

“Refusing to Forget?”—Amos 8:7

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Refusing to Forget?”, is Amos 8:7 → *The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

While driving the other day I couldn’t help but chuckle at a bumper sticker which read: “Of all the things I’ve lost, I miss my mind the most!” Yep! There are certainly moments in some days when it seems like my mind just isn’t “firing” properly and I can’t seem to remember stuff that should be “second nature.” While many people remind me that short term memory loss is a sign of getting old I can recall times in my teenage years when I would walk into a room and stand still wondering what I came in the room to do!

Yet, there are many times when we wish our memory wasn’t so good. Like the times we made mistakes which may have affected the rest of our lives in an adverse way. Or how about those sins which we’ve committed so long ago which the devil still throws up in our face, accusing us all over again to make us feel guilty and especially doubt the forgiveness of Jesus for us? Then there are those memories of past sins placed upon us by others, leaving us as

victims mentally fighting those people in the midst of temptations to harbor resentments, grudges and a refusal to forgive. If only we could have “selective memory,” remembering the good parts of life and forgetting the sinful parts!

While memory issues plague us daily it seems strange for Yahweh to have “memory issues” in light of His omniscience—His characteristic of being all-knowing. In our text He spoke of His “memory” through the prophet Amos: *Surely I will never forget any of their deeds*. Even though many people would like God to remember all their good deeds as well as their acts of benevolence and kindness toward others, that is not what He’s referring to in our text. This is a statement referring to Yahweh’s never forgetting their evils deeds by which His people—the Church—would bring His impending judgment upon themselves.

This is actually a “memory issue” for the LORD! Why? Because it is also His character for forgive and forget. In Isaiah 43:25 He says: *I, I am He Who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins*. In Jeremiah 31 He promised to *make a new covenant with His people in which He would forgive their iniquity, and . . . remember their sin no more*. (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34) This is a “memory issue” for Yahweh because it is His desire to practice “divine amnesia” in complete forgiveness! It grieves Him to have to remember the sins of unrepentant people in the justice of His divine judgment.

Why would God make such a statement to **His** people? During Amos' day God's people enjoyed a time of great prosperity and affluence. Commerce provided opportunities galore for lucrative business ventures. Yahweh spoke through Amos about their winter houses and summer houses and houses of ivory (cf. Amos 3:15). In Amos 6:4-6 he spoke *woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, gorging themselves with food and singing idle songs to the sound of the harp, inventing for themselves instruments of music, drinking wine in bowls and anointing themselves with the finest oils.* What a contemporary picture for us!

So . . . what was the problem? Throughout their history the LORD promised them His blessings in the promised land which He had given them by His grace. The problem was that in the midst of their affluence and God's physical blessings they were *not grieved over the ruin of His people* as they succumbed to idolatry. Amos described the grievous condition of **God's** people living in such idolatry in the verses right before our text. Their greed was so strong that they would *trample on the needy and take advantage of the poor of the land.* They would *deal deceitfully with false balances in the business, enslaving the poor for little or nothing and selling the worthless chaff of the wheat* with the good grain. (cf. Amos 8:4-6)

Even though they were blatantly living in disobedience to the many laws

God had laid down through Moses concerning these practices, the grievousness of their sin found its ultimate expression in disobedience to the 1st Commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:3 → *You shall have no other gods **before Me***. It wasn't that they were ignoring Yahweh. Amos 8:5 implies that they still had some kind of respect God's Sabbath laws. It's just that they couldn't wait for their prescribed rituals to get over with so they could get back to their idolatry, saying, *"When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances?"*

They couldn't wait for church to get over with so that they could get back to disobeying God? And observing the Sabbath before Yahweh while planning their disobedience? This was flaunting themselves as gods in the face of Yahweh with no heart of guilt over sin and thus no repentance! This is the essence of amorality. It may be wrong . . . but so what! Not only the people around you but the LORD Himself is required to tolerate and accept sinful behavior! No wonder Yahweh said, *Surely I will never forget any of their deeds*. The only thing awaiting unrepentance is judgment even for people in the Church.

Yet, Amos is actually testimony to God's attributes of being loving,

forgiving, merciful and gracious! Why? Because God remembered the covenant He made with people in the promise of the offspring Who would come from Eve to crush the devil's power and deliver from sin! (cf. Genesis 3:15) He remembered the covenant He made with His people through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—His Church. Thus He sent the prophets to speak out clearly to their sin in order that the Holy Spirit would convict them and they would turn to the LORD in repentance, seeking His forgiveness and undeserved favor! Amos was living proof that it was not too late for His people to turn from their sins and be saved! He was living evidence of God remembering in love!

When the time came for God to fulfill His promises to deal with sin, death and the devil once and for all, He took the task upon Himself by being born of a woman named Mary. After announcing His incarnation to Mary through an angel (cf. Luke 1:26-35) Mary burst into song, praising God for His “great memory” and continued faithfulness. Listen to how her song ended in Luke 1:54-55 → *He has helped His servant Israel, **in remembrance of His mercy**, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.* You see, the LORD refuses to forget His covenant of love and remembers your sins no more as you trust in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. He refuses to forget your sins only if you continue in unrepentance and evil behavior. It grieves Him to have to remember your sins and experience eternal judgment in His

justice.

Acts 17:30-31 says: *God commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man Whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.* He's talking about Jesus. What would you like to "jog God's memory" on the Last Day? A life lived as a sinner who clings in repentance and faith to Jesus Who has dealt with your sin once and for all? Or a life lived as a sinner who clings to sins in idolatry, sinful pride and selfish entitlement and will experience the eternal judgment of hell?

Not only will faith in God's gracious mercy and forgiveness in Jesus bring forth the fruit of striving to be faithful to the LORD in the vocations of our lives, but it will also bring comfort when Yahweh refuses to remember your sins in His complete forgiveness! Worship will not simply be going through motions, even if it feels like it sometimes, because the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance God's promises in His written Word! (cf. John 14:26) As we remember Jesus' death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins we also receive God's forgiveness through Christ's body and blood in the bread and wine as our faith clings to the promise of His Word connected to this sacrament!

Because of God's refusing to forget His covenant of love in Christ we can

approach Judgment Day in humble confident faith as we see *the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*. We can do as Jesus tells us in Luke 21:28 → *Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your **redemption** is drawing near. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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