

Christ Episcopal Church, Valdosta
“Jesus Always Remembers You” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)
Maundy Thursday: April 1, 2021
Dave Johnson

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

When I was in high school some friends and I were hanging out in the school parking lot during lunch listening to the radio on my dual cassette boom box (remember those?). The principal happened to walk by and he stopped. “What band is that?” he asked. It happened to be Simple Minds playing their massive 1985 hit “Don’t You (Forget about Me).” “Simple Minds” I replied. The principal looked puzzled, “Simple Minds?” “Yes sir,” I replied, “Simple Minds.” He looked at us wryly then said, “How appropriate” and then walked away.

“Don’t You (Forget about Me)” was the primary song on the soundtrack for the classic John Hughes film *The Breakfast Club*. Starring members of the legendary Brat Pack, this gritty film really resonated with 1980’s high school students—and continues to resonate not only with high school students but with many others. The movie recounts the changes that took place over the course of a Saturday of in school suspension for five high school students, each of whom represented a high school stereotype: John (“The Criminal”), Claire (“The Princess”), Andrew (“The Athlete”), Brian (“The Brain”), and Alison (“The Basket Case”).

Over the course of the film these students, who had never have interacted before, get to know each other as they really are—and learn one another’s backstory—their backstory which goes way beyond their apparent stereotype. You learn that John “The Criminal” lives in an angry and abusive home, that Claire “The Princess” can’t stop succumbing to peer pressure because she feels she has to maintain her image and popularity, that Andrew “The Athlete” is under relentless pressure from his father to be the best wrestler in the state and earn a college scholarship, that Brian “The Brain” is under relentless pressure about his grades and is also often the victim of cruel practical jokes, and finally that Alison “The Basket Case” is a compulsive liar who suffers from extreme social anxiety. By the end of the film these disparate students realize that beneath the surface they actually have a lot more in common than they ever imagined.

Every year on Maundy Thursday we commemorate two specific things Jesus did at the Last Supper: washing the disciples' feet as described in the Gospel According to John (John 13:1-17) and instituting the sacrament of Holy Communion as described in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as well as today's passage from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Jesus knows we human beings are so forgetful, especially when it comes to things that matter most. In his 2006 novel *The Road* Cormac McCarthy tells of a journey a father and son make through a desolate and ravaged post-apocalyptic America. Early in this story McCarthy writes:

He kept the boy close to his side. The city was mostly burned. No sign of life. Cars in the street caked with ash, everything covered with ash and dust...He pulled the boy closer. Just remember that the things you put into your head are there forever, he said. You might want to think about that. (The boy asks) You forget some things, don't you? (The father replies) Yes. You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget (12).

That is one of the reasons Jesus instituted Holy Communion, because all of us tend to forget what we want to remember and remember what we want to forget. And the one thing, the most important thing that Jesus always wants us to remember and never wants us to forget is God's love expressed in his death on the cross: "Do this in remembrance of me...do this in remembrance of me...don't you forget about me...don't, don't, don't, don't...don't you forget about me."

This is vitally important because we forgetful human beings need to be reminded again and again and again of God's love for us, a love so unconditional and pervasive and eternal God sent Jesus to die for us.

You see, the truth is the personal struggles the teenagers revealed in *The Breakfast Club* are not just limited to high school students. The truth is in just about everyone's backstory—perhaps even yours—there is abuse that has been suffered, peer pressure to measure up to all the shiny happy people you see on social media, relentless pressure perform in one way or another and prove yourself somehow superior to others, struggles to be truthful, and permeating all of it, a fog of social anxiety. The truth is the church is made of disparate, and sometimes desperate, people who each have a backstory beneath the surface of any stereotype or image.

And yet in the midst of all these realities there is an infinitely greater reality that transcends and supersedes and surpasses everything else: the love of God in Jesus Christ for the world, and for you. That is the reality of which we are reminded each and every time we receive the sacrament of Holy Communion—the reality that the love of God in Jesus Christ is always with us, all the time, no matter what. Each and every time we receive the sacrament of Holy Communion we receive what St. Augustine called “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace”—for as we read in the Thirty-Nine Articles in *The Book of Common Prayer*: “Sacraments...(are) certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him” (872).

Shortly after the Last Supper, Jesus was betrayed and arrested—and the next day Jesus carried a cross through the streets of Jerusalem until he reached a desolate place called Golgotha, covered with dust and ash because that was where garbage was burned. And on the cross Jesus gave his body for you—and shed his blood of new covenant—the covenant of God's love—for you. On the cross Jesus died for all of us: criminals and princesses and athletes and brains and basket cases to permeate and saturate the backstories of our lives with the love of God.

So each and every time you receive Holy Communion, remember that Jesus' words to the disciples are his words to you, “do this in remembrance of me...do this in remembrance of me...don't you forget about me...don't, don't, don't, don't...don't you forget about me.” The good news of the gospel is that no matter what you may remember or what you may forget, Jesus always remembers you.

Amen.