

Acts 10:9-16, John 12:12-15, Genesis 40
“Looking Ahead”

Palm Sunday used to be one of my favorite Sundays of the year when I was a kid. They would give us these long palm fronds and we would wave them and use them as swords. This year, we get to celebrate it with our own fronds as crosses, and together with the Orthodox Church and the pussywillow branches. There is something powerfully intangible this year about celebrating it together. For a moment, just for a moment, we can almost forget the historical differences that have kept us apart. It almost allows us to look to the future and find common ground and hope for reconciliation.

Today, all 3 of our Scriptures deal with people in the Bible who have their eyes set to the future and so don't get caught up in wallowing in their past mistakes. From Peter as he receives his message from God that from now on all that God has created is clean, including Gentiles, so welcome them into the community, to Jesus' disciples in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to Joseph, our featured character for Lent and Easter over these weeks, who while in jail continues to seek God's presence.

We will see today that we always need to have our eyes set on the future, but never, ever forget those who brought us to where we are, especially the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In lent we feel that it is a season of looking back, you look back at the suffering, at the cross, but I tell you today that lent is a season of the future because if you can make it through the cross, then the future will be bright for you. Let's see how Joseph the dreamer with his eyes on the future is forgotten in the past and how we can learn from that.

READ

We spoke briefly last week about dreams. In modern day psychology they have a lot to say about dreams. They tell us that dreams help you relive and work through some dimensions of your past. They help us remember, even if you want to desperately forget some events. They call dreams a part of your own personal archeology. Dreams have value because they bring up your past so you can live the present and make it in the future.

Peter's dream lays God's plan before him and creates the church that we see today, where there is no distinction. It is a bit like the church that we see here at MPC. But the dream we have today in Genesis are very different from what modern psychology

teaches us. These dreams are intended for a future that God and only God will grant. They are more like prophecies predicting future events.

Let's look at the Scripture and remember where we are. Joseph the dreamer is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and he is bought in Egypt by the captain of Pharaoh's guards whose wife is a cross between Mrs. Robinson and Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction. Joseph finds himself in the dungeon, the same word which is used when he finds himself in the pit by his brothers hands, and there he is given charge over all the prisoners. It seems that everything Josephs does works out for him. He still has that Midas touch because God blesses Joseph.

The stage is set when two of the newest prisoners each have a different dream. Now for Joseph dreams are not events of the past being relived but rather future possibilities that God gives to each of us. I love this line in chapter 40. Joseph tells the prisoners, "Don't you know that interpretation belongs to God, come on you'll never figure it out, only God will. So, please tell me what it is." Josephs hasn't lost his humility after the run-in with his brothers. But they do tell Joseph the dreams.

Joseph gives good news to the first person. But then he says something interesting. His next words are , But remember me once you get the good news. Remember who it was that allowed you to make it where you will be. The second person sees a favorable interpretation and asks for his translation. He gets bad news and Joseph of course doesn't ask him to remember him.

Joseph asks the question, or better yet makes the request, remember me. What a poignant, touching request. Eric and I were in 4th grade together. 4th grade is a tough grade to be in. One day you are in the in-crowd, the next day you're out. Eric always seemed to be in the out-crowd. The most painful example of that was when it came time to choose sides for kickball. Eric was always the last one to be picked, and sometimes if there were odd players he wasn't allowed to play at all.

The memory of Eric haunts me sometimes as I see people who throughout their lives are crying out: remember me. There is nothing so sad as to be forgotten. Back in Florida some years back we started a church and it would meet on Sunday evening. Rachel would often come with me. But one Sunday after our morning services, we had 3, I had to race off to the hospital to visit with a family whose mom was in ICU, I then

had to race off to get to the church on time. I forgot that I told Rachel that she could come with me and that I would pick her up on the way out.

When I got back from church that evening, it was after 9, there she was fast asleep on the couch. I knew that she had tried to stay up to see me when I got home.

Nobody wants to be forgotten. Especially those who have done so much for a cause, or for a church and they feel that their efforts, their opinions, their resources, their times is forgotten. One of the greatest and gravest dangers that we face as a church that is committed to looking toward the future is to do what the cupbearer of pharaoh did and that is forget the people that got us to where we are today.

What always amazes me about Palm Sunday, which is a day of tremendous celebration, is that in a few days we will be celebrating Maundy Thursday. Then on Friday, we will hear the thief say Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. We will see Jesus left all alone, forgotten. We will hear him say on the cross: My God, My God, why have you forsaken me, which basically means, why have you forgotten me. What happened to make Jesus be forgotten so quickly? How quickly things change. I never get over that every year.

This church is filled with people who do not want to be forgotten. I think of those husbands who spend hours away from their wives and children, who feel forgotten. I think of those with gifts and talents in this church who want to contribute but haven't tapped in yet to our programs because they don't know how to and don't want to be forgotten. There is probably no worse feeling in the world than being forgotten. You know that feeling don't you.

Today this Palm Sunday we find ourselves with two competing demands. We find ourselves encouraged and pushed to look forward because of the growth and excitement that we feel in the church. On the other hand we find ourselves in a situation where we need to remember the foundation of our community which comes from 50 years, nearly now, of faithful discipleship. I thought last night at the broomball ball, wow, we sure have come a long way.

This church exists today not because of any one man or woman, or even because of any one group of men or women, or even because of the good graces of any government, but because of the grace of God. We can say for a fact that this church is

not our church, it does not belong to any of us, but rather it belongs to the Almighty God who gives us a dream to pursue and who remembers us as His people. Joseph may have been feeling that not only did the cupbearer forget him but God did as well.

We can look at our history as a church and know that God has not forgotten us. Can you say the same thing about your own life. Or do you feel a little like Joseph in that cell unable to look forward because everyone in your life has forgotten you, gone on in their life and left you behind. Even God himself you think has forgotten you. I can assure you this Palm Sunday that God will never leave you or forsake, God will never, ever, forget you, ever. You can use Joseph as your example of someone who had a rougher life than you will ever imagine, and yet God continued to guide him and bless him in everything that he did because he refused to look back and be stuck in the sorrow of his past. He was able to look forward and move forward.

This is what God calls us to do in this Scripture and that is to look always at the future, but don't ever forget the past. Amen.