

INTRODUCTION FOR LIVE STREAMING, FEBRUARY 28, 2021

11:20 Sunday Morning, @ www.facebook.com/austinvillevcovertchurches

GOOD MORNING! WELCOME TO OUR AUSTINVILLE / COVERT SUNDAY SERVICE.

MAY WE PRAY:

Heavenly Father,

We come again, to sit by the still waters, asking you, once again, to restore our souls. Never in the history of our nation, have we loss so many –so quickly. As we pass the 500,000 mark of “loved ones lost” we do so with a softness of heart. We do so, with thanksgiving for their goodness in our nation, our families, our communities –realizing that we are stronger because of them. Just so, we shall determine to be better people ourselves, because of the power their lives have had in shaping our own. The memory of them does make us better, stronger, kinder people. As we follow our Christ, we are filled with the remembrance of Jesus Christ, in hope of a resurrection that shall fix all things broken.

~ In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, AMEN

Doxology

Guire Webb & Kim Chaapel

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

Carol Dziuba has been in the Troy Hospital after suffering a fall. She is also recovering from pneumonia. She is now home. Diane has come to stay with her.

Address for cards: Carol Dziuba, 79 Roseville Ave., Mansfield, PA 16933

Guthrie Clinic has set up a “vaccination-factory” assembly-line in the old Athens/Sayre K-Mart; they are administering entire shipments of vaccines until they are gone. Keep checking <https://www.guthrie.org> then click on COVID-19 vaccine information for a chance at setting up a vaccination appointment if you’re 65 or older! Or call 866-488-4743. You can find this information on your Live-stream service schedule posted on our facebook today. If you get an appointment & can’t get there, let us know. We’ll take you.

Wear your mask, keep the physical distance, wash your hands. Get your vaccine as soon as you can. Stay “heart connected!” If you’re high tech, flip open your lap-top, I-phone, or I-pad. If you’re low tech write a note. If you’re no tech, pick up the phone –don’t be alone. Or, you can do all three! We can do this! Don’t give up –we’re way too close to winning. Don’t give COVID a chance to “sneak-in” through a different door.

So glad you are here, Glorianne Dziuba at the piano, Gloria at the organ, Gabrielle Fish at the camera, Kim Chaapel and Guire Webb (leading our singing), some choir members to give us words for our hymns, all of you who have gathered around your devices. We’re trying hard to keep you safe. We are a “rule keeping people” following the PA mandates and CDC guidelines. Thank you so much for coming to church today.



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Remember

~ Matthew 26:13

We would not be much of a church if we did not stop to remember the 500,000 people who have died in this pandemic. They represent a loss for millions of additional people who are living with the loss. A world where no one cares is no world at all. We

cannot handle this by hardening our hearts and denying the sorrow of so many people. We cannot let ourselves do that. Flags are at half-mast; our churches are set up more as hospitals than chapels. People know that things are not the same. It is cruel to deny that.

Yet, love is still the fix. Love is still the fix. We know that; but, we find ourselves caught in a condition that makes our sorrow and sadness even more difficult. In the past, we were able to act upon our grief, offer comfort, and express our fond appreciation for loved ones by holding a service –asking everyone from miles around to come. By putting together and printing Memorial folders with lots of pictures; by preparing dinners –around which we could share our appreciation –offering comfort and support by our presence and kind words. Now, I find myself at lonely graves, standing in the rain or snow with a few family members all wearing masks –or spread across the graveyard ten feet apart; with the wind doing its best to blow my words away. Or, families “holding onto” ashes –hoping for a better day to express sorrow –sorrow that refuses to wait for a “better day.” We haven’t been able to show & share that respect, give that honor and appreciation toward our loved one in a way that we have come to expect –we haven’t been able to consol those who were the closest to them. We could not share and reflect in the helpful, healing ways of the past. We could not give the comfort we wanted to give –that we needed to give

Yet, with these kinds of losses healing still comes by remembering –not by forgetting. Don’t tell me to forget; it is irreverent; it is callous. Remembering is the greater part of gratitude; we are all less without.

Our grief is compounded in this pandemic by the fact that “keeping apart” physically keeps us safe. It is compounded by the fact that the smaller the gathering –the safer people are. To deny that reality in order to keep things the way they were –would without doubt, cost the lives of many, many more. I remember thinking, “what can we do to not have people die?” –And I did not think that people were “expendable pawns” to gather together for the “ego” of the church. Yet, the ministry of the church seemed to be predicated on the idea of “gathering people together” –the more gathered, the more successful. People are creatures of pride –even church people. In the old days, the introductory question among farmers was: How many cows are you milking; how many cans are you shipping; how many acres do you farm? They were not questions that made you love your neighbor more –only questions that could make you feel inferior or superior –not closer. So, these may be the times to remember the words of Christ, “Where (only) two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). It

might do us all some good to hear Christ saying, "Wait a minute, I'm still here." When we were first raising our children, I was a "one cow farmer." But, I so looked forward to seeing Lizzy every morning, and saying "good night" in the evening. Lizzy liked me and I liked her. I was the happy farmer of one cow –one delightful cow.

So, in the church COVID made us rethink what we were really about. How do we stay together while being apart. How can we be together in such a way as to not hurt each other?

Well, we can still remember. We're going to be better people for remembering. This is a day to remember people. In many cases we are remembering people we never met; yet these people have had an impact upon our lives. In many cases we are inspired by remembering people we've never met.

While we are remembering, let us each know that we too are building a life to be remembered. How do we want to be remembered? It is natural and right to want to be remembered. What is important is *how* we are remembered. What will the memory of us do for future generations? That will be our own doing; that will be our contribution to them. Not all names are remembered in the same way....Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Kublai Khan, & Genghis Khan are not remembered in the same manner as Albert Schweitzer, Louis Pasteur, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Tubman, Mother Theresa, or George Washington Carver.

We are now building the stuff from which memories are made, and of this very stuff, future generations will build their own lives. Don't stop remembering just because there is a pandemic on –in fact, now, more than ever, keep that candle glowing in your heart. Good memories are the healing medicine of God. They won't hurt you.

- What man is there who does not talk of his father as the depository of knowledge?
- Or what woman who does not talk of the wisdom, intuition & warmth of her mother?

Memory is the foundation upon which children build their lives. One summer, when our grandson, Kayle, was a little boy, I was in the hammock under the maple tree swinging with him. After a while, I got tired of swinging, but Kayle said, "Don't let it stop grandpa." What do you do? You keep the hammock swinging, this kid was building memories and I wanted to be a part of those memories. You see, if he grew up thinking that I was wonderful, he was more likely to grow up thinking that life is wonderful. People like that always make a difference. They always make a difference.

Every today is built upon the memory of yesterday; every today becomes the foundation for some tomorrow. We are always building memories. They become the roots of our lives, reaching into the past, securing, anchoring and nurturing our existence. The deeper, the better. *It is up to us to build them well.*
~ Memories

Paul reminded Timothy to "Remember Jesus Christ." And Jesus gives us all a good example of the kind of things that are worth remembering about people.

Matthew 26:13 (New American Standard) "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the

whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her."

The Biblical writers are the historians of the time of Christ; and what strange historians they were! What historian would think to remember the story of the widow and her two mites? Or the story of an eccentric woman, who broke a box of perfume upon the head of Jesus? Nevertheless, it is recorded, for Jesus does not value a thing by its glitter, but rather by the love that shines from it.

To discover the spirit from which good memories are made, we must re-discover the deed of this woman. There must be something wonderful about this story for Christ links His gospel to it. So long as this Gospel lives, the story of this woman will be told. When the story of this woman ceases to exist, then the gospel must cease to exist also. Our Lord's prediction is verified, as the memory of this woman fills the church today. There must be something remarkable about her --but what? And how shall we imitate her?

- 1) Look at the woman
- 2) Look at the Lord & listen to what He says about her.
- 3) Then let's look at ourselves.

First, let's look at this woman. There is much dispute over who she was. Jesus did not name the women. We can only guess who she was. It is my opinion that she remains anonymous in order to represent many people, from many places, in many ages who have served the Lord in the same way. They have served for love's sake. Is this Mary the sister of Martha? We can only guess. My thought is that whoever she was, she represents people like the ones who built, worshiped, and served in our churches.

Christ is reclining at the table of Simon the leper. A sudden thought hits this woman. She goes to her home, gets her money, spends it on a box of perfume (or maybe she had it for some time). She brings it quickly into the house, consults no one, then breaks the alabaster vase (which was also of great value), and out flows a stream of precious perfume, with a very refreshing fragrance. This she poured on the head of Jesus. Its only value now, will be the *memory* of the deed. Think about that; how precious are memories? They are, without doubt, the most precious of all things.

The disciples complained, but Jesus commended.

Matthew 26:8 "But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, 'what is the point of this waste?' I think, in the first place, this act was done from the impulse of a loving heart, and *that* was what made it remarkable. *Love is never a waste*

The heart is often better than the head. I suspect that it is our hearts that brought us here today, rather than our heads. The heart is first affected by the Christian faith, and it is very often *swifter* in its going than the head. It is our practice to calculate whether a thing is our duty or not. Our heart says go, our head says no. Our heart says help them, our head says no. Our heart says tell them, our head says no. Our heart says give, our head says no. --Do I owe it? --Shouldn't someone else do this? Instead of thinking of cost, she thought of love. It was not her duty; this act came from a loftier motive. That is why she should be remembered. With a little pondering, reckoning & reasoning, she would never have

accomplished it. She was driven by a greater power than her mind; she was driven by her heart. Character shaping memories are made in the heart, not the head. It was a force of spontaneous impulse guided by the best that is in man.

In our day we do not give our hearts room to act; we rather calculate: --What will we get out of this? --Will people notice me? --Will it fill my needs? --Has it been done before? --Is this the proper and orthodox way to do it? --Is this expected of me? It would be better if our hearts could grow bigger. No! It may not be expected; it may not be our duty. However, why must we stop short at duty? Will we give Christ no more than His due? This act was beyond routine; that is why this woman is remembered. This act was generated of a pure motive; that is why this woman is remembered. She is worth remembering!

There is a second commendation --what this woman did, was done purely for Christ. Why didn't she sell the perfume, and give the money to the poor? No! she thought, "I love the poor and the hungry, but I want to do something for Him." "I want to do something directly for Him." I do not think that any other disciple, in all of Christ's experience, ever had that thought --this woman did.

In all of our work, our service is divided. Many people benefit from Christian work, including the doer of the work, who often receives some commendation. What we do, we do for reasons beyond our love of Christ. There are many criteria for our work: Does it benefit our church? If not we are very likely to ask, "What is the point of this waste?" Will our organization profit by it? We must serve the Lord from loftier motives, something higher than "What's in it for me." "Do I get my credit?" The beauty of this act lay in that she did it for the Lord. It is, therefore, worth remembering.

Yet there is a third thing. What this woman did was extraordinary. She was not content to do what everyone else was doing.

Now let us look at the Lord. Was He angry? No! *First*, He said, "She has done a good deed to Me." *Second*, "Do not trouble her; do not reflect upon what might have been done for the poor, 'for you have the poor always with you, but Me you have not always,' You can do good to them whenever you please." You can be sure they were shocked.

Here is the sense: We only get one chance at building memories for future generations. These people were sharp; after all, who's going to criticize the idea of giving to the poor. Jesus was sharper, He replied, "Don't use the poor for an excuse for not loving." And yes, I make out better with the loss of friends and family by remembering them; and thereby, "letting them" continue to be a part of my life. --And they do; yes, they are an important part of my life. They make me stronger, not weaker.

It is quite simple, You are becoming a memory for a good many people. What kind of memories will you help them build? Will they be a credit to Christ?

The memory of *you* will be the roots for Christ's Church tomorrow. Give it your best shot! You are becoming the memory for some future church --some future people. It is up to you to give them a chance at good memories, with which to undergird and support their faith. So that, what you do will enhance the gospel. I would suggest, that when you are tempted to stop, instead, just "keep the hammock swinging!" "Don't let it stop, Grandpa; don't let it stop."