TITLE: THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEMBERING!

TEXT: Deut. 32:7; 1 Chr. 16:12; Deut. 6:10-12; Lk. 12:48; Deut. 8:10-20; 2 Chr. 7:14

INTRODUCTION: Two elderly women in church one day were discussing the problems of growing older.

 One commented, "The worst thing is when your memory starts to go. I've known you all my life and I can't think of your name. What is it?"

 The second lady thought for a moment and said, "Do you need an answer right now?"

 This morning I want to talk about the importance of remembering. Do you realize just how important it is for us to remember? That the act of our remembering is a very important and potentially powerful thing in our life.

 The ability to remember is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. If you don’t think so then just try to contemplate what your life would be like without the ability to remember. Not being able to call to mind all the good times of your past. Not being able to remember your wedding day or the birth of your first child… Not being able to remember the raising of your children and all the special things that they said and did growing up…Not being able to remember a loved one who has passed on….

 This is why Alzheimer’s is such a terrible disease. It doesn’t directly affect the health of the body but robs the mind of its ability to remember.

 Even the ability to remember painful and tragic things in our past has tremendous importance to us. If we didn’t remember the stove gets hot we would most probably spend our entire life getting burned by its heat.

 And how terrible would it be if we weren’t able to remember Gods faithfulness to us in our times of adversity.

 Remembering His sustaining grace to us…

 The reason that we celebrate holidays is to bring what they represent back to remembrance.

 Christmas causes us to remember the birth of our savior.

 Easter causes us to remember the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the price that He paid to atone for our sins and the hope that we have in Him.

 Memorial Day is a day set aside for us to remember loved ones who have pasted on, especially the brave men and women who have sacrificed their lives in military service to our country.

 Last week we celebrated Independence Day, the day that we celebrated our national day of independence. This also was a day of remembrance. A day set aside to call to mind past events that have had a great impact and importance to us as a nation….

 I would like to share the story of how our national anthem came into being…

The War of 1812 had been a particularly nasty conflict with the British. They had burned down the Capitol and the White House in Washington, and were set on taking the port of Baltimore, which was protected, in part, by Fort McHenry, just to the south.

 On September 7th, 1814, during the build-up to the attack on Baltimore, two Americans, Colonel John Skinner and a lawyer and part-time poet by the name of Francis Scott Key, had gone out to one of the British ships. They had come to negotiate the release of Dr William Beanes, a friend of Key who had been seized following the attack on Washington. The British agreed, but all three had learned too much about the forthcoming attack on Baltimore and so were detained by the British on board the frigate Surprise until the battle was over.
 The attack started on September 12th, 1814, and after an initial exchange of fire, the fleet withdrew to form an arc just outside the range of Fort McHenry's guns.

 Skinner, Beanes and Key watched much of the bombardment from the British deck. The major attack started in heavy rain on the morning of September 13th. Just under three miles in the distance the three men caught glimpses of the star-shaped fort with its huge flag - 42ft long, with 8 red stripes, 7 white stripes and 15 white stars, and specially commissioned to be big enough that the British could not possibly fail to see it from a distance.

 In the dark of the night of the 13th, the shelling suddenly stopped. Through the darkness they couldn't tell whether the British forces had been defeated, or the fort had fallen. As the rain cleared, and the sun began to rise, Key peered through the lifting darkness anxious to see if the flag they had seen the night before was still flying. And so it was that he scribbled on the back of an envelope the first lines of a poem he called Defense of Fort M'Henry:

O, say can you see, by the dawn's early light,What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming

 As the mist started to clear he was aware that there was a flag flying - but was it the British flag or the American flag? It was difficult to tell: But finally the sun rose, and with intense relief and pride he saw that the fort had withstood the onslaught, the flag still flew.

 After the battle it is said that the Flag flying over Fort McHenry took many direct hits from the bombardment as the British were concentrating their guns on the flag. There is one story of how that each time the flag would fall patriots would run over and lift it back up and after the battle the flag pole was being propped up by the bodies of the men who had given their lives to make sure it did not fall.

Woodrow Wilson once said:
*A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. We are trying to do a futile thing if we do not know where we came from or what we have been about.*

 In this Christian nation it is important for us to remember from where we came, from where our roots of freedom originated, what motivated our forefathers to make the sacrifices that they did so as to preserve the freedoms that we enjoy today…

 In Scripture there are over 100 admonitions from God for His people to remember.

**Deut. 32:7 (NIV)
7Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.**

**1 Chr. 16:12 (NIV)
12 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,**

The words that God spoke to His chosen people of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, are just as true and pertinent for us a nation today as they were for them then….

**Deut. 6:10-12 (NIV)
10When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, 11houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, 12be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.**

The story that we heard this morning about the war of 1812 overflows with the miraculous intervention of God upon this nation….

Our revolutionary war that gave birth to our nation was just as miraculous and God inspired as the Israelites taking possession of the promised land of Canaan was!

Think back to the time of our nation’s birth…

 The American colonies were made up, not of solders and a trained military, but made up of predominantly farmers.

 At the time of the Revolution, the American Colonies were Colonies of Great Britton and under British domination and rule.

The reason that many had left England in the first place and came to America was because the King of England had established a one denomination Church in England and everyone was expected to belong to it---The Church of England..

 It would be like President Biden setting up a state or national denomination----saying that everyone would have to become a Catholic …

Most of those who left England to come to America came here to have freedom in their worship of and service to Christ..

In trying to keep the American Colonies under the thumb of the mother country, Great Britton, unfair and harsh taxes were levied on the Colonies, but the straw that broke the camels back was not just the excess taxes on tea but when the King wanted all guns to be handed over to the British authorities leaving the settlers defenseless and unable to ever stand up against British opposition…

The Colonist refused and ended up going to war against the mightiest known military force of the day.

These Farmers formed militia’s, many of them just armed with hayforks, picks and ax’s and left their homes, farms and families to fight against the most well equipped and best trained army of the day.

 It would be like Haiti or Bermuda trying to defeat the US militarily today.

And yet these untrained, ill-equipped, undisciplined colonists ended up, not just defeating the British army, but sent them home in disgrace.

How? They depended, not on their own strength, might and sufficiency but they depended on the power and might and sufficiency of their God.

It is interesting to me just how these men taken prisoner in the gallows of a British ship prayed as Fort McHenry was being so mercilessly bombarded by British warships…

They weren’t praying for their own lives, they weren’t even praying for the lives of those in the Fort, many who were just women and children, but they were praying that God keep the flag from falling…Praying that the flag wouldn’t hit the ground.. Why? Because they knew what that flag flying on that rampart meant. It meant freedom.

 Freedom from the oppressor. Freedom to worship God in the way that they choose.

Those men who died in Fort McHenry under that barrage of British gunfire making sure that the flag didn’t hit the ground proved the words that George Washington had so adequately spoken when he said:….

*The thing that sets the American Christian apart from all other people of the world is that he will die on his feet before he will live on his knees!*

What happened at Fort McHenry at the beginning of the war of 1812 and what brought that war to a successful end was nothing less than the miraculous.

 Sense that time God has blessed this nation like He has blessed no other… with the possible exception of Israel in the days of King David or Solomon….

 But Scripture tells us :…..

**Luke 12:48 (NIV)
48 …. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.**

So God calls us, His people, to remember. Remember what He has done. Remember His mighty deliverances and mighty power. Remember His many acts of grace….

 In speaking to a people who have been miraculously delivered by His grace God has these words of instruction…

**Deut. 8:10 -20 (NIV)
10When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.**

**11Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”**

**18But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.**

**19If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. 20Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.**

 What is God telling us here? He is telling us to remember.

 Remember from where we came. Remember how we got to where we are today.

**11Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees ….. 12Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of slavery.**

As a nation it is disastrous for us to forget, to not remember from where we came. To not remember how we got to where we are today. To forget that all that we have, all that we have become as a nation, is but a blessing from God to a people who have called upon His name.

 There is also a warning here for a Godly nation that forgets it’s past and starts to look at itself as self sufficient ….

**19If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. 20Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.**

 As we look around us today I think we can all recognize that our nation is in trouble. That as a nation we seem to have forgotten God and followed other gods.

It is time for America to remember. We need to remember today more than any other time in our nation’s history because we have seemed to start to develop a self-sufficient and self-reliant attitude. As a nation we have seemed to forget and forsaken His commands laws and decrees..

This past century alone we have taken prayer out of our schools telling God He is not welcome here; we have legalized abortion on demand making it legal to kill our own unborn children. We are now making a mockery out of the most sacred of human institutions by legalizing same sex marriages.

We have assigned civil rights to things the word of God has plainly told us are sexual perversions.

 Now, it seems many are so confused and blinded by the enemy that they can’t ever decern between who is a boy and who is a girl.

And what do you suppose our forefathers, the men and women and children who gave their lives at Fort McHenry keeping our flag from hitting the ground would think about trying to take God out of the pledge of allegiance?

 How long will it be before great old national Hymns like “God Bless America” and “My country Tis of Thee” and even our national anthem will have to be re-written because any reference to God will be found unconstitutional.

Even just 60 years ago all of these things would have sounded totally absurd. But they don’t today do they?

We are actually seeing them happen right before our very eyes.

 Possibly the most pertinent words of Scripture to Americas today are:

**Deut 8:19-20If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.**

Why is it that we don’t fear God as a nation today? Why is it that we just keep on passing ungodly and unholy laws and decrees?

Legalizing abominable practices? Making Sodom and Gomorrah look like Disneyland in comparison, and we have no real fear of God!

Do we really think that we are so neat and so special a people that God will never judge us for our sins?

 That He will always just turn His head from our unholy actions and say well it’s OK after all they are Americans?

Some of the most significant words that have ever been spoken in this nation, I believe, were spoken by George Mason, the Father of our Bill of rights while on the floor of the Constitutional Convention speaking about the difference between individual accountability to God and national accountability to God.

An individual answers to God in the future but not a nation; when a nation dies it is forever dead; it will not be resurrected in the future to answer for what it has done.

 Therefore, when does a nation answer to God?

George Mason explained*: “As nations cannot be rewarded or punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities.”*

Are we really so arrogant as Americans that we think that God will never judge us for our sins? That God’s righteous judgment on America is an impossibility.

 If God is to remain true to His character then He has to judge America for her sins!

 If God never judges America for her sins then He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology..

Church, as American Christians we need to remember!

We need to remember that God is Just and His justice cannot nor will not sleep forever.

Thomas Jefferson once said: *And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis---a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: That His justice cannot sleep forever.”*

 If Jefferson was fearful of Gods wrath in his day how much more fearful should we be of His wrath today for the sins of our nation..

 So where is the hope for us as a nation today?

There is only one hope for the future of America and it lies with you and I, His Church…

**2 Chr. 7:14 (NIV)** (Gods promise to His people) **14if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

Church if America is to ever advert the just judgment of God it has to start with us!

**14if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

 How does one change the course of a nation?

 One person at a time---starting with ourselves!

 Church we need to remember. Remember the height from which we have fallen. We need to be calling upon His name. We need to be praying and interceding for our nation.

 We need to humble ourselves before God and turn from our wicked ways and be praying that our nation does also.

 We need to allow God to change and transform us into who and what He wants us to be and we need to be introducing others to Christ so that He can change and transform them.

 We need to select and prefer Christians, Godly men and women, to be our leaders in the affairs of government…

 This is the hope, the only hope, for our nations continued survival….

 The question for each of us is will we allow God to use us to be a part of the solution or will we not and remain a part of the problem?

 Can our nation be healed and be a truly prosperous nation once again?

 The answer is yes but only if we, the Church of Jesus Christ, stands up and fulfills our calling to be light in the darkness of our world proclaiming the Gospel message of Jesus to all that we possibly can and striving to be reflections of Jesus to our world….

**14if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

Will you and I play our part in the healing of our nation? Or will we remain apathetic to what is going on all around us and contribute to our nation’s demise?

 The choice is ours to make.....