

Luke 12: 49-56

Hebrews 11:29 – 12:2

Quilting our lives – the act of remembering.

Re-remembering.

Just a week ago, I sat in a memorial garden at Rosebank Union Church in South Africa, where my Gran (my Moekie's) Ashes are interred. I was not there for her final breath, I missed the family coming together to tell her story, sing her songs, remember her wisdom and the unfolding of her life. I recalled to my memory a poem that she lived by called 'salutation to the dawn'.

Look to this day – for it is life  
The very life of life,  
For in its brief course lie all the verities and realities of your existence,  
The bliss of growth, the glory of action, the splendour of beauty,  
For yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow is only a vision.  
Today well lived,  
makes every yesterday a dream of happiness,  
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Look well therefore to this day,  
such is the salutation to the dawn.

I had to laugh for as I sat in that moment, I realised that in order for me to look to this day, I was being called to root myself in the memories of my past.

Not to ignore it or push it away, but to quilt my life together. Even and maybe especially the pieces that often don't seem to go together.

The joy, the pain, the uncertainty, the disconnection and fragmentation, and the parts that make sense – to re-member - to gather the journey as a whole.

Our sacred readings today, are a quilt of fragments. Quite confusing. And yet provide us with the depth and complexity of human experience.

When commenting on this strange gospel text from Luke, the late Rev. Canon Douglas Williams said:

Perhaps we are called to listen carefully to what the writer was *trying* to say, rather than to what so *many*, including many Christians, *think* they are saying.

Every Biblical reading tells us something about God, and something about being human. But often we get them confused. There is a dark side to human life. There is disaster. There is pain, and suffering. And there are divisions between people.

And a Bible that didn't *recognize* that wouldn't be worth *having*. But the Bible is not a scientific or historical or psychological textbook written by God. It is not even a *religious* textbook written by God. It is the record of the attempt of a community of people—Jewish first, and then Christian—to describe and to understand our experience of God. God *does* speak to us through the Bible, but God's voice is filtered through a very human set of writings.

(Sermon Christ Church Cathedral, Aug 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

And so it is that a gospel passage about division is laid side by side with a passage from Hebrews. A call to quilt together the disparate parts of the story together.

Hebrews, is an illusive piece of writing, an author unknown, the original recipients unknown, the context sparse, and yet it is rhetorically rich, seemingly a sermon to a congregation who were tired and losing confidence.

And this particular passage on faith, is a call to re-member - fragile and remarkable lives of faith.

- Pilgrimages out of oppression – crossing the Red Sea, leaving Robin Island, marching at Selma, or protecting the sacred land at Standing Rock.
- A marginalized woman's risk as she cared for foreigners. Rahab, Corrie Ten Boom, REST (the North Shore Regional Ecumenical Support Team for refugees).
- A man riddled with doubt, so unsure about what to do next he laid out a fleece and asked God to show him the way by where the dew landed. There is nothing like sleepless nights of tossing and turning, while longing for clarity on the way forward. For guidance from the Holy Spirit.

For the mystery of it all, is that we are connected to the lives of those who have gone before us. And re-membering keeps us balanced and whole. Not only as individuals but as communities.

It is what nourishes our faith.

Christian theologians use the word *anamnesis* when talking about our Eucharist. That is the time we gather around the table to bless, break and share bread and wine.

Anamnesis comes from the same root that we get the word 'amnesia'. Whereas *amnesia* means to not be able to remember, the word *anamnesis* means to remember. It means to remember in such a way as we participate again in the event we're remembering. *It is a memorial* - and we are not just recalling people of faith and the person of Jesus to mind, like we call to mind a fond memory—but that in a mysterious way they are present to us in the thin space around the table. Through this sacred act we literally re-member, we become 'members' again of Christ and brothers and sisters to one another in community – past, present and future.

(Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the Word*)

And in our present time of uncertainty.

How important it is to situate ourselves in our history.

And to have moments to remember. Our distant thread of life. And our current living memory.

I do love what Elise Boulding, Norwegian-born American Quaker sociologist, called the 200-year present.

“Within our community, someone will have been born somewhere close to 100 years ago, and some child you know will be alive 100 years from now.

By thinking about that span of time as encompassing the living present reality of people you know and care about, that span of time becomes accessible. It becomes our time in a very profound sense.

This 200-year span belongs to us: it’s our life space. It’s the space in which we should be thinking, planning and making judgments, evaluating, hoping and dreaming. This opening up of what we normally think of as our future and our past and making it a part of our present experience, makes changes more comprehensible . . . an enormous strengthening force in a period of very rapid change.”

*(accessed from: <https://www.shirleyshowalter.com/the-200-year-present-a-way-to-lengthen-your-days/>)*

This memorializing of stories of faith is not only for our nourishment. It is also for the life of the world.

In Bishop Michael Ingham’s book, *Mansions of the Spirit*, he refers to a letter that was written by the International Scientific Community to spiritual leaders.

It was read at the parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1993. It reads:

“We the people of the earth, need the help and involvement of spiritual communities.

It is from our respective faiths that we derive:

- our sense of origins,
- of self,
- of purpose,
- of possibility.

You are our inspiration for what we humans and our Earth can become.

Your dreams are our visions and our destiny. We depend on you.”

Remembering who we are.

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Is like that moment when Simba the lost, shame-filled lion king, disconnected from the pride (his family and friends), is led to a water mirror. The Monkey-priest, Rafiki, stirs the water and he sees living in him the wisdom of his father, Mufasa.

“Simba you have forgotten me.

You have forgotten who you are and so forgotten me.

Look inside yourself Simba, you are more than what you have become.

You must take your place in the circle of life.

Remember who you are.”

My friends as we come to the table, let us re-member. Amen.