

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, June 26, 2010 – 11:00 AM
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Spiritual Amnesia - Luke 17:11-19

Introduction: Amnesia is a strange condition that involves a partial or total loss of memory. It may occur as the result of a blow to the head, psychic trauma, Alzheimer's Disease, or too much alcohol or narcotic use. Someone once said that the main cause of amnesia is borrowing money! There may be some truth to that!

Sometimes it is temporary and the memory slowly returns. Almost all of us have experienced it to some degree. For example, we might forget to pay a bill, or keep an appointment, or forget about a commitment, or forget to take out the garbage, or forget to return a call, or we forget an anniversary or a birthday. Now some of you are already thinking: "*Uh oh! Did I forget mine?*" That kind of memory loss is considered normal.

Sometimes, we forget because it's convenient. That's when we become like the comedian Steven Wright who once said, "*Right now I'm having amnesia and déjà vu at the same time. I think I've forgotten this before.*"

I heard about someone's answering machine greeting which went: "*I can't come to the phone now because I have amnesia and I don't talk to people I don't remember. So, I'd appreciate it if you could help me out by leaving my name and telling me something about myself. Thanks.*"

Did you hear about the young husband who forgot he was married? Yep. He failed to come home one night because he absent-mindedly forgot that he was married and had gone to his mother's home instead. I think Elaine told me that happened on "*General Hospital.*" That poor guy probably needed to be in a hospital by the time that wife got through with him!

But seriously, there are cases in which the victim forgot his own name and address and family - and could not even recall any significant event that occurred in his life before the amnesia set in.

But I want to suggest to you this morning that there is such a thing as spiritual amnesia - and it happens quite often in the church, and it's reaching epidemic proportions!

When attendance goes down, the spiritual amnesia virus is going around! When the commitment level wanes, we've been exposed to spiritual amnesia. When tithing falls off, somebody's been infected with spiritual amnesia! When no one's being saved or baptized, spiritual amnesia has broken out!

How can you tell if you've got spiritual amnesia? Let me suggest four ways to diagnose if we've got a case of spiritual amnesia. They come from today's text.

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance

13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

*19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." **Luke 17:11-19 (NIV)***

First, we've got spiritual amnesia:

1. When We Forget the Lord's Mercies

Such was the case with these nine lepers. They got so caught up in the healing that they forgot the Healer! How soon we forget.

Why did only one healed leper return to thank Jesus? The following are suggested reasons why the other nine did not return:

- One waited to see if the cure was real.
- One waited to see if the healing would last.
- One said he'd see Jesus later.
- One decided that he had never had leprosy in the first place.

- One said he'd have gotten well anyway.
- One said it was the priest that cured him.
- One said, *"It was just a coincidence. Jesus didn't really do anything."*
- One said, *"Any rabbi could have done it."*
- One said, *"I was already getting better anyway."*

Just like these nine ungrateful lepers, how quick we are to forget the past mercies of the Lord! Listen to a real example of how thankful we should be:

In our nation's capital, there is a special office in the Post Office called the Dead Letter Office. One year there was a letter appeared addressed to Santa Claus. Now this wasn't unusual, because in the 3 months before Christmas, there were thousands of letters asking for something. But in the months after Christmas, there was only one card that was addressed to Santa Claus to express thanks. How quick we are to ask and receive. How slow we are to give thanks!

God has blessed us with so many things that we should remember forever: His mercy, grace, salvation, forgiveness, peace, joy, a sunrise and sunset every day, air to breath, food to eat, clothes to wear, the ability to make a living, freedom to enjoy, health, happiness...the list goes on and on. We need to heed the words of the Psalmist who said in **Psalm 103:2 (NIV)**: *"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."* Secondly, we've got spiritual amnesia:

2. When We Minimize the Lord's Might.

How many times have you seen it? Someone is cruising along in their spiritual life. Things are going great. The family's healthy and happy. Work's great. The money's coming in. The bills are being paid. You've got all the stuff you need, and then - WHAM! Something happens! The dog dies. The lawn mower tears up. Vacation plans get canceled!

Or something even worse happens! You or someone close to you comes down with a life-threatening disease. You get laid off. A child gets in trouble. IT'S CRISIS TIME! Where's God now, huh? Why did He allow this to happen? Where are all my church buddies? Why don't they come and bail me out?

F. B. Meyer once said: *"Though behind us lay the gift of the cross, the miracle of the resurrection and ascension, the care exercised by God over our early years, we are disposed to doubt God's power today."*

Sometimes we allow today's troubles to crowd out or minimize the Lord's love and grace, and we put ourselves in the doom and gloom of our situation.

Paul was reminded of the words of the Lord when he was faced with what he called, *"a thorn in my flesh."* He recalled a promise from the Lord who said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* **2 Corinthians 12:7&9.**

Here are two things we need to remember when we're faced with a crisis:

(1) We're Not Alone - We have a Savior - a *"Wonderful Counselor"* - a *"Comforter"* who will walk through any dark valley with us and see us through to the other side.

(2) There is a Reason - The main reason God allows us to go through trials and crises is so that He can get glory from it. God's power is always displayed best against the backdrop of human weakness. That's when other people will look at our peace and joy in the midst of a crisis and say, *"It must be God's presence and power in your life that enables you to get through it."* And it is!

However, there's a lesson for us to learn here too. Next time you're walking through a crisis, instead of blaming God **for** it, ask God what you need to learn **from** it! You'll see a BIG difference in your attitude. Thirdly, we've got spiritual amnesia:

3. When We Forget Our Promises

There are two kinds of promises made: Those made in secret to God: to love Him and serve Him and always remain faithful to Him. And those made openly to God and others: marriage vows, baptismal vows, parental dedication vows, church membership vows.

When these promises become empty promises, and devoid of meaning, that is a sure sign we've got spiritual amnesia. We've forgotten the sacredness of those vows.

The Psalmist said in **Psalm 116:12 & 14 (NIV)**: *"How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?... I*

will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people."

Some may be guilty of making promises to God when they're in an emotional state, caught up in the joy of the moment. May I share something with you? Don't get caught up in making a crisis-centered commitment. You'll soon experience spiritual amnesia shortly thereafter. I guarantee it. As soon as the crisis is over, you'll forget about that commitment because you'll start to reason within yourself. You'll convince yourself that you would have gotten through it anyway. You'll rationalize that God will understand. You'll even try to convince yourself that you got through it without the Lord's help.

You see, we're guilty sometimes of using God as a "*spare tire*" We only use Him when we need Him, and the rest of the time, He's forgotten - that is until suddenly on the road of life, we have another flat! Then we pull him out again.

Dale Evans once attended a communion service in a London cathedral where there were only seven people present. She asked an English friend why so few were there. He replied, "*Well, it's like this: we English are a nation of crisis. We are at our best in a crisis situation. Then we get on our knees and ask God to help us. After the crisis has passed, we thank Him for help and go our own way again.*"

During the World War II, on the night before a scheduled attack, many soldiers wrote letters to their parents. The chaplain who censored the mail was unable to read them until after the battle had taken place. When he did, he found two letters in the same handwriting: one written before and one after the battle. In the first, the young soldier wrote his mother, "*I vow before God that if I come through tomorrow, I am going to live for Him.*" The second letter, written after the danger had passed was addressed to a friend in another regiment: "*I've just come through a scorcher up on the front. If you can get leave and meet me in Paris, let's plan on getting drunk together.*"

Ecclesiastes 5:2,4, & 5 (NLT) says: "*And don't make rash promises to God, for He is in heaven, and you are only here on earth. So let your words be few...So when you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to Him. It is better to say nothing than to promise something that you don't follow through on.*" Finally, we've got spiritual amnesia:

4. When We Forget Our Purpose

The Bible tells us that every believer has a purpose in life, and in that purpose, believers are called to be ambassadors, witnesses, servants, stewards, soldiers, and disciples.

But the sad fact is, in God's church today, there seems to be a lot of ambassadors who've abandoned their posts; a lot of witnesses who have gone silent; a lot of servants who are just serving themselves; a lot of stewards who are short changing the Lord, a lot of soldiers who've gone AWOL, and a lot of disciples who have gotten distracted in the church today. In other words, we've got a lot of people who are walking around with spiritual amnesia. They've forgotten that God has saved them for a purpose, and they are floating along doing nothing!

With physical amnesia, the person is helpless and can't be blamed for their condition. The Christian who has been stricken with spiritual amnesia doesn't have an excuse. They've brought this condition on themselves. They have no one to blame but themselves!

The fact is, if you're not active in ministry, then you have forgotten why you were saved! The devil has clubbed you on the head with complacency and you've forgotten your purpose. And what is our purpose you ask?

May I remind you of the first half of **Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)** which says: "*...for by grace are you saved, through faith.*" And also of verse 10 which says: "*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*"

During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver for coins. Cromwell sent his men on an investigation of the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. They returned to him and said, "*The only silver we could find is the statues of the saints standing in the corners.*" Cromwell replied, "*Good! Get the Saints out of the corners, melt them down and put them into circulation.*"

Not bad theology. The goal of our faith - the result of our salvation is not to become silver saints, who are highly polished, frequently dusted, and crammed into the corners of elegant cathedrals. Our goal is not to have rows of padded pews and polished furniture, and elegant edifices with manicured lawns. Our goal as born again believers is to become melted saints, who are circulating through the mainstream of society. We are to be in the workplace where unbelieving co-workers are looking for real Christians. We need to be at home where things

are sometimes in a state of confusion and chaos. We need to be on the school campus where students struggle with peer pressure. And we need to be in the hospitals and nursing homes where reality never takes a nap.

Conclusion: Is there any hope, medically speaking for those who suffer from amnesia? Yes, but that person must depend on others: doctors, nurses, therapists, medication, rest, or surgery.

The same is true with spiritual amnesia. If his memory is to be restored, it will take the power of God. Maybe even shock treatment. God might use a sermon, a verse of scripture, a song, a testimony or even a tragedy wake us up from spiritual amnesia.

There is a story of a Persian king who was elevated from a poor home to the glory of a royal throne. When he became king he sent his servants to the old shack where he was raised, with orders to gather every relic of those days. They brought him broken toys, torn and tattered clothes, a crude wooden bowl from which he ate. All of these he arranged in a special room of his palace, and each day he'd spend an hour sitting among the memories of his humble past. On the wall hung a plaque: LEST I FORGET.

Friends, may we never forget what we've been saved from. May we never forget why we've been saved. Let's do whatever it takes to jog our memories, to remind us of our mission, to remind us of the many promises we've made, to remind us of the Lord's might and His mercies. May we ever "*Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all of His benefits.*"