

**“WRITING YOUR MEMOIRS”**

**A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT  
BOOK OF SECOND SAMUEL (2 SAMUEL 23:1-7)  
AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON JUNE 6,  
2021----THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF MY FINAL  
SERMON SERIES FOCUSING ON THE THEMES OF  
LEGACY AND THE PROMISES OF GOD**

**SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE IS WRITING MEMOIRS  
THESE DAYS, WITH THE WEB, E-BOOKS AND  
SELF-PUBLISHING PROVIDING THE VEHICLE FOR  
EVERYONE FROM CELEBRITIES TO AVERAGE  
JOES TO PEN OR PUNCH HIS MEMORIES INTO  
BOOK FORM FOR THE WORLD ----OR AT LEAST  
THEIR LOVED ONES----TO SEE.**

**IT ALSO SEEMS THAT PEOPLE LOVE TO READ THEM, TOO.... FOR EXAMPLE ---IN RECENT YEARS AS MANY AS FIVE OF THE TOP 10 BOOKS ON *THE NEW YORK TIMES* NONFICTION BESTSELLERS LIST WERE MEMOIRS OF ONE FORM OR ANOTHER..... WE'RE CLEARLY INTERESTED IN THE LIVES OF THE FAMOUS, THE INFAMOUS AND EVEN THE NOT FAMOUS AT ALL.**

**UNLIKE A BIOGRAPHY, WHICH IS USUALLY A LITTLE MORE OBJECTIVE GIVEN THE BURDEN OF HISTORIANS AND BIOGRAPHERS TO GET THE FACTS STRAIGHT, A MEMOIR IS REALLY AN UNFILTERED AND PERSONAL VERSION OF THE WRITER'S LIFE –**

**THE FACTS AS HE OR SHE SAW THEM..... OF COURSE, GIVEN THE PERSPECTIVE OF TIME AND DISTANCE, THOSE FACTS CAN EASILY MORPH INTO PERSONAL FICTIONS, TOO..... IN 2006, OPRAH WINFREY WAS EMBARRASSED AFTER PROMOTING JAMES FREY'S MEMOIR, *A MILLION LITTLE PIECES*, AND THEN FINDING THAT IT WAS LARGELY A FICTION OF MADE-UP STORIES. THAT KIND OF SELF-CENTERED CONFIDENCE TENDS TO MAKE ONE SKEPTICAL OF THE TRUTH OF MEMOIRS, BUT THE MALICIOUS FICTION IN THAT CASE TENDS TO BE MORE THE EXCEPTION THAN THE RULE.**

**REGARDLESS, EVEN THE MOST TRUTHFUL  
MEMOIRS HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF FICTION TO  
THEM. AS THE LATE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER  
DAVID BEN GURION PUT IT, "ANYONE WHO  
BELIEVES YOU CAN'T CHANGE HISTORY HAS  
NEVER TRIED TO WRITE HIS MEMOIRS." -----OUR  
MEMORIES TEND TO BE SELECTIVE AND OUR  
STORIES MAY BE EMBELLISHED WITH  
UNINTENTIONAL HUBRIS, BUT THAT'S WHAT  
MAKES IT INTERESTING.....WELL KNOWN AND  
PROLIFIC AUTHOR SUSAN CHEEVER CALLS THE  
MEMOIR THE NEW NOVEL OF THE 21ST CENTURY  
-- "TRUTH" OFTEN BEING MORE INTERESTING  
THAN ANYTHING ON THE FICTION SHELF.**

**ON THE OTHER HAND, A MEMOIR CAN ALSO BE BRUTALLY HONEST ABOUT ONE'S OWN PAST, USING WRITING AS A MEANS OF HEALING.**

**INDEED, THOSE MEMOIRS ARE OFTEN THE MOST POPULAR BECAUSE THEY REVEAL THE DEPTH OF HUMAN PAIN AND FAILURE TO WHICH MANY READERS RELATE..... THE LATE FRANK**

**MCCOURT'S WON A PULITZER PRIZE FOR HIS RUNAWAY BESTSELLER *ANGELA'S ASHES* ----A MEMOIR OF THE MISERY AND SQUALOR OF HIS CHILDHOOD AND YET IT OFFERED HOPE THAT**

**WE CAN OVERCOME IT.....THE EPIC *HOTEL***

***RWANDA* SHOWED US THAT WE CAN BE BRAVE EVEN THROUGH THE MIDST OF CRIPPLING FEAR AND CRISIS.**

**WE LOVE THESE PERSONAL STORIES BECAUSE  
THEY SHOW US WHAT IS POSSIBLE FOR  
HUMANITY.**

**THE TRUTH IS THAT EVERYONE HAS A STORY,  
AND THE MORE WE ARE ABLE TO CONNECT OUR  
STORY WITH THE STORIES OF OTHERS, THE  
MORE WE SEE OURSELVES IN A DIFFERENT  
LIGHT. CAPTURING OUR STORIES AND SHARING  
THEM ISN'T JUST A WAY OF LEAVING A LEGACY,  
BUT OF OPENING A DOOR TO A FUTURE THAT IS  
FILLED WITH HOPE, NOT ONLY FOR US BUT FOR  
THOSE WHO WILL RELATE TO BOTH OUR PAIN  
AND OUR TRIUMPH.**

**WE MIGHT THINK OF THIS WEEK'S TEXT FROM SECOND SAMUEL (2 SAMUEL 23:1-7) AS A *KIND OF CLOSING STATEMENT* OF KING DAVID'S OWN MEMOIR UTTERED AT THE END OF AN EPIC AND TRAGIC LIFE.**

**DAVID'S STORY IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE. IT'S THE TALE OF AN UNLIKELY HERO WHO IS CHOSEN BY GOD EVEN THOUGH HE IS THE LEAST QUALIFIED IN HIS FAMILY AND TRIBE. HE SLAYS A GIANT BY DEMONSTRATING FAITH IN GOD AND BRAVERY BEYOND HIS YEARS.**

**HE GOES FROM HERDING SHEEP IN THE COUNTRYSIDE TO BEING THE MOST POPULAR PERSON IN THE COURT OF THE KING, WHICH MAKES THE KING RAGE WITH JEALOUSY. AND SO DAVID BECOMES A RELUCTANT REBEL, A FREEDOM FIGHTER ON THE RUN WHO IS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE MURDEROUS INTENT OF HIS KING AND THE VIOLENCE AND IDOLATRY OF THE ENEMY. HE LIVES IN CAVES AND BECOMES A CUNNING WARRIOR IN A WAY THAT MAKES THE PLOT OF A TOM CLANCY NOVEL LOOK PEDESTRIAN BY COMPARISON.**



**DAVID BECOMES KING AND IS A "MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART" (1 SAMUEL 13:14), BUT THE HIGHER WE CLIMB, THE FARTHER WE TEND TO FALL. DAVID ENGAGES IN AN ADULTEROUS AFFAIR, KILLS OFF THE WOMAN'S HUSBAND, LOSES THE CHILD AND THEN WILL LOSE THE WHOLE NEXT GENERATION OF HIS CHILDREN EXCEPT FOR ONE. THE ONE WHO WAS ONCE ON THE RUN FROM THE KING HE WOULD SUPPLANT WOULD SOON BE ON THE RUN AGAIN FROM HIS OWN SONS WHO SOUGHT TO SUPPLANT HIM.**

**IT'S A CLASSIC STORY OF THE HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE, THE INSIDIOUS POWER OF SIN AND THE CORRUPTION THAT OFTEN ACCOMPANIES POWER.**

**IF DAVID WROTE THE PSALMS THAT ARE CREDITED TO HIM IN THE BIBLE, THEN IT'S CLEAR THAT THEY ARE A KIND OF POETIC MEMOIR OF BOTH PRAISE AND PAIN. POETS TEND TO WRITE THEIR MEMOIRS LESS IN PROSE THAN THEY DO IN VERSE, AND DAVID'S LAST WORDS ARE NO EXCEPTION, WRITTEN AS AN "ORACLE" THAT PUTS DAVID IN THE COMPANY OF THE PROPHETS (2 SAMUEL 23:1).**

**GOD SPEAKS THROUGH DAVID (V. 2) AND SAYS,  
"ONE WHO RULES OVER PEOPLE JUSTLY,  
RULING IN THE FEAR OF GOD, IS LIKE THE LIGHT  
OF MORNING, LIKE THE SUN RISING ON A  
CLOUDLESS MORNING, GLEAMING FROM THE  
RAIN ON THE GRASSY LAND" (VV. 3-4).**

**AT FIRST THIS MIGHT SEEM LIKE FICTION, GIVEN  
THE REALITY OF DAVID'S OWN STORY. IS THIS  
ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE MEMOIRS THAT  
ALTERS HISTORY IN FAVOR OF LEGACY? WELL,  
NOT EXACTLY. DAVID'S SONG HERE IS REALLY  
LESS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OF THE PAST THAN IT  
IS HOPEFUL OF THE FUTURE.**

EVEN WITH ALL OF DAVID'S BROKENNESS,  
REVEALED AGAIN AND AGAIN IN THE STORY,  
THE PROMISE OF GOD WILL STILL BE REALIZED  
THROUGH HIS ROYAL LINE. TO PUT IT ANOTHER  
WAY, THE POINT OF THE MEMOIR IS LESS ABOUT  
WHAT DAVID DID THAN ABOUT WHAT GOD WILL  
DO.

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES EVEN WHEN  
WE ARE UNFAITHFUL. DAVID SAYS AS MUCH IN  
THE NEXT FEW VERSES. GOD HAS MADE A  
COVENANT WITH DAVID DESPITE THE KING'S  
FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO HIS END OF THAT  
COVENANT.

**GOD'S PROMISES ARE ALWAYS "ORDERED IN ALL THINGS AND SECURE" (V. 5). NO MATTER WHAT THE "GODLESS" DO (AND IF WE'RE HONEST IN OUR OWN ASSESSMENT OF OUR LIVES, WE'RE ALL "GODLESS" AT TIMES), GOD WILL STICK TO HIS STORY OF REDEMPTION FOR THE WHOLE WORLD (V. 6).**

**THAT'S AN IMPORTANT REALITY TO REMEMBER AS WE WRITE OUR OWN MEMOIRS..... SURE, THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS YOU WILL WANT TO INCLUDE, LIKE IMPORTANT DATES AND PLACES, IMPRESSIONS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS, YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU OVER THE COURSE OF LIFE.**

**YOU ALSO HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER YOUR STORY IS GOING TO BE SELF-SERVING OR WHETHER YOU WANT TO TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. YOU MAY HAVE THE SAME APPROACH TO MEMOIR-WRITING AS FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, WHO SAID, "A LOT OF PRESIDENTIAL MEMOIRS, THEY SAY, ARE DULL AND SELF-SERVING. I HOPE MINE IS INTERESTING AND SELF-SERVING." IT'S A REAL TEMPTATION TO OFFER ONLY AN EDITED VERSION OF OUR MEMOIRS THAT WILL PUT US IN THE BEST LIGHT, BUT EVEN PREACHERS KNOW THAT PEOPLE WILL TURN YOU OFF IF YOU'RE ALWAYS THE HERO OF YOUR OWN STORIES.**

**THOSE WHO BELONG TO GOD, HOWEVER, WILL RECOGNIZE (AS DAVID DID AT THE END OF HIS LIFE) THAT GOD IS THE ONLY HERO OUR MEMOIRS REQUIRE. WE NEED TO ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT OUR LIFE STORIES ONLY HAVE LASTING VALUE IF THEY'RE FOLDED INTO THE STORY OF WHAT GOD HAS BEEN DOING, IS DOING AND WILL DO IN THE WORLD. DAVID LOOKED BACK AT A LIFE FRAUGHT WITH BOTH POWER AND PAIN AND SAID, ESSENTIALLY, "NO MATTER WHAT, GOD WILL PUT THINGS RIGHT.**

**ANYONE WHO ASPIRES TO BE A KING OUGHT TO REMEMBER THAT AND RULE JUSTLY IN THE FEAR OF GOD." DAVID'S MEMOIR OF THE PAST LEADS HIM TO THINK, AT THE END, ABOUT A BRIGHT FUTURE.**

**THE MEMOIRS OF GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD LOOK VERY SIMILAR TO DAVID'S. INDEED, OUR MEMOIRS SHOULD FOCUS AS MUCH ON THE FUTURE AS ON THE PAST. MEMOIRS REMIND US THAT WE ALL HAVE A PAST AND THAT WE HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY THE EVENTS AND PEOPLE WE'VE KNOWN OVER THE YEARS.**



**TAPPING INTO THAT STORY CAN BE  
THERAPEUTIC FOR US AND MAY BE  
INSPIRATIONAL FOR OTHERS. MEMOIRS REMIND  
US, TOO, THAT WE ARE ALL BROKEN PEOPLE  
WHO ARE PRONE TO BIG MISTAKES, REGRETS  
AND DETOURS THAT HAVE LED US IN  
DIRECTIONS WE DIDN'T NECESSARILY ENVISION.  
AN EPIC MEMOIR WILL SPEAK THE TRUTH  
ABOUT OURSELVES; OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE  
PRETTY SELF-SERVING AND BORING TO THE  
REST OF THE WORLD. AFTER ALL, WHO WANTS  
TO READ ABOUT SOMEONE WHO'S PERFECT -----  
UNLESS IT'S JESUS, OF COURSE?**

**A CHRISTIAN MEMOIR, HOWEVER, WILL ALSO INCLUDE AT LEAST A CHAPTER ABOUT WHAT GOD IS DOING WITH OUR STORY -- HOW GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE HAVE REDEEMED EVEN OUR GREATEST FAILURES AND TURNED THEM INTO SOMETHING GOOD. LIKE DAVID'S MEMOIR, OURS MUST ALWAYS END WITH A HOPE FOR A FUTURE MADE POSSIBLE BY GOD. WHILE OUR PAST CAN MAKE FOR A GREAT STORY, GOD'S FUTURE FOR US WILL BE AN EVEN BETTER ONE THAT IS FULL OF HOPE, POSSIBILITIES, AND NEW LIFE. THAT'S THE KIND OF MEMOIR THAT THE WORLD NEEDS TO READ, EVEN IF IT'S ONLY WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS.**

**WHAT DOES YOUR STORY LOOK LIKE SO FAR?**

**WHAT INFORMATION WOULD YOU INCLUDE? IF**

**YOU WERE TO WRITE YOUR MEMOIRS ...**

**- WOULD YOU INCLUDE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS?**

**WHAT ARE THE EVENTS IN YOUR LIFE THAT**

**HAVE SHAPED YOUR ATTITUDES, INFORMED**

**YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD AND**

**CHANGED THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE?**

**- WOULD YOU MAKE A LIST OF SIGNIFICANT**

**PEOPLE IF YOU WERE WRITING YOUR MEMOIRS?**

**WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE? WHO HAS**

**INFLUENCED YOU MOST FOR GOOD OR FOR ILL?**

**WHAT WAS THEIR CONTRIBUTION? HOW DID IT AFFECT YOU?**

**- WOULD YOU MAKE A LIST OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES THAT ARE A PART OF YOUR LIFE'S GEOGRAPHICAL STORY? WHAT ARE THOSE PLACES? WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

**- WOULD YOU TELL THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH -- OR WILL YOUR STORY BE SELF-SERVING, AS CLINTON SAYS ....**

**- WOULD YOU TRY TO DISTILL YOUR MAJOR PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE? WHAT IS THAT PHILOSOPHY? WHY DOES LIFE HAVE MEANING FOR YOU?**

**- WOULD YOU TRY TO PUT IN ONE PARAGRAPH OF THE ADVICE YOU'D PASS ON TO OTHERS? WHAT IS THAT ADVICE?**

**- WOULD YOU TRY TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, "IF I HAD IT TO DO OVER AGAIN, I'D ..."?**

**- WOULD YOU TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHERE GOD HAS BEEN IN YOUR STORY? WERE THERE TIMES WHEN *YOU* THOUGHT GOD HAD GONE AWOL AND YOU NEVER EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM GOD AGAIN? WAS THERE A TIME IN YOUR STORY WHEN YOU WENT AWOL? YOU JUST COMPLETELY OPTED OUT? WOULD YOU SHARE HOW GOD AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD HAS THE OVERRIDING ORIENTATION THAT EXPLAINS WHO YOU ARE, EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU?**

**DAVID, WHOSE WORDS ARE OUR TEXT FOR THIS SUNDAY, ALSO WROTE PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS POEM IN HISTORY..... WE CALL IT THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM. AND AT THE END, HE PREDICTS HOW HIS STORY WILL END. IT CAN ALSO BE THE WAY OUR STORY CAN FIND ITS MOST WONDERFUL CONCLUSION: "SURELY, GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE, AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD MY WHOLE LIFE LONG."**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND FOR ME.....AMEN**

