

Memories - The Living Love

Romans 5:1-5

St. Mark's & St. James UCC ~ November 22, 2020

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*There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true,
Then give the Lord the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.*

*Give love, and love to your life will flow,
A strength in your utmost need,
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.*

This poem was written under the pseudonym of Madeline Bridges, at the end of the tragic civil war which divided our nation.

Tradition tells us she was watching at the end of the war – watching the soldiers walking home carrying their wounded and dead. As she watched the men passing by her she began to pray to God for some inspiration, some way to help this country so divided and so despondent. And she was given these words:

*There are loyal hearts,
there are spirits brave,
there are souls that are pure and true.*

These, for her, were a legacy of love and faith for a nation so immersed in grief ~ words of healing and hope for a people torn apart and consumed by the devastation of war.

Sometimes we ask ourselves, what will my legacy be? How am I going to be remembered when I am gone? Will I be remembered for deeds done in faith and for the love of others, for my love of God? Will people remember me at all?

Indeed, people naturally want to be remembered and to remember their loved ones.

It is a God-given emotion
deep within
to let our love, shine in some significant way
and especially in the darkness of the loss of a loved one.

It was April 1863 ~ Columbus, Mississippi. An elderly woman decorated the graves of her two sons who had died in the Civil War representing their beloved southland. After laying down her

flowers she walked over to two other mounds of dirt in the corner of the cemetery to place flowers there also.

“What are you doing?” friends shouted, “Those are the graves of union soldiers ~ northern soldiers.” The compassionate mother softly responded, “I know. I also know that somewhere in the North, a mother or a young wife mourns for them as we do for ours,”

It has long been tradition to remember those who have passed on before us – with the laying of flowers, decorating the grave, or lighting a candle. We do this to keep the memories clear and vibrant in our minds.

We remember perhaps not only the lives that have gone on before us – but the purpose of those lives while here. Our life here is more than just a mere existence – there is a purpose and a plan to our lives. God has a purpose for us. God has created each of us with special intent. The question we ask ourselves is, what is that intent? What would God have me do or be or a part of while here, before we go home?

Nadine Stair at age 85 wrote a poem she entitled, “*If I had My Life To Live Over*”

I’d dare to make more mistakes next time.
I’d relax, I would limber up.
I would be sillier than I have been this trip.
I would take fewer things seriously.
I would take more chances.
I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers.
I would eat more ice cream and less beans.
I would perhaps have more actual troubles,
but I’d have fewer imaginary ones.

Imagine along with me that Jesus is standing in front us. We are ready to go home to an eternal life with our Creator and Jesus asks,

“*What would you do differently with your life – if you could do it over?*”

I ask this question of myself from time to time. I don’t want to wait until Jesus is standing in front of me, knowing it’s too late to call a do-over.

I would seek God’s guidance sooner. And not as a last resort.
I would try to learn more about Jesus.
I would live my life more fully:
 Seeing with the eyes of Jesus
 Going out with the feet of Jesus
 Serving with the hands of Jesus
 Feeling with the heart of Jesus.

I would laugh more often – at myself.
I would appreciate the good in people and notice less the not-so-good.
I would say “I love you” more often.
I would be a better father, a better husband, and a better friend.

God’s love has been poured into our hearts

Those who are worshipping with us this morning might be deeply committed to Christ ~ followers of Christ ~ Christians ~ and you have been much of your life.

Or, you might be a brand new Christian. You don’t know all that much yet, but you are open and wanting to know more and be in a deeper relationship with Christ. Or, you might be trying to figure it all. Not sure where you fit in all of this.

You’re not taking the pastor’s word for this Christianity thing – you want to feel something more before you commit.

Regardless of where you are in our walk with Christ, knowing that God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us places us in a certain position.

We must do something! We can’t ignore the love we have been filled with.

We can accept this love and in doing so live out the life Christ has called us to; to live out a joyous life.

Or, we can reject it and in doing so reject God and be miserable.

Or, we can sit with it, but only *just* so long ~ remaining on the fence. But soon the Holy Spirit will compel you and you must decide.

So, we decide for ourselves, but we’ve also known someone who has been a tremendous influence on our lives. They lived their life as Christ called them to and they left this legacy of faith and love to us. And we never want to forget that!

We don’t want to forget how important they were to us. We don’t want to forget the indelible impression left upon us. We want to live our life like they did!

So that at that time, when we stand before Jesus and answer his question

“What would you do differently with your life – if you could do it over?”

We can say...

Lord, I’m sure there are things I should have done differently. I know I am far from perfect. And I did my best to live life as you called me to – living and loving even as you did. Forgive me for my wrongdoings and sins. I’m in your hands now.

Imagine our heartfelt joy hearing the words of Jesus Christ saying,
'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

To those who have gone home before us:

We love you dearly and miss you. We are so blessed to have had you in our lives. We will see you again.

To our Lord Jesus Christ:

May our hearts be open to the Holy Spirit given to us. May we live our lives as you have called us to. Let there be no regrets when we hear the words...

"Well done good and faithful servant."