." Amen.