

John 21:1-14
 April 25, 2010, 8:30 Service

Hampton Baptist
 Charles R. Smith

"Times to Remember"

Are there certain songs that remind you of an event or a particular occurrence in your life? For a while, we were members of the Columbia CD Club where we received eight CDs for a dollar each with the promise of buying some others down the road. This allowed us opportunity to build quite a collection, but if we liked only one song on a particular album, we still had to buy the CD just to get the one song. Now, with the advent of iTunes and iPods, we can buy one song or an entire collection.

When I buy music and take a trip down memory lane by listening to songs of the 70s and 80s, I turn the music up loudly and play my air guitar, singing (screeching) just like the lead singers. I remember driving my 65 Mustang Fastback with the windows down and the music blasting from the 8-Track Tape Player. I remember riding around with my best friend Scott and my cousin Mark. Memories of places I had since forgotten flood my mind simply by listening to a song. Times to remember.

Seeing large azalea bushes this spring have reminded me of my grandmother, who died in 1994. Perhaps the largest pink azalea bush I have ever seen was between her front porch and her side porch. Her house is no longer there; it was sold and moved away. But when I think of her house, I can even remember how it smelled. You know certain houses have a distinct aroma about them. The scent was probably a combination of home-made biscuits and whatever else had been served at the last meal. And I always felt secure in her house. I can remember the feelings, the smells, the tastes. Times to remember.

Do you ever watch *Dateline* on NBC? They have a regular feature on the show called *Timeline*, a segment that gives a top movie, top song, and top news story for that week of a particular year. They give three options before a commercial break, and then tell the answer after the advertisement. When playing that game, I try to remember what grade I was in when the particular song was popular or where I saw a particular blockbuster movie. Times to remember.

Historical moments also are retained in our memories. Depending on our ages, we can remember *where* we were and *what* we were doing when we heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor; the assassination of John F. Kennedy; the first moon-walk; the Challenger explosion; the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Times to remember.

A variety of stimuli can trigger our memory: something is said, something we see or smell, a date on a calendar. To me, memory is a fascinating gift from God. Memories can be full color or black and white. They can be snapshots, or they can be moving footage.

My interpretation of our New Testament Lesson is a story of remembrance. Although the words "memory" or "remember" are not recorded, I think it is a story of recollection. This account comes on the heels of Easter. Jesus had appeared to the disciples on two separate occasions. He first appeared on Easter Sunday evening to ten disciples; Thomas was absent, and Judas, of course, was off the scene. Jesus then appeared a week later to the eleven disciples, and Thomas then believed once he saw Jesus for himself. Those two appearances occurred in Jerusalem.

Our passage takes place on the Sea of Tiberias, also known as the Sea of Galilee, more than seventy miles from Jerusalem. Seven of the eleven disciples were gathered when Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

As you remember, this was his *chosen* profession *before* Jesus chose him as a disciple. Peter had a fishing business with his brother, Andrew, and Zebedee's sons, James and John. The other six disciples who were with him said, "We'll go too."

Easter was gone. Jesus had risen from the dead. All seven of these disciples had seen Jesus; doubting Thomas had touched his nail-pierced hands and his side. And now they had left Jerusalem, the place where all the commotion had occurred; the place where about three weeks earlier, Jesus had paraded into town on a donkey being hailed as the King of Israel; the place where Jesus had been crucified; and the place where he had appeared to them after the resurrection. Now, they were in Galilee, the province where Jesus had spent most of his ministry. They had gone back to doing the same thing that they were doing before they met Jesus. Jesus had called many of them from the fishing boats to be fishers of *people*, and now, after the resurrection, even after they had seen the risen Christ, they had gone fishing.

For us, Easter was just three weeks ago. At that time, children were wearing their new Easter clothes and had the smell of chocolate bunnies on their breath. We celebrated the light of the world on Easter Sunday, and we were reminded that Mary Magdalene's world had changed from darkness to light when Jesus called her by name. But that was three weeks ago. How *personal* was Easter for you? What impact did the resurrection have on your life? After our celebration on Easter Sunday, did you enter the next week with the same mindset and attitude? If so, then you did not truly *experience* the hope of Easter. If your life is no different today than Easter Sunday, then you missed the message of the Easter story. The resurrection of Jesus has called us to leave the life of the mundane and routine, and recognize that we serve a *risen* Savior. Because of the hope found in Jesus, our world is no longer controlled by the darkness. The light of the world has come to erase the darkness that clouds our futures. How has the light changed your life since Easter?

Well, for the disciples, they decided to venture into the darkness of night and go fishing. They went back to what was comfortable. If you live in the dark long enough, you become acclimated to it and forget that there is a light that can illumine your world. The disciples went fishing all night and caught nothing. When they went back to their routine, I wonder if they took *time* to remember their *times* with the Master.

And after spending the evening in darkness and fishing all night while not catching anything, the disciples encountered a stranger on the shore. The stranger inquired if they had caught any fish. And dejectedly, they replied, "No."

So then the stranger told them to throw their nets to the *other* side of the boat, and there they would find some fish. It was common for people on shore to give counsel to fisherman who were not far from the shore. Sometimes those standing on the beach could see schools of fish in the Sea. They did as the stranger suggested and found that there were so many fish that their nets could not contain them all.

John turned to Peter and said, "It's the Lord." John knew that it was Jesus not because he could recognize him *physically*. John's acknowledgement resulted from a *memory*.

You see, earlier in Jesus' ministry, Luke recorded (Luke 5:1-11) that Jesus saw two empty boats along the Sea of Galilee. The owners were on shore washing their nets. Jesus climbed aboard one of the boats and asked Peter, its owner, to move away from the shore a little bit. Jesus then began to teach the multitude which had gathered. He asked Peter to go out to the deep water. Peter told him that they had fished all night, had caught nothing, but basically said, "What have I got to lose?" So Peter took his boat into the deep water. They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Peter and his crew had to signal for James and John to come help. Jesus then told them that from now on they would become fishers of people. They pulled their boats to shore, left everything, and followed him. Times to remember.

They had not fished since the day that they left all and followed Jesus. And now, just a couple of weeks after Easter, three years after they *committed* themselves to Jesus, they had a similar experience. This stranger on the shore told them to put their nets on the other side of the boat, and they could not even haul in the net because of the great number of fish. Times to remember.

Peter was so excited that it was Jesus that he jumped into the water and swam to shore. The other six disciples came to shore dragging 153 fish with them. When they hit the beach, the disciples saw Jesus having a cook-out. Jesus was grilling fish over an open fire, and he also had some bread. I wonder where Jesus got the fish and the bread. Fish and bread...of what do you think that combination reminded the disciples? The greatest miracle that Jesus performed was the feeding of more than 5,000 people. It is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13)

You remember the story. A great crowd of people had followed Jesus; there were 5,000 men and there were additional women and children. It was about supper time, and the disciples petitioned Jesus to release the crowd so that they could go and get themselves something to eat. Andrew told Jesus that there was a boy with five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish. Jesus told the disciples to position the crowd into groups of fifty. Then Jesus held the bread and the fish toward heaven, blessed it, broke it, and then gave it to his disciples to distribute to the people. Everyone's hunger was satisfied, and the disciples gathered twelve baskets of fragments. Times to remember.

Jesus told the disciples to come up on shore and have breakfast. Jesus, the Son of God, the one who rose from the dead, this one who was mightier than even death, was going to serve them. *Serve* them? These fishermen who had resorted to their earlier vocation? What do you think they remembered? (John 13:3-9)

The night before Jesus was crucified, on the night that we observe Maundy Thursday, Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. And after dinner, Jesus took a towel and wrapped it around his waist, got a basin of water, and then went to all twelve of his disciples and washed their feet. This was a dirty job, one usually reserved for a servant. Yet Jesus wanted to show them what it meant to be great in his kingdom. To be great in the Kingdom of God meant to serve others. He even washed the feet of Judas who left the room later to betray Jesus, and he washed the feet of Peter, who after Jesus' arrest, three times denied any association with him. Times to remember.

And now Jesus was offering to serve them breakfast. They had been fishing all night; they had to be tired, and probably were more than a bit frustrated before their morning catch since they had caught nothing all night. Times to remember.

Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that their lives should *never* be the same. The lives they lived when they were fisherman should be a direct *contrast* to the lives that Jesus had now called them to live. Through strong stimuli, Jesus issued to them an invitation to remember. They were to recall the day that Jesus called them as disciples; they were to remember the mighty works that he had done for them; they were to remember his love for them and his call for them to serve others.

Today, three weeks past Easter, Jesus also issues an invitation to us to remember. We are to recall what Easter should *mean*, and how it should not be just a one Sunday a year observance. We are to remember the hope we can claim because of the resurrection of Jesus. We are to remember that light always wins.

We are also invited to remember the time that Jesus called *us* to be his disciples. For some of us, much has happened since that day. For others, the day that you accepted Christ was fairly recent. Regardless of when we made that decision to follow Jesus, today we are called to remember how we are to love and serve others. There are times when we lose our focus; we fall back into routines, like the disciples, and forget that Jesus has called all of us to serve even those who dislike us, say bad things about our families, or even those who have hurt us. Those are the **very** people that we should be

serving. Jesus has called us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and that is something that we conveniently forget. But today, we are called to remember.

Times to remember. I am thankful to God for the wonderful gift of memory. And my prayer is that we will continually be reminded of what it truly means to be one of God's children. Help us, oh God, to remember.