

The Memory of Mercy

12/28/2025

Rev. Daein Park

John arrives at his friends' gathering looking very downcast. Someone asks, "What's the matter?" He sighs, "My wife is so negative. I'm trying to overcome my forgetfulness..." "What did you forget?" He says, "My wife suggested we go shopping. So I remembered the car seat, the stroller, and even the diaper bag." "But?" "But all she kept saying was, 'How could you possibly forget the baby?'"

This story may make us laugh or prompt us to think about how our minds work. We remember a thousand small details, and sometimes forget the one thing that really matters.

Today is the first Sunday after Christmas Day, and it is also the last Sunday of 2025. In the church, our Christian year actually ended with Christ the King Sunday, when we finished the cycle and then began again with Advent. But in our daily lives, we still live by the secular calendar, and this week, the year 2025 comes to an end.

This mix of calendars invites us to remember.

We remember the joy and light of Christmas that we just celebrated.

We also remember the heaviness, including losses of this past year.

As a congregation, we lost four beloved members in 2025, including our dear Pastor George. As your pastor, there were also personal losses, some close friends, some close relatives, whom death has taken this year. There is a grief that sits quietly in this room. It is part of the truth we carry into worship this morning.

So the question is: in all that we remember, will we forget the "baby"? Will we remember every sorrow, every failure, every regret—and somehow forget the one who is at the center, the Christ who came to be with us?

Our readings from Isaiah 63 and Hebrews 2 invite us into something deeper: not just our memory of this year, but God's memory of mercy.

Isaiah 63 begins with a decision: “*I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us*” (v. 7). The prophet chooses to remember, to “*recount*,” to tell again and again what God has done. This is not because life was easy; actually, Isaiah is speaking into a time of deep disappointment and confusion for the people.

Yet what does Isaiah remember?

That God has shown mercy and “*abundance of steadfast love*.”

That God looks at the people and says, “*Surely they are my people*,” and becomes their savior.

Then there is this tender line: “*In all their distress, it was no messenger or angel but God’s presence that saved them; in love and pity God redeemed them; God lifted them up and carried them all the days of old*” (v. 9).

Others might forget. We forget. Nations forget. Even God’s people forget. But God has a different kind of memory, a memory of mercy.

God remembers us as “my people.”

God remembers every distress and chooses to be present, not distant.

God remembers to carry us, like a parent carries a tired child.

If we are honest, some of us look back at 2025 and see mostly our failures, our regrets, our griefs in our personal lives and our society. Yet Isaiah says: let us also look back and “*recount the gracious deeds of the Lord*.” Not to deny the pain, but to notice that in the middle of sorrow, mercy was there.

Hebrews 2 shows us that the mercy Isaiah talks about has taken on a human face in Jesus. It says, “*It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings*” (v. 10). That is a remarkable sentence. The One through whom all things exist chose a path of suffering, not comfort.

The writer says we are “children” whom God is bringing to glory, and Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Then comes the heart of the passage:

“Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death... and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death” (v. 14).

Notice what this tells us about God’s mercy:

God’s mercy is not just a warm feeling; it is a decision to share our flesh and blood, to fully enter our condition.

God’s mercy goes right into the center of our fear, the fear of death, and breaks the power of that fear.

This year, as we have stood by hospital beds, or gravesides, or received hard phone calls, that fear of death has been very real. The pain of losing four beloved members and our own beloved is not theoretical. It is in the empty chairs, the missing voices, the habits of our fellowship that are now broken.

But Hebrews says: Christ has shared our humanity, our suffering, and our death, so that death no longer has the final word. Christ is *“a merciful and faithful high priest... to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people”* (v. 17). And because Christ was tested and suffered, Christ is able to help those who are being tested—help us, now.

In other words, when God remembers us, God does not just remember our sins; God remembers mercy. God remembers the cross. God remembers the resurrection. God remembers the promise that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

So how do we live these last days of 2025 with “The Memory of Mercy”?

First, we tell the story. Like Isaiah, we “recount the gracious deeds of the Lord.”

We can remember specific moments this year when God carried this church: people showing up with food, cards sent, prayers quietly offered.

We can remember the faith and witness of those who have died—how our beloved members and friends lived and loved among us.

Second, we tell the truth about our sorrow. Hebrews does not deny suffering; it places Christ right in the middle of it.

We can say to God, “This year hurt. I am tired. I miss them.”

And at the same time, we can say, “Thank you that Christ has shared my flesh and blood, my suffering and my fear.”

Third, we entrust our future to God’s memory, not ours. Our memory is like John in the joke—we remember the stroller, the car seat, the diaper bag...and forget the baby. We remember:

Every mistake from 2025.

Every argument, every failure, every disappointment.

But God remembers differently. In Christ, God remembers mercy.

When God looks at you, God sees a beloved child, a brother or sister of Jesus.

When God remembers this church, God sees a people who have been carried “all the days of old” and will be carried still.

As the secular calendar turns, we do not know what 2026 will bring. There may be more losses, but there will also be more mercies. What we do know is this: the same God who entered our world as a baby, who shared our flesh and blood, who carried Israel and carries the church, will not forget us.

So here is a simple invitation as this year closes:

Sometime today or this week, take a quiet moment and name before God three pains from 2025 and three mercies from 2025.

Hold them together in prayer, and ask Christ, our merciful and faithful high priest, to stand in the middle of both your grief and your gratitude.

And as a church, let us decide that we will not be “so negative” that we forget the one who is at the center. We will grieve honestly, we will remember our beloved dead with love and tears, and we will also remember the baby, the Christ child who grew, suffered, died, and rose to bring many children to glory.

The memory of mercy is not just what we have of God; it is what God has of us. And that memory is sure, steady, and eternal. Amen.