

TIMELY REMINDERS

(Jude 1-2)

I am not known for having a wonderful memory. Those who know me well know that I have difficulty remembering names, dates, details, sometimes entire conversations, and certainly appointments.

I'm not, however, as bad as the wife who kept leaving her keys in the ignition when she parked her car despite the fact that her husband kept reprimanding her for doing that. One day, she had a meeting at a local hotel. When she was ready to leave, she couldn't find her keys. They weren't in her purse. They weren't in her pockets. She didn't see them in the meeting room. She concluded that she must have left them in the ignition of her car.

She walked to the parking lot to discover that her car was gone. She knew that what her husband had warned her about time and time again had finally happened. Her car had been stolen. She knew she had to make two phone calls. First, she called the police and reported her car stolen. She gave them the make and model, described the color, and even was able to give them her license plate number.

Next, she made the call she really didn't want to make. She called her husband. When he answered, she said, "Honey," (the word she used when she was apologetic), "Honey, I am so sorry. I did it again. I left the keys in the ignition, and my car was stolen. Would you come get me at the hotel?"

There was an uncomfortable pause, and then, with obvious irritation in his voice, he said, "I dropped you off at the hotel."

Now, it was time for the wife to pause as she took in this new information. While being terribly embarrassed, she again apologized and asked, "Will you still come get me?"

Her husband answered, "I will as soon as I convince this policeman that I didn't steal your car."

Fortunately for me, we live in a day when doctor's offices and others routinely send us text messages and/or emails to remind us of our appointments, or I can put a reminder in my own phone, and my phone will beep me 30 minutes before I need to be where I need to be.

I view today's text as a helpful, gentle reminder.

For the next five weeks or so, we are going to look at one of the most neglected books in the N.T. I have been preaching for almost 40 years, and over the last four decades I have only preached from Jude a grand total of two times, and the last time was for a Wednesday night devotional more than 22 years ago.

I want to correct that lack of attention to this letter by preaching through it over the next month or month and a half. I will tell you more about the author later in the message but Jude along with Philemon, 2 John and 3 John are the only books of the NT that are one-chapter in length. 2 John has the fewest verses at 13 while 3 John has 15. Both Philemon and Jude come in at 25 verses.

After deciding to preach from Jude I learned that Wade Burleson is dedicating this fall

semester to an examination of Jude on Wednesday nights at Emmanuel. In his introductory lesson on Jude, he mentioned three quick facts about Jude.

First, he said it is a catholic book. When he uses the word *catholic*, he is not referring to the Roman Catholic Church. The word catholic means universal. Unlike many NT letters, this letter is not addressed to the believers of a local church as are letter such as Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, and many others. Nor is this book addressed to individuals such as Timothy, Titus, Philemon. Instead, the letter was mean to be circulated so that believers anywhere might benefit from its message.

In addition to being a catholic book, it is also a cautionary book. He wants his readers to contend for the faith against false teachers who are leading people astray. In addition to cautioning against error, he also cautions his reader against getting caught up in immoral behavior.

Finally, Wade mentioned that this book is a comforting book. This book talks about God's mercy, about how God can keep us from stumbling, about eternal life, and about the fact that Jesus is the Lord forever.

This morning we will focus on just the first two verses. These two letters serve as the greeting. I want you to be aware of something: The Bible does not contain the word of God; the Bible is the word of God. That mean every word in this book is important. Even in a simple greeting, God can speak to us through it. As we look at this greeting, I want to emphasize how these two verses serve as timely reminders.

Let Me Remind You of Who You Are

In the latter half of v. 1, Jude uses three words to refer to his readers—*called*, *beloved*, and *kept*. Those three words describe those who are in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. If you belong to Jesus, those three words describe who you are.

1. As a Follower of Jesus, You Are Called.

The word *called* is used ten times in the NT. Consider some of the occurrences in the NT. We read in Romans 1:6, “you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” We are called to belong. If you are Christian, it is because the Holy Spirit irresistibly summoned you.

It shows up in my favorite Bible promise—Romans 8:28 which says, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” We are called according to God's good purpose. God has His reasons for selecting you to be a member of His family.

In Revelation 17 we are told that the Beast and those who are aligned with him will make war on the Lamb. Think about that image, a beast attacking a lamb. It doesn't sound like a fair fight, does it? Well, it's not a fair fight because the Lamb in this passage is Jesus, and anyone who declares war against Him doesn't stand a chance. We read in v. 14 of that chapter, “for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful.” Those words describe you. If you are an ally of Jesus, if you are aligned with Him, you are called, chosen, and faithful.

I remember being in elementary school. At recess, on the playground, the boys would get together to play kickball or soccer. Sometimes, a boy would yell out, “First captain, first choose.” On another day, someone who was a bit humbler might call out, “Second captain, first choose.” I never knew the difference between a first captain and a second captain, but I do know that anyone who was the captain wanted to have the first choice. Of course, he would choose the most athletic, most talented player for his team. Each captain would alternate picks until everyone had been chosen. The fear of anybody in elementary was to be chosen last. No one wanted the shame and reproach of being chosen last. To be chosen last meant that you really weren’t wanted, that some team got stuck with you.

God is the first Captain, and there is no second captain. Anyone else who claims authority is an impostor. God, however, doesn’t choose like anyone else might choose. He doesn’t choose the best and the brightest and the most talented. Let me bring 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 to your attention. Listen to how Eugene Peterson paraphrased that passage:

Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don’t see many of “the brightest and the best” among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn’t it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these “nobodies” to expose the hollow pretensions of the “somebodies”? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That’s why we have the saying, “If you’re going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God.”

If you are called, you can’t pat yourself on the back and think that God called you because of your superior qualities. It is not as though God was looking at a batch of resumes and yours stood out part from so many others, and then God called your references and they all gave you a glowing report. That’s not what happened.

Still yet, God chose you. He called you. You belong to Him. He adopted you into His family and made you a co-heir with Christ. For that reason, it doesn’t matter what the world says. It doesn’t matter what accusations Satan hurls against you. It doesn’t matter what your detractors say. It doesn’t matter what you say if you are given to self-loathing. As Paul asked rhetorically in Romans 8:31, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

2. As a Follower of Jesus, You Are Beloved.

God doesn’t just put up with you. He loves you. You are familiar with John 3:16, “For God so loved the world . . .” I have heard it said that we could take out the word world and replace it with our name. “For God so loved Matt Miles, for God so love Kathy Strohmeier, for God so loved Thom Johnson, for God so loved (you insert your name), that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.” God loves you that much.

In 1998 Michael W. Smith recorded a song that could be the theme song of every Christian. Listen to these lyrics:

I have been unfaithful
I have been unworthy
I have been unrighteous
And I have been unmerciful

I have been unreachable
I have been unteachable
I have been unwilling
And I have been undesirable

Sometimes, I have been unwise
I've been undone by what I'm unsure of
But because of you, and all that you went through
I know that I have never been unloved

I have been unbroken
I have been unmended
I have been uneasy
And I've been unapproachable

I've been unemotional
I've been unexceptional
I've been undecided
And I have been unqualified

Unaware, I have been unfair
I've been unfit for blessings from above
But even I can see the sacrifice you made for me
To show that I have never been unloved

God has set His love upon you and He is loving you with His fierce, everlasting, patient, and persistent love. And because He loves you in that way, there is a third thing Jude tells us that can be said of you.

3. As a Follower of Jesus, You Are Kept.

In my version, the word kept is followed by *for*, but in some other versions it is followed by the word *by* and still others by the word *in*. Are we kept for Jesus, or are we kept by Jesus, or are we kept in Jesus? That is a difficult question to answer because in the Greek text, there is no pronoun. In the Greek text, the name *Jesus Christ* precedes the verb "having been kept."

The important thing is that for the believer there is protection. Our salvation is secure. No one can snatch us from the Father's hand.

Here on Earth, we keep things of valuable. We protect things we don't want to lose. While I don't have one now, but in year's past, I had a safety deposit box at my bank. In that box, I kept birth certificates. I kept the titles to cars I owned. I kept my will in that safety deposit box and a few other items that I did not want to lose. If my house burned down, those items would be safe. If my house blew away in a tornado, those things could be retrieved. They were kept.

God keeps those who are valuable to Him. Time will take your looks. Age will rob you of your abilities. Death will separate you from your family. Nothing and no one can take your soul and your salvation.

Jude is known as a general epistle. There are seven of those, and all of them bear the name of the author—James, First & Second Peter, First, Second, & Third John, and Jude. Let's look at another general epistle. Notice 1 Peter 1:3-5. You and what God has for you are guarded by God.

There are more Brinks and Loomis armored vehicles that there are banks in the U.S., but according to the FBI, there are about 4,000 bank robberies in our country every year, while there are between 25 to 35 armored car thefts annually. Why the discrepancy? Well, bank tellers don't wear side-arms. They are trained to hand over the money. The guards who work for Loomis and Brinks are armed, and they will use them if need be.

God protects what is precious to Him, and if you belong to Jesus, you are beloved, and He will keep you secure.

Our text reminds us of something else.

Let Me Remind You of What You Have

In addition to reminding us of who we are, Jude reminds us of what we have. In v. 2 we find three things God has given us, and Jude prays that God would multiply these gifts to us. We will get to those in a moment, but in v. 1, there is hidden one more gift that we need to unwrap.

We have the godly example of those who have gone before us. It is here that I want to tackle the issue of who this author is. He claims to be Jude. There are no less than six different men in the NT who had the name *Jude*. Which Jude is this? He claims to be the brother of James. The fact that he does not elaborate on the identity of James tells us that this James is already well known and needs no introduction.

By the time this letter was written, James, the brother of John has already been martyred. Since James was the first apostle of Jesus to have been martyred, and that was several decades ago from the time this letter was written, it is quite apparent that is not the James to which he is referring. Who else was named James who was well-known? That would be James, the half-brother of Jesus. I say "half-brother" because while they shared the same mother, Jesus did not have a human father. He was begotten of the Holy Spirit.

This Jude says he was the brother of James. Look with me at Matthew 13:53-56. Jesus returned to the town where he was raised—Nazareth. The people of his hometown were astonished by the things Jesus was saying and doing. They knew His father, and his

mother, and his brothers—two of whom were James and Judas. Since Judas was listed last, he may have been the youngest boy. We can't say that for sure because in Mark 6, Simon is the last boy mentioned. Maybe they were twins. Who knows?

Notice what Judas does not say. He does not say, "Hey, listen to me because I am the blood brother of Jesus." No. Instead, he humbly writes, "a servant of Jesus Christ." Jude acts as a godly example of humility, of one who does not think more highly of himself than he should. We need people like that in our life. They are gifts to us from God.

What godly person has God put into your life to help you become what God wants you to become? Was it a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, a godly saint in the church where you grew up? Thank God for that gift.

And with God's help, be that gift to someone else. Be that godly model, that wise mentor. Our young people have plenty of bad role models. They need a good one who shows them what it means and what it looks like to follow Christ and live for Him in this world where He has placed us.

In addition to godly models, God also gives us godly graces. He has given us mercy, peace, and love. Mercy is how God has acted toward us. Mercy and grace are similar, but they are not the same. It has been said that God shows us mercy by not giving us what we deserve while grace occurs when God gives us what we don't deserve. We don't deserve salvation, but God gives us salvation by His grace. We do deserve judgment and hell, but, mercifully, God doesn't give us that.

We, too, are to be merciful. At times, people may deserve a piece of our mind, but don't give them that. Give them grace instead.

Peace is a settled-ness in our soul. It is that awareness that God's got this, and He's got us, that we are going to be okay.

According to Paul, peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit. That means it is something that the Holy Spirit grows in the rich soil of your life. You can't make yourself peaceful by the exertion of your own effort, but you can receive the peace God wants you to have as you quit striving and allow the Spirit to work in your life. The Holy Spirit is the Gardener, and sometimes He has to break up the stony ground and till it up. Other times, He has to pull up weeds that don't belong in our lives. That's not fun, but it is necessary.

The last grace Jude mentions is the first fruit Paul listed—love. Love is what we have been shown, and now, love is what we are to show to others. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul told us the way love acts. Listen to vv. 4-7 in the *New Living Translation*:

⁴Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, ⁵never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. ⁶It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. ⁷If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

Let's act that way towards others.

I used to serve on staff with a man who when he prayed, he often used the phrase,

“Lord, remind us.” Often, our great need is not to learn some new truth we’ve never encountered before. Rather, we simply need to be reminded of things we have long known but have forgotten.

Lord, remind us of who we are in You, and remind us of what we have received from Your gracious hand.