

Pentecost 2, 2008  
Memorial Day Weekend  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Isaiah 49: 14 – 16

From the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 49.  
The people said, “The Lord has forsaken me! My God has forgotten me!” Now, can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? And even if a mother forgets, I will not forget you, says the Lord. Look! You are written on the palm of my hands.

The Word of the Lord. And now heavenly Father may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our spirits all be acceptable in your sight this day, o Lord our rock and our redeemer, AMEN.

As I mentioned earlier in the announcements, this is Memorial Day weekend; and though for many a young person Memorial Day may be synonymous with parades, picnics, and potato salad, obviously, we know—there is something here, a little deeper than that. There is war now, and there have been wars in the past, and people being people no doubt there will be wars in the future as well. And if there are wars, then there are soldiers, and others also who willingly lose their lives for family, and community, and country. Now as Christians we do understand, that killing for any cause is not now nor ever has been the will of God. Let’s get that much straight, at least—there are no “good” wars, ok. There are from time to time, necessary wars? Battles that must be fought and battles that must be won. And, we Christians understand, that while we are not entertained by violence and we do not exult in war, we are humbled by those who have actually had to go out and fight them, and at the very least we will resolve to do our very best, to remember.

Which begs a question. How well *do* we remember? How well do we remember, some of you are teachers, and you might wonder with me, about the kind of grade the average American citizen would get on a history test. What would happen if people were actually asked, to do some remembering on Memorial Day? Bataan, the Argonne forest; Vietnam, even Italy and Germany for crying out loud, could people today find these places on a map and then, tell why they’re important? Could people find Iraq on a map. How many remember any of the sacrifices others

have had to make, and pardon me for being frank how many would even seem to care. Selfish and self absorbed, so many in this country just go their merry way, not even aware—not even aware, of how much they've forgotten.

And it's not just them out there, either; unfortunately. Selfish and self-absorbed, we also forget a lot of things, don't we? Every day, amnesia is an art form, we forget what we don't like and remember only what we want to remember, we remember only what suits us somehow. You've been in an argument with your spouse, for example, or with someone else in your family—not quite a war maybe, but close enough, an honest to goodness argument, in your own home. No doubt you remember the hurtful things they said and the mean things they did that led to this little confrontation, of course you remember what they said and did wrong. But do you remember what you said and did? Are you as aware of your own faults, and your own unrepented sin, as you are of theirs? Is anybody's memory quite that good, or aren't we all a bit selective.

How about outside your home, in the larger world? You remember I'm sure, in vivid detail, all the times you have been treated unfairly by bosses or co-workers or customers. You could relate every cutting word ever said to you or about you in the cafeteria, or by the water cooler. You're aware no doubt of the boorish behavior exhibited by "certain other people" on the highway, or at ball games, or in the mall. Fine, but that's the easy part. Here's the trick—do you remember when you've done the exact same thing, do you remember when you've acted the exact same way? Can you admit to yourself *and maybe one other person*; when and how you have treated people unfairly, when and how you have spoken cutting words about someone, or acted rashly and without thinking, is anybody's memory quite that honest? Is your memory, quite that fearless, it's not easy. Selfish, self-absorbed, we go our merry way, not even aware of how much, we've allowed ourselves to forget.

And in our relationship with God. At root, it seems to me, sin is all about this sort of intentional forgetfulness. We "forget," we choose not to remember, that God is God and we are not. We forget, we choose not to remember, that He is the potter, we are the clay, He is the Lord and we

are the servants; He is the One who has commanded us, and called us, and summoned us to discipleship, and the way of the cross. We remember the promise of heaven, we forget what it's supposed to mean right here on earth. We remember Easter, oh boy we remember Easter! We're also called to remember Good Friday, and the way of the cross, and with the help of God to walk that way ourselves. Fat chance. Selfish self-absorbed people have a problem with crosses. Loving, forgiving, sharing, helping, making sacrifices for someone else, great idea, great idea! For you. But ask me to do it? Forget about it.

But God has sworn, He will not forget us. He will not treat us as we deserve, He will not forget us, but will remember us, in mercy! The words spoken by the prophet Isaiah today go to the very heart of the Gospel—you. Your name. Your life. Your hopes and dreams and aches and pains and worries and fears, your past and your future. Safe and secure, treasured, remembered—written on the palm of God's hand, forever.

Others will forget. People swear they will remember, then don't. We swear, and we fail; we are sinners too. But God is different. God is gracious and loving and full of mercy, and God will not forget you. Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom—and you know what? He will.

May it be so for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.