The Importance of Remembering

*Finding Dory*

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Scripture:
Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:12-14 & 8:11, 19;
Ephesians 2:12-13, 22; Proverbs 18:24; Proverbs 27:17;
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Matthew 28:18-20;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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I recently hid an item that I didn’t want to be discovered by family members until the appropriate time, and now I have forgotten where I put it. This is a problem.

The truth is that I have so many things going on in my head that I’m prone to forget a lot of things. So there are sticky notes all over my office and home to help me remember the important and urgent things I need to do. Why am I telling you this? Because I don’t think I am alone. Forgetting is a human problem. And in our busy, information-saturated culture, it may be more of a problem than it has ever been.

Maybe that’s why I like Dory so much. She is a blue tang fish who suffers from short-term memory loss, so she forgets everything. We were first introduced to her when she befriended a clown fish named Marlin and helped search for his son in Finding Nemo.

In the movie Finding Dory, we learn she has suffered from short-term memory loss since she was born. As the movie opens, we see her with her loving parents who are trying to coach her and give her skills to help remember who she is and how to find her way home. Even so, she is swept away by the undertow and becomes separated from her parents. This is where we pick up the story in the first clip.

This is a powerful scene because when Dory is first separated from her parents, she knows she is looking for them. But as time goes on, she begins to forget. This is a
problem. At one point she says, “I’m looking for something but I don’t remember what it is.” Dory is lost. She doesn’t know who she is, whose she is, or where she comes from, and that’s why the movie is called *Finding Dory*.

When I first watched this scene of Dory aimlessly swimming and searching the ocean, I was deeply moved because this is our story. Apart from God, we are all lost and wandering through life not knowing who we are, whose we are, where we come from, or what our purpose in life is. That is why we read in the Bible over and over these words: “Do not forget.”

 _But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children_ (Deuteronomy 4:9).

 _Take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you_ (Deuteronomy 6:12-14).

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**Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes…. But remember the LORD your God.**

Deuteronomy 8:11, 19

**Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes…. But remember the LORD your God** (Deuteronomy 8:11, 19).
The Israelites were prone to forget who they were. They were once slaves in Egypt with no hope and no future. By grace, God intervened and rescued them, accomplishing for them what they could not accomplish for themselves. More than that, God gave them a new identity. They were now God’s people and called to a different way of life.

So, many think of God as a cosmic killjoy who is trying to make us do or not do things we want. But the commandments of the Lord were given as a gift of grace to help God’s people remember their true identity and to help teach them how to live a new, different, intentional, and holy life—the abundant life we were all created to enjoy. Listening to God’s word, obeying His will, and passing our faith onto the next generation are ways God’s people remember who they are and whose they are. This idea is reiterated in the New Testament, as the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians:

*Remember that you were at that time without Christ*.... *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*.... *in Christ you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God* (Ephesians: 2:12-13, 22).

This is our true identity: We are God’s people—people in whom Christ dwells. Remembering is central to our spiritual life. And aligning our thoughts, words, and actions helps us to remember who we are and whose we are.
Let’s return to the movie. The story picks up one year after the original film, *Finding Nemo*. Dory has become a helping hand in raising Nemo. One day, while helping to teach a lesson on migration to Nemo’s class, she watches stingrays swim by and hears them singing this song:

O we're going home. Swimming to and fro, our hearts know where to go. Beating like a drum that sends us back to where we're from. We know who we are and it's time to travel far. Days and nights we'll go to make our way back home.

The song highlights the fact that Dory doesn’t know who she is or where to go to find her way back home. But when she gets swept up in the current of the undertow again, she begins to remember her parents and where she comes from. This next clip is actually a promotional video that gives a good overview of what the movie is about.

I love these clips because they really depict that life is a journey to discover who we are, whose we are, and where we come from. There are many challenges and obstacles to overcome along the way that require patience, perseverance, creativity and imagination.

But perhaps the most important thing to remember is that this faith journey is not to be taken alone. Though her friend Marlin doesn’t want to leave the coral reef again, he understands what it is like to be separated from someone you love, so he and Nemo set off with Dory on this life-changing
journey across the ocean. As Proverbs 18:24 says, “Some friends play at friendship but a true friend sticks closer than one’s nearest kin.” Marlin and Nemo are more than friends; they are like family.

The trio reconnect with their old friend Crush the sea turtle who helps them ride the water current to California enabling them to reach the place where Dory was born and where she believes her parents are—the Marine Life Institute, a rehabilitation center and aquarium. Dory becomes separated from Marlin and Nemo when she is rescued, tagged, and taken inside the park.

There she meets Hank, a cantankerous octopus. Due to a traumatic ocean life that left him with only seven tentacles, Hank wants to continue living in the safety and security of an aquarium. So he agrees to help Dory find her parents in exchange for her tag—his ticket to the aquarium in Cleveland. He literally carries her through the institute with many humorous happenings along the way as they seek to locate her parents and solve the mystery of her upbringing. Their friendship helps him discover he not only has a heart; he has three.
Dory also encounters her childhood friend Destiny, a nearsighted whale shark who communicated with Dory through pipes, explaining how Dory learned to speak whale. And she meets Bailey a beluga whale who is convinced his biological sonar skills are on the fritz. Even with their limitations, this unlikely pair work together to guide Dory to where she needs to go.

And here is how this story connects with our story. So many in our world are like Dory, who don’t know who they are or where they come from. In his book Reaching Out, Henri Nouwen writes, “In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.”

Life is a journey to discover and live more and more who we are, whose we are, and where we come from, but we need friends to help us along the way. As Basil of Caesarea said, “The Creator arranged things so that we need each other.” Scripture highlights this over and over.

*Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another* (Proverbs 27:17).

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the
other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Each character in the movie has some serious limitation, but as they work together, they help each other overcome their weakness and many obstacles. Together, they help each other find their way back home. These relationships are great examples of the many “One Another’s” we find in Scripture:

- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Minister one to another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

As Jesus’ followers, we are called to live in spiritual friendships and Christ-centered community because we need each other. We, too, need help to remember who we are and to find our way home. During the month of August, we are encouraging everyone to find ways to connect in community with spiritual friends and to find a place to serve using your gifts. No matter your age or stage of life or time availability, there is a place for you. So go to the links given in your bulletin to explore the opportunities or talk to one of us on staff. Just as Dory was guided by her friends, we’re eager to be of service and to guide and connect you.

Now let’s get back to the movie. After many and varied adventures, Dory once again finds herself back in the ocean. She has not found her parents, and now she is separated from her old and new friends. She is once again lost, alone, and doesn’t know what to do. She is beginning to forget again, but she starts to look around in an attempt to get some direction. She notices a seashell and because she likes seashells, she begins to explore further. In this next scene,
we discover that the path of seashells leads Dory to finding her parents.

When I first saw this reunion scene, I thought of the joyous reunion of the loving father and his prodigal son and of the words of “Amazing Grace”: “I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.”

I was amazed at the imagery of using seashells to lead Dory to her parents, to lead her home. Seashells have been associated with baptism since the early centuries of the Christian church. Just as the seashells lead Dory to her parents, so baptism points to Jesus, who is “the way, the truth and the life.” Only in Jesus can we find our true home in God. In the Great Commission, Jesus said:

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Baptism is a sacrament that reveals our new identity in Christ. The water helps us remember Jesus and all he did for us to wash us clean by forgiving our sin. In Jesus, we are given a new and different life.
In baptism, we remember who we really are and to whom we really belong. We have been united with Christ, and because we are united with Christ, we are adopted into the covenant family of the Triune God. In Christ, we are God’s adopted children and heirs of His kingdom. That is our true identity! We belong to God, and we belong to God’s family. In times of doubt and temptation, we are called to remember who we are and whose we are as we claim the promises of God.

In a few minutes, we will celebrate The Lord’s Supper, another sacrament the Lord gave his followers. It is all about remembering. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

This sacrament helps us to remember Jesus’ last supper with his disciples, where he gave his followers this sacrament. However, calling it communion helps us remember who we are and whose we are. God’s people are in communion with Christ, with each other, and with all who belong to Him in every time and place.
This meal not only helps us remember our true identity, but it also helps us to remember our purpose: We have been commissioned to a life of reconciliation and service.

In the movie, Dory’s happy reunion with her parents is not the end of the story. She has cultivated relationships with many other marine creatures, so she sets out on a further quest to free her friends from captivity so they can live the full and meaningful life they were meant to live in the ocean. Dory will not be satisfied until all of her old and new friends are living together in community on the coral reef back home.

As Dory sets the animals free, she reflects that her journey has given her a new mission. It is the one she has heard repeated over and over in the movie by the voice of Sigourney Weaver: “The Marine Life Institute’s mission is the ‘rescue, rehabilitation and release’ of ailing marine animals.”

As Jesus’ followers, that is who we are and what we are called to remember in communion. We have been rescued or saved by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are being rehabilitated or sanctified or made holy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being transformed into the image of Christ so that we can live the abundant life we were meant to live here and now and forever. And we have been released or commissioned or sent to serve as we love others as Christ has loved us. The way we say it here at VPC is that we are Becoming like Christ Together for the World.
I chose the movie *Finding Dory* to preach today knowing that we would celebrate communion. Jesus is the host at this table. He has given us this meal to help us remember him and all he has done for us. When we remember, we know who we are, whose we are, and what our purpose is. Amen.