

## 1.7.24 Remembering Our Past, Rejoicing in Our Present, Reimagining Our Future

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What do you remember about the day you were born? What do you recall about that most important day? If, like most people, you can't remember anything about the day you were born, do you know anything about it at all? I know that I was born at what was called Boston Memorial Hospital on a Thursday. It was a leap year like this year, and the # 1 song in the USA was Rag Doll by The Four Seasons and the #1 song in Great Britain was A Hard Day's Night by the Beatles and I've been a fan of both groups ever since. I know that my dad was at the hospital on Wednesday night and wanted to stay with my mom and be present when their third child arrived, but Dr. Elia told him to go home and get some sleep, I wouldn't be arriving for a while. So, my dad went home, and early on Thursday, establishing my habit of being a morning person, I arrived while my dad was still asleep at home and he wasn't pleased with Dr. Elia. As a baby I had such a happy disposition that my maternal grandmother called me "Sunny Jim" because I smiled all the time. Of course, I don't remember any of this, so how do I know it?

**Because someone told me and reminded me of these things more than once so I know and remember them.**

Today as we begin a new year in which we'll be celebrating 200 years of Christian life and witness in and through Brewster Baptist Church, I want to talk about the importance of: **Remembering our Past** to our sense of identity and core values. **Rejoicing in our Present** – focusing on gratitude and thankfulness. And **Reimagining our Future** – being open to God and the new things God may want to do.

We'll be touching on these themes throughout the year, so today is merely a brief introduction. Let's start with **Remembering**. Remembering is vital in our lives. Without memory, we couldn't learn anything. Without remembering what we did yesterday, how can we plan what to do tomorrow? Without the ability to remember we lose our sense of self and identity. We wouldn't know the people who are most important to us or the values that we hold as vital and worth practicing. One of the heartbreaking aspects of Alzheimer's disease is losing the ability to remember important people and information.

**Remembering is vital to faith.** Remembering God's goodness moves us to respond to our world in hope rather than fear. Remembering God's love for us fuels our love for others. Throughout the Bible, God's people are invited to place their trust in the Lord, to remember all the blessings God has given and all that God has taught about living as God's beloved children. Peter writes about this in **2 Peter 1:1-13 (New Century Version)** 1 From Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. To you who have received a faith as valuable as ours because our God and Savior Jesus Christ does what is right. 2 Grace and peace be given to you more and more, because you truly know God and Jesus our Lord.

3 Jesus has the power of God, by which **he has given us everything we need to live and to serve God.** We have these things because we know him. Jesus called us by his glory and goodness. 4 Through these **he gave us the very great and precious promises.** With these gifts you can share in God's nature, and the world will not ruin you with its evil desires.

5 **Because you have these blessings, do your best** to add these things to your lives: to your **faith, add goodness**; and to your goodness, add **knowledge**; 6 and to your knowledge, add **self-control**; and to your self-control, add **patience**; and to your patience, add **service for God**; 7 and to your service for God, add **kindness** for your brothers and sisters in Christ; and to this kindness, **add love.** 8 **If all these things are in you and are growing,** they will help you to be useful and productive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But anyone who does not have these things cannot see clearly. He is blind and has forgotten that he was made clean from his past sins. 10 My brothers and sisters, try hard to be certain that you really are called and chosen by God. **If you do all these things, you will never fall.** 11 And you will be given a very great welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 **You know these things,** and you are very strong in the truth, **but I will always help you remember them.** 13 **I think it is right for me to help you remember** as long as I am in this body.

An important part of a pastor's role is to help people remember God's truth, blessings, and promises. Who God calls us to be and what God calls us to do. Passing

on these truths has been the task of the people of God for thousands of years. We know what we know of the Bible because faithful people have remembered, repeated, and shared and lived the story of God's love for so many generations before us. Every person has a story worth sharing, including Brewster Baptist Church. Whether this is your first time participating in worship with us, or you've been coming for decades, it's good to know some of our story. In the 1820s, West Harwich Baptist Church on Route 28 ignited a revival on the Lower Cape. Inspired by the new thing God was doing, a group of Brewster farmers, fishermen, and artisans organized Brewster Baptist Church (BBC) on December 23, 1824. There was also another likely factor in the church being founded at the end of 1824. That was the year the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted a measure allowing officially recognized religious societies, not only the official state church Congregationalists, to assess taxes on all church members. In other words, BBC was founded at a moment in time when the Spirit of God was moving on the Lower Cape and the laws of the Commonwealth became more favorable for groups wanting to raise funds and plant new churches that weren't Congregational. It wasn't until 1833, more than 40 years after the ratification of the Bill of Rights in December of 1791, that Massachusetts became the last state to end support for a particular church.

For the first three years, the church met in people's homes and the local schoolhouse. In 1828, the members built their first building, approximately where the Chapel now stands. As membership grew, so did the church. The first addition was built in 1860 and then remodeled in 1881 after a steeple fire. The first parsonage was built in 1874 and a baptistery was added in 1888. One of the most significant events in the history of the church took place when Alyce and Ollie Lund, who owned what is now The Candleberry Inn next door, and a large tract of land from Route 6A all the way back to Route 137, sold approximately 9 acres to Brewster Baptist Church on April 5, 1967, for the staggering sum of...\$10,000. Without the vision to purchase that land and the graciousness and willingness of the Lund family to sell it, BBC as it exists today, would never have happened. Not only that but just two years later at a church meeting on May 14, 1969 the church sold some of that land to the Brewster Ladies Library Association by a vote of 22 to 0. The church did for the library what the Lund's did for the church and

those two acts allowed BBC and the Brewster Ladies Library to grow and expand into their present forms.

Our family was blessed to begin our ministry here on October 1, 1995, at a moment in time much like when the church was founded, when the church was ready to step out in faith and the population of the Town was increasing. I'm humbled and thankful to be the longest serving pastor in the 200-year history of our congregation. After the purchase of land that allowed to the church to expand, a second hugely important event to remember was the church raising more than \$2,400,000 to complete a 17,000 square foot addition in 2001, which included a new sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, lobby, and office wing that we've been using for more than twenty years. We only borrowed a little over \$800,000 and we paid that mortgage off in just four years.

Throughout our history, BBC has tried to do what 2 Peter 1 describes, which is to do our best or to make every effort to develop qualities that reflect God's nature. These qualities include (vv. 5–7): faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, service for God, kindness, and love. Verse 8 says, ***"If all these things are in you and are growing, they will help you to be useful and productive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

I've spent most of my time talking about remembering, but I want to briefly touch on the other two aspects of our yearlong theme. The Bible not only frequently tells us to remember what's important and to remind each of other of what is true and how we're called to live as God's people, we also hear repeatedly in God's Word about **the importance of rejoicing in the present**. I preached about joy three weeks ago, so I'm not spending much time on it today. However, we can't remind ourselves enough about the importance of focusing on joy, gratitude, and thankfulness as much as possible in our daily lives. Just as it's beneficial as an individual or a church to **remember** key people, moments, events, and values that have shaped and continue to guide our life, it's also wise to make rejoicing a regular habit and practice. Even when we're grieving, not physically well, struggling, or feeling blue, being intentional about stating what we can be thankful for and rejoice about today is a healthy Biblical practice. **Psalm 5:11**, says, ***"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy."*** What is

something about God or your faith that causes you to rejoice or to feel joy at this moment in your life? **Psalm 118:24** declares, *“This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”* How could this verse shape or influence your daily approach to life? Remember that rejoicing doesn’t start with our emotions, it begins with choosing where we place our focus. Practicing the habit of rejoicing and gratitude, will bring our emotions along in their wake. As a church we have many reasons to rejoice in our present and I hope if you go to breakfast or fellowship time after worship that you’ll talk about some of the things that give you joy because you are part of BBC. If you’re watching online, perhaps you could write a few things down and share them with us.

Finally, I want to touch on **Reimagining our Future – being open to God and the new things God may want to do**. Our church exists because a small group of believers was willing to step out in faith and courage and take a risk in starting a new church that would reach people with the good news of God’s love in Christ. All through our church’s history, there have been moments like that, I’ve mentioned a few. Others have included the idea of writing and recording radio spots to try and reach and encourage people across Cape Cod. That was an innovative step that no other church was doing. More than 25 years later, BBC is known all over Cape Cod thanks to our radio spots. We began a Saturday evening service in 1997 when no other Protestant church on Cape Cod had one. We hired Kip Mickelson to join our staff to help create and launch a contemporary service which began in 2001 and Kip was able to help us take that important step. We have continued to be a both/and church and now the next frontier is being a church that serves people in person and online. We now have perhaps two hundred people a week watching us online either during our live stream or when it fits in their schedule. Discerning how to reach, identify, minister to, and disciple our online congregation is a next step in reimagining our future. For those of you who are watching us online, let us know your thoughts or ideas!

Balancing Remembering the Past and Reimagining the Future isn’t always easy. Everything that people hold as important to remember, was once new, innovative, and a change. People who love hearing the organ played and don’t like drums and guitars, need to remind themselves that an organ was at one time a new and controversial

instrument to use in Christian worship. People had to adapt and get used to it. People who don't like traditional hymns need to recall that Christianity didn't emerge out of nowhere in the 1970's with praise music. I'm sure there were folks leaving John Newton's church in England after worship the first Sunday he introduced a new song called *Amazing Grace* who were saying to each other, *"I can't stand these new songs, why can't we just chant the psalms like we always used to?"*

**God is always doing new things** as the Lord states in **Isaiah 43:19a**, *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* In the verse before it, **Isaiah 43:18**. God says, *"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old."* There are things that should always be remembered, like who God is and what God has done, and there are other things that we need to let go of and release so we may participate in the new thing God wants to do. That new thing in your life or in our church's life may be hard to imagine, like how there could be a river when all you see is desert. That's where faith comes in. How do you balance that which is older and worth remembering with embracing new things God may wish to bring forth or to do? Jesus shows us a way.

In Matthew 5 in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus repeatedly says, *"You have heard that it was said... but I say to you..."* Much of Jesus' teaching is a re-imagining of the tradition that had been remembered and passed on from Moses. Jesus is modeling that faith is living and dynamic and requires re-imagining and re-examination. Jesus recognizes this tension between remembering and reimagining when he says in, **Luke 5:37-39** (NKJV) *And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'* Remembering our Past, Rejoicing in our Present, Reimagining our Future. Praise God we have such a legacy of faith, courage, innovation, love, and generosity that has marked our church's history. Praise God we have so much to rejoice in and be thankful for in our present. May God continue to grant us wisdom and vision that guides us into a future of faithfulness and fruitfulness. We're going to have a wonderful year!

## Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Recall a fond memory from your life that you'd be comfortable sharing or that you can write about in your journal. What makes that event special and worth remembering?
2. Why are remembering, recalling, and reminding important to who you are as a person and to your relationships and values?
3. Psalm 5:11, says, "*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy.*" What is something about God or your faith that causes you to rejoice or to feel joy at this time in your life?
4. Psalm 118:24 declares, "*This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" How could this verse shape or influence your daily approach to life?
5. God is often doing new things as the Lord states in Isaiah 43:19a, "*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*" How do you balance that which is older and worth remembering with embracing new things God may wish to bring forth or to do?
6. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, Jesus repeatedly says, "*You have heard that it was said... but I say to you...*" Much of Jesus' teaching is re-stating and re-imagining of the tradition that had been remembered and passed on from Moses. In what sense is faith a living and dynamic process that requires re-imagining and re-examination?

## Before Communion Luke 22:14-20

14 When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.

15 He said to them, "*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" 17 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "*Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for*

*I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.*” 19 Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, *“This is my body, which is given for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**”* 20 And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Luke is the only Gospel that includes the phrase, *“**Do this in remembrance of me.**”*

### **Remembering Our Past, Rejoicing in Our Present, Reimagining Our Future**

1/7 2 Peter 1:1-13 (New Century Version) I Will Always Help You Remember

Verse of the Day, 2 Peter 1:12, You know these things, and you are very strong in the truth, but I will always help you remember them.

1/8 Deuteronomy 8:11-18, Do Not Forget the LORD Your God

Verse of the Day, Deuteronomy 8:11, Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today.

1/9 Psalm 77:1-20, I Will Remember Your Wonders of Old

Verse of the Day, Psalm 77:11, I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; I will remember your wonders of old.

1/10 Psalm 5:1-12, Let All Who Take Refuge in you Rejoice

Verse of the Day, Psalm 5:11, But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you.

1/11 Psalm 118:22-29, Let Us Rejoice

Verse of the Day, Psalm 118:24, This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

1/12 Isaiah 43:15-21, I’m About to do a New Thing, Do You Not Perceive It?

Verse of the Day, Isaiah 43:19, I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

1/13 Matthew 5:43-48, You Have Heard that it was Said... But I Say to You

Verses of the Day, Matthew 5:43-44, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

### **Call to Worship Psalm 100:1-5**

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

**3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

**5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.**

### **Middle text Deuteronomy 8:11-18**

<sup>11</sup> **Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God**, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today.

<sup>12</sup> When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> **then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, <sup>15</sup> who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, <sup>16</sup> and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. <sup>17</sup> Do not say to yourself, "*My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.*" <sup>18</sup> **But remember the LORD your God**, for it is

he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.