

Day 29 Devotion

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."

Luke 22:19

In the Book of Job, Bildad, Job's friend who has come to console him for his extraordinary misfortunes, tells him to consult "bygone generations" and consider the lessons of his ancestors. He is pushing Job to look back to his forbearers for guidance and inspiration and repent of his presumed sins. Good advice, it would seem!

But Bildad is playing a dangerous game. John Drane, a Scottish theologian, points out that our memories of the past are much clouded by the baggage that each of us brings to the act of recalling events and people of long ago. Memory is notoriously selective as we go about choosing what to remember and how to remember it.

That point struck home with me. History can unite us, it is true, but it can also divide us. After the Civil War, the Southern Presbyterian Church (the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.) debated how to handle Black Presbyterians during Reconstruction and decided, as someone stated in the General Assembly in 1882, 'We can't afford to admit this mass of colored people (into the governance of the PCUS).' African Americans left the church in droves. That history was gradually forgotten so that those of us growing up in the church fifty years ago had little or no idea of the realities. Understandably, Black Presbyterians did not forget.

Scripture offers another kind of history. In God's Word, remembering is not about dwelling on human shortcomings, but about divine grace and the possibility of new life. God's way of remembering is inspirational and life-giving, both for the present and the future. It is about remembering the words of Jesus and his last moments; it is about remembering Jesus' resurrection and victory over death. Bildad had one perspective on history. We have another, anchored in the remembrance of the Last Supper and of the grace extended by God no matter our sins.

Paul Pressly, First Savannah

*From being satisfied with things as they are,
Help us, O God, to see with new eyes
Through the shutters erected by our past.
Give us the power to discern your will in working for a just world.*

RESOURCES:

[Black Presbyterians: The Legacy Series \(Part 1 of 6\) - YouTube](#)

[BiT Summer 2014 Drane.pdf \(biblesociety.org.uk\)](#)