

The stroke of the paddle creates a whirl of ripples that are left behind the kayak and slowly ease out until they either dissipate or roll up on the riverbank. Once the kayak has glided downstream there are no traces of its ever being on the river. The only thing that continues to “exist” of the moment is lodged in the memory of the kayaker with the capacity to see the past.

As we look back on our experiences, we can only approximate what happened in our lives. Our minds can be triggered by old photographs, returning to places where something happened, listening to others who may have shared the same experience.

Even though we cannot return to the past physically, our memories and our learning from experiences can continue to “live” on, providing us with insight, perspective, and wisdom. We could call these collective memories our spirits of the past. With every stroke of our paddle, with every moment of our life, we are giving the opportunity to learn something and guide us along the way.

Thus William S. Craddock, Jr.

elaborates on Soren Kierkegaard’s statement

*“Life can only be understood backwards,
but it must be lived forwards.”ⁱ*

emphasizing the importance of faithful memory

to direct our forward paths in life.

Remember – Learn – Act Wisely.

Such is the message of the scriptures this morning.

Moses, Paul, and Jesus recall their followers to

remembrance, celebration, and belief

in the promises of God.

As Professor Katherine Schiffendecker points out

about today's story from Exodus:

it is worth noting that the story of the golden calf is a kind of “fall” story, similar to “the Fall” in the Garden of Eden. In both stories, immediately after the establishment of a relationship between God and humanity, human beings disobey. In the case of Exodus 32, God forms Israel as a new creation and they immediately fall into sin. What is God to do?

God recalls us to faith

to remember who we are in God

not only to remember our faults,

but also to remember God's saving grace.

Just as the Israelites, Timothy, and

disciples of Jesus throughout the ages

are called to remember

and to celebrate new life in Christ Jesus.

We are called this morning by Word and

Eucharist (*thanksgiving*)

to remember God's faithfulness to us

by looking at the wakes of our life journeys

juxtaposed to Christ Jesus' redemptive

power.

We remember, we celebrate, we believe.

We measure the steps that have brought us

to this moment in Christ

and we move forward toward

the surprises that await us

around the bends of life.

*grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord,
who has strengthened [us],
because he judged [us] faithful and
appointed [us] to his service,
even though [we were formerly wrongdoers]*

Whatever faults have been ours in the past,

In this service we are called to remember

what Christ Jesus has done for us.

The emphasis in this morning's parables

from Luke

is to focus on God faithfulness toward us

by seeing ourselves as the sheep and the coin.

We are women, men, and children

of great worth

to God our creator.

Sheep wander away, become stuck in crevices

moaning for release—

and the Shepherd follows the sounds

of their pleas until they are reclaimed

and healed and returned to their flock.

Coins are lost then recovered

because they are of great value.

Coins are the currency of the realm

bearing the image of the ruler

just as US coins bear the images

of Lady Liberty and presidents.

And just ambassadors bear the seal of their

home countries to foreign lands,

we bear God's image to this world.

In an economy

of hatred, fear, unkindness, and stinginess

We introduce the coin of ourselves as Christ's people,

forgiveness, peace, mercy, and generosity.

We are the coin of God's realm—

the Kingdom of God on earth.

We can pay this price of ourselves because,

as recorded in the letter to Timothy,

*[We] received mercy because
we had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and
the grace of our Lord overflowed for us
with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

No wonder God never ceases to come

looking for us—

We are his body on earth.

Timothy received and heeded

this message of truth received in a long, heartfelt letter—

not in a dream or by himself

in a garden or at sea

but from a faithful member of the Body of Christ

who also writes:

*I am deeply grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ
(to whom I owe all that I have accomplished)
for trusting me enough to appoint me his minister,
despite the fact that I had previously blasphemed his name,
persecuted his Church and damaged his cause.*

*I believe he was merciful to me because what I did
was done in the ignorance of a person without faith, and
then Jesus poured out his grace upon me, giving me
tremendous faith in, and love for, himself.*

*This statement is completely reliable and should be
universally accepted:—“Christ Jesus entered the world to
rescue [liars, thieves, cheaters, adulterers, depressives,*

murderers, punks, reprobates, addicts—in short, any and every wrongdoer]”.

I realise that I was the worst of them all, and that because of this very fact God was particularly merciful to me. It was a kind of demonstration of the extent of Christ’s patience towards the worst of people, to serve as an example to all who in the future should trust him for eternal life.

Because we cannot see the wake we create in

our life journeys but

can only remember them,

Memory is fodder for

remorse, repentance, restoration, *and* joy

not despair or feelings of unworthiness.

Let us heed this message as did Timothy—

*The prophetic word that was directed to you
prepared us for this.*

*All those prayers are coming together now
so you will do [live] well,
fearless in your struggle,
keeping a firm grip on your faith and on yourself.*

Let our memorial acclamation make us wise and
guide us:

*We remember that Christ loved us
to the end.
And we celebrate that he is with us still.
And we believe that he
will come again in Glory.
We remember, we celebrate, we believe.ⁱⁱ*

ⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱ Memorial Acclamation, *Roman Catholic*