

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

*The annual harvest festival, called the Feast of Weeks, provides the setting for this reading. This festival celebrates the first fruits of the produce of the land offered back to God in thanks. In this text, worshipers announce God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, <sup>2</sup>you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. <sup>3</sup>You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." <sup>4</sup>When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, <sup>5</sup>you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. <sup>6</sup>When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, <sup>7</sup>we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup>The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; <sup>9</sup>and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. <sup>11</sup>Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

**Second Reading: Romans 10:8b-13**

*Paul reminds the Christians at Rome of the foundation of their creed, the confession of faith in the risen Christ as Lord.*

<sup>8b</sup>"The word is near you,  
on your lips and in your heart"  
(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. <sup>11</sup>The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

**Gospel: Luke 4:1-13**

<sup>1</sup>Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

<sup>9</sup>Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup>for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,  
to protect you,' <sup>11</sup>and 'On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

<sup>12</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" <sup>13</sup>When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

So, when was the last time you forgot your password to some website, bank account, or other application for logging into something or downloading something, especially when you are trying to get something accomplished? Then there are those sites that constantly make you change your password so that you never can wrap your brain around it.

Or what about that television remote? Remember when you had to actually get up and go turn the channels; we never lost that dial did we, because it was attached to the TV itself. But nowadays we almost need a button on the TV to press, that makes our remote ring or light up, I hear some models now even have that. I know certain cell phones have certain apps so that you can locate them because we know we forget them everywhere.

We often joke about forgetting things. Remember the old line that our moms would say to us: “You would forget your head if it wasn’t hooked on to you.” Some folks that have lived a few decades will call it a “senior moment” when things are forgotten. More seriously, we often worry about issues of medical dementia and Alzheimer’s and about forgetting. But there’s also another type of forgetting that is wired into our being and living each day. It is the forgetting of our place in life, our direction in life, and where we have been figuratively.

As a parent we are often trying to pass on this type of information to our children to equip them to handle life’s up and downs, life’s challenges and temptations, life’s hurdles and achievements, all the while training them not to forget who they are and where they came from. A part of this means we often rehearse with our kids certain aspects of a new situation they may be facing. This could have been with a child as they entered kindergarten and elementary school, all the way to teaching our children

how to drive a car and leave home to live on their own. We test them by saying okay - what are you going to do when you start the car and then pull out of the driveway? We then expect a litany of response from them that sort of recites all the steps they are going to give in a certain situation like: I'm going to check my mirrors; I'm going to put on my seatbelt; I am going to look all around me; I am going to start the car; I am going to put the gear in reverse. And the list goes on and on. We may say to a child who is staying by themselves the first time tell me what you're going to do when you get home: I am going to lock the door behind me; I am going to let the dog outside; I am going to let the dog back inside; I am going to feed the dog, I am going to sit down at the table and do my homework etc. etc. It can be other instructions as well that seeks to imprint a mark on their identity: Remember to use your manners, remember that you are Christian, remember that you are loved, remember where you came from. Remember where the money comes from, remember who pays the bills, and so on.

We practiced these litanies of remembrance to equip one another for living life and all what that may encompass. It means to protect oneself from danger, it means to ready ourselves for certain situations that we may face in life of the unexpected and expected. It also serves to remind us of who we are and where we come from.

One of the reasons that our church, and many other like denominations, have the church season of Lent, is also to remind ourselves who we are and whose we are. It is also serves to remind ourselves about the hard stuff of the faith. It would be easy to come to church every Sunday and sing about Christ victory over death, and always concentrate on the great news of the empty tomb, and there are certainly churches that do just

that; but it then becomes easy to forget what happened three days earlier. In theological circles this is often labeled a theology of glory verse a theology of the cross. As Christians, and Lutheran Christians at that, we seek to encompass all of the gospel message, which means remembering the symbol that is foundational to our faith, a symbol of death- the cross.

So, before we celebrate the morning that a tomb is found to be empty, we backtrack about 40 days or so, in our time, and set a day in the middle of the week that we label as Ash Wednesday to remind ourselves that we are dust in the dust we shall return, to remind ourselves that we are mortal and are in need of God. We take this purposeful time in our lives to repent, reflect, and renew our commitment to God. We also remember. We remember where we come from. We remember God's creation. We remember the life, teachings, and acts of Jesus. We remember Christ journey to the cross, that leads to the good news of Easter. We remember how it all gets started with him being tempted in the desert. We simply do not seek to skip over the hard parts.

This remembering, in this way, is not brand new for people of the faith. In our Old Testament lesson today, we have this same approach, that is told to the faithful of how they are to approach the priest in their practice of worship, offering themselves and their possessions to God. Like we go over and over to teach children to respond in a certain way to a situation and recall who they are, in the annual harvest festival the Jewish people were instructed what to say when they approached God. They are instructed as worshipers to recall and proclaim God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse of our first lesson from Deuteronomy, we heard of their instruction of what to do and say. It read:

“You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, “Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us.” When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.”

This served to remind the faithful of where God had been in their life, and to reinforce in them, how God was still directing them in their day to day living. Likewise, each year we come off of Ash Wednesday, in our reminder of our mortality, to encounter Christ who in his humanity, is also tempted like us. He is tempted with food, power, and self-centeredness, all which had to have some lure for him, or it would not be a real temptation. We are reminded that the path and challenge that Jesus walks is not easy, and it was not as simple as waking up in the tomb one morning.

So, what do you need to recall and remember on this day? What is the Holy Spirit awakening in you at this point in your life? What is the Holy Spirit provoking you to recite and renew in the living of these days in 2019?

How will you let this journey in Lent, be a part of that process for you? Maybe your discipline can be to do the Lenten devotions, attend Sunday worship, attend midweek and Holy Week services, take time to read the Scripture, take that leap of faith, make that decision, to take a break out of your schedule to re-center your thoughts and hearts on what God is calling you to be about, to give up something that often tempts you, but in such a way that it reminds you to incorporate something of God into your life. Whichever course may be helpful for your unique spiritual journey, may we seek to be about remembering where God has taken and carried us so far along this journey, remembering that faith is often not an easy thing, remembering that life in the faith is often about challenge and temptation, as well as comfort and belonging; remembering who we are and whose we are. Amen.