

Lest We Forget

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[0 : 0 0] If we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Deuteronomy chapter 6. Deuteronomy chapter 6, and read again at verse 10.

Deuteronomy chapter 6 at verse 10. And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to give Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob to give you, with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

But particularly those words at the beginning of verse 12, where Moses says to the people, then take care lest you forget the Lord.

Take care lest you forget the Lord. As you know, on a day like today, a day which is known throughout our nation, as we're saying to the children, it's Remembrance Sunday.

We gather together at war memorials and at remembrance services to remember and to honour those who lost their lives in the horrors of war, both past and present.

[1 : 3 9] And I'm sure that many of us, we gathered at a war memorial, either in Borv or in Barvis or in Braggar this morning, to remember the fallen. Because as we often say at this time of year, it's good for us to remember the fallen.

It's good for us to remember those from our own villages who left our shores and our island never to return home. It's good for us to remember the millions who innocently suffered at the hands of the enemy.

It's good for us to remember the men and women who died on the battlefield in order to bring us peace. It's good for us also to remember those who lost their lives on the Ioleah with the safety of home only in their sight.

It's good for us to remember and to thank the Lord for bringing us through one of the darkest centuries of our history. But it's also good for us to remember to pray for those who are still serving in our armed forces, whether on land or in the air or on the sea or even beneath the waves.

It's good for us to remember to support those still experiencing the effects of war, both physically and mentally. My friend, it's good for us to remember lest we forget.

[2 : 5 7] Lest we forget. And we always have to say lest we forget. Because the truth is, we are prone to forgetting. We're prone to forgetting.

It's now over a century since the end of the Great War. It's over 70 years since the end of the Second World War. And life, as we all know it, it's very different to their day.

Sadly, our lives are too busy. Too busy running around and rushing around trying to deal with all the demands upon us to the point that we often forget and we fail to remember the service and the sacrifice and the suffering that all took place in the past in order to bring us peace, the peace we enjoy in the present.

But that's why it's good for us to be reminded. That's why it's good for us to remember lest we forget. And as we said to the children, it's that well-known phrase, lest we forget, that I want us to think about today.

Lest we forget. Because it's a phrase that we often read, we often see it, we often hear it at this time of year. And yet what we often fail to remember is that it's taken straight from the Bible.

[4 : 14] Taken straight from the Bible. It's taken from here, Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 12. Take care lest you forget the Lord. Take care lest you forget the Lord.

And so I want us to think about this familiar phrase that we're all aware of. And I want us to think about where it came from and what it means for us today. And I want us to think about it under two simple headings.

Two simple headings, failing to remember and faithfully reminded. Failing to remember and faithfully reminded. So first of all, failing to remember.

Failing to remember. We'll read again in verse 10. Moses says to the people, when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you, with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant.

And when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[5 : 30] We mentioned earlier, if you were at the Boer War Memorial service, we mentioned that in order to explain and express the sadness and the suffering at the sorrow of war, many poems have been written.

And they've been written in order to remind us and reaffirm to us about all the tragedies of war, but also to show us how much we owe those for paying the ultimate sacrifice in order to bring us peace.

And we've become very familiar with some of these war poems. We mentioned one to the children, John McRae's in Flanders Fields. In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow between the crosses row on row.

There's also Robert Lawrence Binion's Ode to Remembrance. We often recite it at a memorial service. They shall grow not old as we that are left to grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. Another famous author of the well-known poem was Joseph Rudyard Kipling.

[6 : 40] In fact, he had a particular and a personal interest in the First World War. Joseph Rudyard Kipling had a son who went to war. He signed up for the war effort in the First World War.

His son was called John. And John Kipling, he was killed during the Battle of Luz on the Western Front in France in 1915. And sadly, John Kipling, his body, was never recovered from the war.

But this led Joseph, the father, it led Joseph Rudyard Kipling to join what was called the IWGC, the Imperial War Graves Commission.

And their role and their responsibility was to provide a headstone for every fallen service person who was never recovered. They were to provide this headstone for each relative so that their remains, although they had never been recovered, they could have a headstone for them.

But remarkably, everything Kipling did, it was influenced by the Bible because Kipling was a Christian. And so when Kipling was asked what should be written on the gravestone, what should be engraved on these headstones of all these unidentified war graves, Kipling didn't need to think twice.

[8 : 01] He quoted a phrase from the Bible from Paul's letter to the Philippians in chapter 4, verse 6, the phrase, known unto God. Known unto God.

And you know, it's because of Joseph Rudyard Kipling that there are over 212,000 graves across the world today and their headstones have that biblical inscription upon them, known unto God.

Eight of those headstones can be found in Sandwich Cemetery because on the morning of the 1st of January 1919, as you know, there were soldiers who were lost from the Iola.

And eight of the soldiers who were so badly injured after being thrown in the waves of that force 10 gale onto the beaches of Holland. No one could identify these eight soldiers.

And when their remains were washed ashore a number of weeks later, all that could be said of these eight men was that they were known unto God.

[9 : 08] God knows who they were. Nobody could identify them, but they were known unto God. And you know, Kipling was a man whose life was influenced by the Bible, as every Christian's life should be influenced by the Bible.

But Kipling's biblical influence, it was not only seen on all these unmarked war graves scattered throughout the world. Kipling's war hymn, the war hymn recessional, it also had that biblical influence.

Especially because Kipling, he not only wanted Britain as a nation to remember the fallen as we do each and every year, Kipling also wanted Britain to remember that the Lord was the real reason for their victory over the enemy.

Which is why the opening verse of Kipling's hymn, recessional, it reads, And then there's that chorus, Kipling's chorus, which is actually, you could say, Kipling's prayer, his prayer for the nation, Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.

Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget. And remarkably, as you can see, Kipling's chorus was lifted straight from the Bible.

[10 : 38] Because the first half of Kipling's chorus is from Psalm 46, a psalm that we often sing at memorial services and remembrance services. It's a psalm that reminds us and reassures us that when our world is turned upside down by war, God remains our refuge and our strength.

That's why the psalmist could confess, he said, Our God, who is the Lord of hosts, is still upon our side. The God of Jacob, our refuge, forever will abide.

And you know, it's appropriate, it's applicable that Kipling used the phrase, Lord of hosts, to relate to war. Because as we said earlier, the phrase, Lord of hosts, it literally means Lord of the armies.

Lord of the armies. And that's what Kipling is praying. He prayed that we would remember the armies. Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.

And as you know, and as you can see, the second half of Kipling's chorus is taken from our text this afternoon. Verse 12, Take care, lest you forget the Lord.

[11 : 50] Take care, lest you forget the Lord. And you know, by this point in the history of God's people, when the book of Deuteronomy was written, the Israelites, they had been in the wilderness for 40 years.

They had been rescued and redeemed from slavery and bondage in Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Moses, the man of God, he had led the Israelites. We studied the first half of the book of Exodus.

And you remember, he led the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea and on into the wilderness, which was no easy task. Because at the time, if you remember, at the time, there were two million Israelites, including men, women, and animals, walking in the wilderness.

But now, after 40 years, the Israelites, they're standing now on the banks of the River Jordan. They're about to cross over into the promised land. And the Lord here, he speaks to his people.

And he speaks to them in order to remind them about his commandment and their commitment. He speaks to his people in order to remind them about his commandment and their commitment.

[13 : 03] But the reason the Israelites were in the wilderness, the reason they were there for 40 years, 40 years in the wilderness, the reason they were there was because they had forgotten the Lord.

They had forgotten the Lord. They had failed to remember the Lord's commandment and they had failed to remember their commitment to the Lord. In fact, the thing is, if the Israelites had remembered the Lord's commandment and had remembered their commitment to the Lord, their journey to the promised land would have been under a month.

They would have been there in less than a month from Egypt to the promised land. But because they had failed to listen and failed to learn from the Lord, because they had failed to change their ways and conform to God's word, because they had failed to remember the Lord's commandment and remember their commitment to the Lord, because they had failed and forgotten, it took them 40 years to enter the promised land.

40 years. I'm not even 40 yet. And I know that's a long time, 40 years.

You know, one commentator said, it took 40 hours to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.

[14 : 31] It took 40 hours to get Israel out of Egypt, but it took 40 years to take Egypt out of Israel. And yet, despite their failure to remember his commandment and their commitment to him, the Lord faithfully reminds them.

He reminds them in this passage, and he reminds them and us, lest we forget. Lest we forget.

Take care, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. That's what I want us to see secondly.

I want us to see that they were faithfully reminded. First of all, they were failing to remember. They had forgotten, but now they're going to be faithfully reminded. They're faithfully reminded.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 6. Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son, and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you all the days of your life, that your days may be long.

[15 : 52] Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, that you may multiply greatly as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

You know, whenever I consider the book of Deuteronomy, I always think of the book of Deuteronomy like an old photo album. An old photo album. I'm sure that you all have an old photo album at home with lots of pictures from the past, maybe some of your pictures are.

So old that they're black and white. Or maybe some of you are so good with technology that you have all these photos, they're smartly stored on a USB stick or on a cloud somewhere in the sky, or they're stored on your phone.

And you know, what's amazing about your phone, or if you have social media, is that you'll have all these photo memories that will pop up from time to time. And these photo memories, they'll pop up with pictures of the past, and when you look at them and you go through all these photo memories, you're given these memories to remind you of things that you did or places you went that you would have completely forgotten about it had you not been reminded.

And you know, that's what the book of Deuteronomy is like. You come to this book and the first thing you should think about when you see the book Deuteronomy is photo album. A book of memories.

[17 : 19] That's what it is. It's a book of memories where the Lord is faithfully reminding all the Israelites of all that they have experienced and enjoyed as His people.

Because as you know, the Lord, in the Exodus, the Lord rescued His people. He redeemed His people from slavery and bondage in Egypt. They were in Egypt for 400 years, and the Lord brought them safely out of Egypt and on into the wilderness.

And now as the Israelites are standing on the banks of the River Jordan ready to cross over into this land of promise, this land of promise, as it says there in verse 3, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land full of blessing, full of benefits for them.

And so as they're standing there waiting to cross the river, the Lord faithfully reminds His people. He reminds them so that they will not forget. They will not forget the Lord when they enter the promised land.

Now as you know, we're sadly seeing a lot of the promised land at the moment due to the war between Israel and Gaza. So much so that we're being given daily updates of all the disasters and the devastation and the deaths that are taking place in that region.

[18 : 43] But the area where the ancient people of Israel, this people in that time, the area that they were standing in was on the banks of the River Jordan. Where they were standing was the area that we would now describe as the West Bank, just north of the Dead Sea.

And it was there that the Lord faithfully reminded His people of His commandment and their commitment to Him. And the commandment which the Lord faithfully reminded His people was the greatest commandment.

If you're going to remind people of any commandment, remind them of the greatest commandment. Verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

And these words that I command you shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. You shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Do you remember when one of the Jewish scribes came up to Jesus? And he came up to Jesus in order to test Him. It's amazing the amount that tried to test Jesus all the time.

[19 : 56] And he tested, the scribe tested Jesus by asking Him the question, which commandment is greatest of all? Which commandment is greatest of all? And Jesus answered the question by quoting those verses from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

And that's because those words that we just read, they are known among the Jews as the Shema. The Shema, which means it's the Hebrew word for here, or to here.

It comes from the opening word there in verse 4. It's the opening word of the greatest commandment. Hear, Shema, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. And you know, the Lord faithfully reminded His people there on the banks of the River Jordan, He reminded them of the greatest commandment.

Because from this point on, and it's an amazing thing when you consider this passage, from this point on, as they go towards the promised land, the Israelites were to recite these verses, the Shema, every morning and every evening throughout their entire life.

[21 : 13] In fact, it's said that the first thing a Jewish child is taught to speak are these words, the Shema, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. It's the first thing a child is taught when they're able to speak. And apparently, it's the last thing a Jew will seek to utter on their deathbed is the words of the Shema.

And you know, despite forgetting and failing to remember the Lord in their past, the Israelites were faithfully reminded that God's word doesn't change.

God's word remains true. His love never ends. His care is complete and His forgiveness is full and free. That's what they were reminded every morning and every evening.

Every time they recited the Shema. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

[22 : 18] And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. They were to be reminded, faithfully reminded, that God's word doesn't change.

His promises remain true. His love never ends. His care is complete. And His forgiveness is full and free. And you know, that's why we should read the Bible every day.

I don't know if you read the Bible every day. Maybe you read it now and again. Maybe you never read it at all. But this is why we should read the Bible every day.

It doesn't have to be huge chunks of the Bible. Just a little bit of the Bible because it's in our Bible, God's word, that we are faithfully reminded. Just like the Israelites were faithfully reminded here, we are reminded that God's word doesn't change.

His promises remain true. His love never ends. His care is complete. And His forgiveness is full and free. You want to be a Christian, my friend, read the Bible?

[23 : 23] You want to know how to live as a Christian? Read the Bible. You want to follow the Lord? Read the Bible. Because the Bible faithfully reminds us God's word is true.

His love never ends. His care is complete. His forgiveness is full and free. So take time to read your Bible every day. But as we said, it wasn't just the greatest commandment that the Lord faithfully reminded His people about.

He also reminded His people, faithfully reminded His people about their commitment to Him. Because for 40 years in the wilderness, wandering in this wilderness, the Israelites forgot the Lord.

They had failed to remember their covenant commitment to the Lord. They had forgotten and failed to remember that it was the Lord who rescued them. It was the Lord who redeemed them.

It was the Lord who brought them out of slavery and bondage in Egypt. And that's why at this point, this juncture, as they're going into the promised land, the Lord faithfully reminds the Israelites of their covenant commitment to Him lest they forget.

[24 : 30] Lest they forget. And part of their covenant commitment, and this is what's fascinating about this chapter, part of their covenant commitment to the Lord was to teach their children and to teach their grandchildren about the goodness and the grace of God.

The covenant commitment that the Lord had put upon His people was that they were to teach this to their children and their grandchildren. They were to teach them about the goodness and grace of God because the Lord faithfully reminds His people and He says to them there in verse 6, these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

The next thing He says, you shall teach them diligently to your children. There's your covenant commitment. And how will you teach them, He says? You shall teach them by talking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. They shall be frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, to give you with a great and good cities that you did not build and houses full of all good things that you did not fill and cisterns that you did not dig and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant.

All these good and gracious things that I have given to you, when you eat in that land, when you are full, take care, He says, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[26 : 12] My friend, the Lord faithfully reminded the Israelites of their commitment to Him because part of their covenant commitment was to teach their children and their grandchildren about the goodness and the grace of God.

And you know, when you read the Bible, which I'm encouraging you to do, when you read your Bible, you'll see that there's this huge emphasis upon teaching our children and our grandchildren about the Lord because it's our role, it's our responsibility as parents and as grandparents not only to prepare our children and grandchildren for life, but it's our role and responsibility to prepare our children and grandchildren for eternity.

And that's what the Lord is reminding His people here. And you know, for Moses, who uttered these words to the Israelites on the banks of the River Jordan, Moses knew how important this was.

He knew how integral it is to teach the next generation because Moses in the wilderness for 40 years, he had watched and witnessed a whole generation die in the wilderness and not reach the promised land.

So Moses knew how important this was. Moses knew why the Lord was faithfully reminding the Israelites, teaching these people about their covenant commitment so that they will teach their children and their grandchildren about the goodness and the grace of God.

[27 : 50] You know, Moses, he had watched and witnessed firsthand what happens when you don't do that. Moses had seen that it doesn't take long for the Lord to be forgotten.

It doesn't take long for the Lord to be forsaken. And you know, sometimes I think this is what we have forgotten. This is what we have failed to remember as the church of Jesus Christ in our island and in our nation.

You know, we might be good at remembering to recite the commandments and the catechisms of God's Word, or even to follow the traditions of men. We're good at that.

We're good at doing traditional things. The war memorial service is a good tradition. But you know, I think we have forgotten and failed to remember our covenant commitment to teach our children and our grandchildren about the goodness and the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

And I say that because if we were to go back three generations, if we were to go back to the generation that lived through the Second World War, what can be said about that generation?

[29 : 10] They feared the Lord. They feared the Lord. They were committed to the Lord and His cause. When the soldiers were away, they were praying for them.

They feared the Lord. The next generation forgot the Lord. They forgot the Lord. They went to church. They went to Sunday school in their youth.

They baptized. They were baptized as children. But they became too busy for the Lord. So one generation fears the Lord. The next generation forgets the Lord. And my generation, my generation, has forsaken the Lord.

Totally forsaken the Lord. They have no interest in the Lord. The Lord's cause or the Lord's day. And you know, looking at it, it doesn't take long, does it? It's not a long period of time to go from fearing the Lord to forgetting the Lord to forsaking the Lord.

In three generations, our island and our nation has gone from fearing and forgetting to forsaking. And you know, my children's generation, many of them fail to even acknowledge the Lord at all.

[30 : 21] And you know, this is why our Bible has a huge emphasis upon teaching our children and our grandchildren about the Lord. This is why we love our children in our congregation.

We want them to know about the Lord because it doesn't take long. It doesn't take long for an island and for our whole nation to go from fearing the Lord to forgetting the Lord to forsaking the Lord and now to even fail to acknowledge that the Lord even exists.

God exists. And this is why the Lord here, way back in the book of Deuteronomy, He's faithfully reminding His people about their covenant commitment.

And you know, it should cause us to question ourselves as the Lord's people. The time has completely gone today, but I want us to finish with this. It should cause us to question ourselves, have we forsaken our covenant roles and responsibilities?

That's what I think about when I come to a passage like this. Have we forgotten the Lord? Have we failed to remember our covenant commitment to the Lord? Have we failed to remember, not only in baptizing our children, that's a covenant commitment to the Lord.

[31 : 37] That's what we all did in baptizing our children. We made a covenant with the Lord. We covenanted with the Lord to bring up our children. But more than that, we have covenanted with the Lord in our work, witness, and worship of this congregation.

Do you know, as members in our congregation, as office bearers in our congregation, and I speak to myself when I say this, where is our commitment? That's the call here in Deuteronomy chapter 6.

The Lord is calling for commitment. Where is our commitment? Where is our commitment to the means of grace? Where is our commitment to being in the Lord's house on the Lord's day, morning and evening?

Where is our commitment to being out midweek? Where is our commitment to participate in the work, witness, and worship of our congregation? Where is our commitment to be part and partial of the fabric of our congregation?

Because, you know, we have to ask ourselves, have we forgotten? Have we forsaken our covenant responsibilities? Have we forgotten the Lord?

[32 : 51] Have we forgotten the Lord? He hasn't changed. But have we forgotten the Lord? Have we failed to remember our covenant commitment to the Lord?

Because it's not to us, not only to us, it's also to us and to our children. It's all about looking forward to the next generation.

And, you know, I believe, you know, when you look at Kipling's prayer, there's a depth to his prayer. There was a man who lost his son in war. And there's a depth to Kipling's prayer that we often overlook because Kipling, he based his words, as we said, upon the Bible.

And he not only wanted us to remember the fallen of a past generation, he also wanted us to remember a future generation. The children yet unborn would praise and magnify the Lord.

He wanted us to remember those coming up behind us so that we prayerfully prepare them by faithfully reminding them about the goodness and the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 04] By telling our children, and our grandchildren, the simple gospel message that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners.

Kipling's prayer, Lord God of hosts, be with us yet. That's our prayer as we leave today. Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee this morning for speaking to us in Thy Word.

And Lord, how we need to be reminded, reminded of what the Word's saying to us in it. we are so prone to forgetting, so prone to getting caught up in the busyness and the business of life, that we forget the Lord, the Lord who redeems and the Lord who rescues and the Lord who ransoms people, throwing them from darkness to His own marvelous light.

Help us then, we pray, not to forget, but to remind our children and our grandchildren and even the generation that is still yet unborn.

[35 : 27] O Lord, we pray that we would remind them that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners and that our longing would be that they too would know Him and love Him and follow Him, that they would fear the Lord because the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Bless Thy truth to us, we ask. Go before us, we pray, and take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 46.

Psalm 46, page 271. Psalm 46, page 271, we're singing from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 46, verse 8. Come and behold what wondrous works have by the Lord been wrought.

Come see what desolations He on the earth hath brought. Down to the end of the psalm. Our God, who is the Lord of hosts, is still upon our side. The God of Jacob, our refuge, forever, will abide.

[36 : 48] These verses of Psalm 46, to God's praise. Psalm 46, verse 9, verse 9, verse 9, verse 9, O man, behold what wondrous works have by the Lord been wrought.

He on the earth He on the earth hath brought.

On to the ends of all the earth for sin to peace He turns.

The foe He breaks the spear because in fire the joy of God.

Be still and know that I am God among the heathen eyes will be exalted high.

[38 : 20] Will be exalted high. Will be exalted high. Our God, who is the Lord of hosts, is still upon our side.

The God of Jacob, our refuge, forever will abide.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.