

Sermon: The Spiritual Practices of Jesus: Reading and Memorizing Scripture 4/14/24,
Luke 4:14-21

Opening Story: TV Commercial Jingles

How many of you watch the local news? In my family the main thing we like to watch the local news for is for sports and weather. Now the local news is always a little different depending on what part of the country you live in, but one thing, wherever I've lived, is always consistent: The tv commercial jingles. Now I don't know who writes these things but a good jingle is like an earworm. You hear it and you can't get rid of it. Here's a few you might know. I'll sing it and you fill in the blank. If you don't like my singing voice I apologize in advance. Welcome to West Herr _____. You really gotta get it at _____. Air-quip Heating and _____. Metro mattress_____.

Friends, tv jingles are those things that are with us for better or for worse. One of the reasons we remember them is because of the catchy music, but I think they also stick in our heads because we just simply hear them over and over and over again.

Today we're going to continue our sermon series (that we started during Lent) on the Spiritual Practices of Jesus. Today we're going to talk about the importance of memorizing scripture. I would suggest that just like tv commercials, the more we hear scripture, the more it sticks in our brains. **The more we make reading scripture a priority, the more it stays with us when we need it the most.**

We'll look at some reasons of why memorizing scripture is important and how it can be a form of medicine to our souls when we face life's challenges.

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21 (pp.61)

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶ When

he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' ²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

Reflection

This is one of the rare occasions where Jesus actually reads from scripture directly. Books weren't in fashion so scrolls became the main form of documents that people would read from. Now even the scrolls of various Old Testament works were not widely available like they are today. One synagogue might have several scrolls available, but for one place of worship to have all the books that we have in our Old Testament today was rare. Unless an individual was wealthy they wouldn't have access to scriptures in their homes. They would have to go to a synagogue to learn scripture and recite it. Depending on people's level of education they would memorize scripture to varying degrees. Now in the gospels Jesus frequently quotes from various scriptures he has memorized. In fact, Jesus quotes from, or alludes to, 23 different books of what we now call the Old Testament in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

You might be interested to know that the books he quoted from the most are Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Exodus.

So why is it important to memorize scriptures?

Well for Jesus it was essential.

1. As I mention, the average person didn't have access to any scriptures at home so to teach the crowds he would need to commit scripture to heart.
2. We don't know what the literacy rate was but it was certainly lower than what is the norm for us today. If you weren't able to read something then you needed to hear it to absorb it. Hearing scripture read aloud was an important piece of Jewish worship. It was a larger part of their service than even many churches today.
3. From a personal perspective, scripture must have kept Jesus grounded. It must have made him feel connected to the Lord and remind him of his ministry and his purpose.
4. Jesus uses scripture to challenge the religious leaders of his day that had lost their way. He is able to defend himself against their attacks because of his deep knowledge of scripture.
5. Jesus uses scripture to comfort those who felt lost like a good shepherd. Isaiah 40:11 says, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep." Friends, how reassuring is it for us to know that when things are at their worst, Jesus is at his best. He is holding us to his chest and carrying us through like a loving shepherd.
6. Finally, Jesus uses scripture to defend the cause of the poor and the outcast among him. His vision for the kingdom of God was a place right here and right now where people looked out for, and took care of one another. Where they helped and cared for the most vulnerable among them. Friends, Jesus essentially uses his great

knowledge of scripture to lead and teach people a new way of moving and being in the world, and he says to us go and do likewise.

Now that we've looked at some reasons why memorizing scripture was important to Jesus, let's look at some reasons it can also be beneficial to us.

So, why is it important for us to memorize scripture?

1. It can help us in times of struggle. When we are sick, we take medicine for physical ailments. Just as we do with the physical, scripture is spiritual medicine for our souls. Many times, God speaks to us in prayer through the scriptures we have taken to heart. Many times, the Holy Spirit helps us to recall scriptures that bring us wisdom and encouragement when we need it the most. I know many of us have personal experience with this. Scripture can remind us that Jesus is our cornerstone. When the foundation is crumbling, we can remember that we have nothing to fear.

2. Scripture can help us speak up for what is right. Certain things that people say or teach are not faithful to scripture, so when we see people saying these things or misquoting scripture, we have a basis to defend what we believe to be the correct interpretation. Just like Jesus did when people used scripture for their own purposes, we can be the voice of truth and reason in troubling waters.

Now, one thing we need to be careful of when using scripture is that we don't take it out of context. Sometimes it can be tempting to flip through the Bible and try to find a verse that defends a personal opinion or belief. What we really need to do is to make sure we are

good stewards of scripture, that this, to use it in ways that are faithful to its original meaning and context. Things like looking at the setting and context of when and how things were said are crucial in developing a deeper understanding of the word.

3. Memorizing scripture can help us help each other.

We all need reminders of God's love and grace. We all need reminders that God is with us. Reminding friends of comforting verses is a way we can minister to them and help to walk alongside them in life's overwhelming moments.

Proverbs 7:2-3 says, *"Keep my commandments and live, keep my teachings as the apple of your eye; ³ bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart."*

Friends, when we have written scripture on the tablets of our hearts it changes us. It helps us to approach situations in life differently. It helps us to reflect instead of react when conflicts arise. It helps us to go forth on God's strength and not our own. Memorizing scripture lays a foundation for the Godly types of people we are, and are still seeking to be. It helps us to strive to be more like Jesus.

Conclusion

So may you write the words of scripture on tablet of your hearts.

May you make it an intentional practice to read and re-read scripture so that it becomes a jingle that you never want to forget.

And may the Lord speak to you, and through you, that in memorizing scripture you may be a brighter light that shines in the darkness.

Children's Moment: Memorizing Scripture 4/14/24

Object: Bible

Today I've brought with me a Bible. What do we use this for? To teach us about God and how God wants us to live. There are lots of verses in here that can help us in our everyday lives.

What's your **favorite movie** or tv show? I bet if I asked you, you could tell me lots of your favorite lines from that show. As humans, things that we enjoy, we take to heart and remember.

Well just like when you've watched something a bunch of times and can remember it, we can do the same thing with the Bible. When we memorize little passages of scripture or stories it can help us to remember how God loves and cares for us. These verses are especially helpful when we are sad or mad or are feeling emotional. When we are feeling like this it helps to remember verses from the Bible that can make us feel better and help us know the right thing to do.

Have you ever been sick? What do we sometimes need to take when we are sick? Medicine. Well...memorizing Bible verses can be like emotional and spiritual medicine when we are feeling bad. It can help us remember that God is in control and he is with us. It can help us to remember the right thing to do when we are overwhelmed.

I want to give you a scripture today that you can memorize that will help you. "Do to others as you would want them to do to you." -Matt 7:12. This verse helps us to remember that we should treat other people how we want to be treated.

So next time you're having trouble controlling your emotions I want you to remember this verse, and that God is always with us helping us to make good choices.