

## Daily Devotional, June 9, 2020 Is Today Garbage Day?

There's a story about a man from the city who was visiting relatives on a farm. He was out walking around with the farmer when the farmer gave a whistle and his dog herded the cattle into the corral, and then latched the gate with her paw. "Wow, that's some dog. What's her name?" The *forgetful* farmer thought a minute, and then asked, "What do you call that red flower that smells good and has thorns on the stem?" "A rose?" "That? it!" The farmer turned and called out to his wife. "Hey Rose, what do we call this dog?" (*Source Unknown*).

We seem to be living in not only a coronavirus epidemic, but an epidemic of forgetfulness.

I find myself getting up from my computer on a mission, marching downstairs to a destination and standing there trying to remember why I came. Or consider my wife Laura. I was out inspecting our gardens this morning when I noticed on my way back into the house that the garbage cans were rolled up to the curb. Today is Tuesday. Our garbage pick-up is Thursday. When I asked Laura why they were already at the curb she told me she didn't want to do it in the rain in the morning. When I reminded her that this was Tuesday, her mouth dropped open. She had lost an entire day!

Haven't we all lost track of days during this stay at home lockdown? I know I've lost a few at different times. Or we have something that two months down the road we are going to need. We put it in a particular place where both of us promise to remember where it is. Two months pass, and we find ourselves frantically searching with no idea where to look. All of us have forgetting moments. After the frustration we hopefully laugh and move on with life.

Forgetfulness often strikes at the most awkward moments. You may be introducing a new friend to an old friend, when you forget the old friend's name. You may be addressing a group of people, when suddenly you lose your train of thought. Or you may be serving dinner to guests, when halfway through the meal it occurs to you that you forgot to remove the dinner rolls from the heated oven. Only the smell of burning bread reactivates your memory.

We may improve our memory by playing word games, working crossword puzzles, following a healthful diet, getting adequate sleep, and using memory techniques, yet moments of forgetfulness are bound to occur. But what if the object of our forgetfulness is God?

***11 Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, Deuteronomy 8:11-20 (NIV)***

Forgetting God wreaks havoc in our lives so what can we do to help us remember him?

The ancient church, particularly in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, practiced praying throughout the day what was called, the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," in one breath. Such "breath" praying helps reduce forgetfulness. Praying short verses or lines from the Bible from memory, can be ideal for breath prayer. Here is one from the Psalms: ***When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. Psalm 56:3 (NIV)*** Or other passages: ***"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." 1 Samuel 3:9; "Not my will, but Your will." Luke 22:42***

Saying a breath prayer almost always causes me to take a deep breath, to slow down and become more attentive to what is taking place around me and in me. I become more aware of God's presence. My prayers become less about what I want and more about living in the presence of God.

I know I will continue to struggle with remembering names or with what I'm supposed to do when I head purposely to another room in the house, but I can choose not to forget God. Breath-praying helps me do that and could be a perfect remedy for you also. I urge you to give it a try.

***Prayer: "Lord, so many of my problems stem from not remembering you. I forget your wisdom and so I worry. I forget your grace and so I get complacent. I forget your mercy and so I get resentful of others. Help me to remember who you are every moment of the day. Amen."***