

Sermon- Sept 11- 10th anniversary .

Remembering to love

We all remember where we were when we heard the news of the attack on the WTC. David and I were in seminary in Virginia. When I heard the news about the first plane –I was with a small group of seminarians and we knelt down and prayed in the classroom- and then we heard a loud noise and then the building shook with the reverberations from the plane that hit the pentagon. My first thought was to find David and get to Megan (1st grader). I am sure you remember where you were too... We had all been just going about our day, it was a beautiful day. And in the course of an hour and fifteen min. 19 people-who didn't know us-- -- fueled by a hate- we did not understand - hijacked 4 planes killed 3,000 people and wounded all of us--- and all of our lives were changed that morning. We who were strong, great, powerful, and invincible, in a moment were made afraid – and vulnerable.

We mourned together the loss of life, we feared for what would happen next..... and we continue to wrestle to come to grips with a change in our identity. We who have been for most our history the invincible - became vulnerable.

We responded to that time of vulnerability as a nation with incredible love- sacrificial love—all week we have been listening and reading the stories- the retelling of those who stepped into the aisle of flight 93- those who ran up the towers to rescue- as others rushed out. Of people who reached out to help with no thought of color or culture or creed- they became wounded healers- offering their best selves to strangers- —because somehow the experience had linked thier lives together--- and in vulnerability they/we found strength and courage to act in love. We want to remember that love. Across the nation and around the globe there was an outpouring of love and solidarity. We were all bonded together in our grief. We remember that love. I was at St. Paul's chapel this week, that holy space- where first responders who worked day and night- at ground zero--- ordinary people who for months sacrificed their own selves searching for hope in the dust of death-- --- came to receive a meal, a back rub, a moment of rest to sleep on church pews, (the marks of the boots are etched in the pews). Some of you went and served.... in that holy place. We remember that love.

Today we not only remember THAT LOVE--Today we are 'remembering to love' ----- not just looking back to the ways love was poured out in those first days, and weeks following 9/11- but remembering to love looking forward. How are we to do this?

Jesus life and teaching – speaks to us about 'remembering to love'---- He teaches that love is not only in the care of neighbor and stranger in acts of kindness but in the concrete work of forgiveness. Loving even enemy. Jesus is uncompromising in his teaching on forgiveness- it is the ONLY way to healing. (us as individuals- and I believe – us as a nation) To love those who died/ who were murdered- this is easy our hearts are tender to them and we grieve even those we never knew- To love those who gave their own lives to rescue others- hero's like Father Mychal Judge- Franciscan priest, died as he knelt blessing others. This love is easy.

To love those who sacrificed hours of time and even their own health in the rescue and recovery this is easy.

But to love those who plotted and carried out the atrocities- we scream NO- there is no love for them. Or for those who continue to plot evil. Is not our hate and fear and revenge justified? When we remember that hate- there is no place for love. We did not understand what fueled such acts of violence. We did not understand why anyone would carry out such an atrocity on innocent people. We cannot know the motivation that fueled the hatred of those who carried out the murder of 3,000 people. Though... a FATWA by Osama Bin Laden in 1998 called the UN sanctions against Iraq (1990-2003) a crime and a sin. The sanctions hastened the deaths of a million Iraqi citizens and UNICEF says that 500,000 children died as a result of the sanctions. Were the attacks a retaliation on us for the perception of our culpability in the deaths of 500,000 Iraqi children? I don't know. I do know that innocent lives continue to be lost everyday. Over 7,000 American and coalition soldiers have already died and the civilian death toll is in the 100's of thousands. It is time for someone(s) to stop the cycle of violence.

Revenge is a human impulse when we have been wronged.

And remembering to love – to act in forgiveness- to reach out in healing ---- is to act against our human impulse.

It is to beg the Spirit of God to not let us act in the same way as our enemies. It is to beg the Spirit of God to move in us in such a way to work to eliminate our enemies by making them our friends.

Remembering to love- is not a political plan, slogan- or a military strategy- it is the strategy of only a small group of people who follow the one who prayed to God that forgiveness be granted to those who hammered nails into his hands----- forgiveness is not forgetting the atrocities done- rather forgiveness is - to put all pain, anger, and fear in the care of God and trust God for all judgment. Forgiveness then is to risk to believe that change is possible. That reconciliation is possible. It doesn't happen quickly- but it is possible- consider our relationships with Germany, and Japan and Russia -- our hatred and fear and warring has ended---and we know that reconciliation is possible.

As an Act of remembering to love- a very small act in the healing process - I invite you to make a prayer flag. During the Eucharist- either before you come to the table or after you receive the Eucharist come and make a prayer flag. Similar to the Tibetan prayer flags that ask that the wind blow through the flags and carry the prayers of good will to all.... to bring peace and healing to all- neighbor, stranger, enemy. Together let us make this small act or writing a prayer or drawing a symbol of love to express our desire to reflect that we want our lives to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to extend his love in the world--- the kind of sacrificial, courageous love that was poured out on 9/11--- we remember THAT LOVE when strangers risked their lives that others might live--- so that we might continue to live 'remembering to love'. AMEN