

Column

We all need reminding. As children, our parents were doing so constantly:

“Keep your fingers away from electric sockets.”
(Once I tried putting a bobby pin in one. Don’t do it . . . a bad idea.)

“Turn off the light when you go out of a room.”

“Put your dirty clothes in the hamper.”

“Don’t suck your thumb.”

But children are not the only ones needing reminders. Adults need them as well. I once saw over the coffee pot in the break area of a business: “Clean it up after yourself. Yo’ mamma don’t work here!”

Likewise, signs are often posted in restrooms of restaurants reading: “Employees are required to wash their hands before returning to work.” That

seems pretty basic, but apparently some folks need to be reminded.

Utility companies often include on their monthly statements a reminder that if the amount owed is not paid by such-and-such a date service will be suspended.

Teachers and speakers often end their spiel by reminding their audiences what they have just told them. Repetition is a good way of getting a point across and fostering retention.

In the Bible we likewise find examples of this technique being used. For example, much of what is found in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy is repetition. Moses has gotten the children of Israel to the edge of the Promised Land. Before he passes the baton to Joshua and they cross over Jordan, he reminds a new generation of the terms of the covenant God made with their parents at Sinai.

“If you keep God’s commandments, things will go well with you in the land,” Moses tells them, “but if you don’t, among other things, you will find

yourself back in some form of exilic slavery, another ‘Egypt’. The great blessing is the Land of Promise; the great curse is absence from it.

Fast forward now to the New Testament. Paul begins 1 Corinthians 15 with a recapitulation: “Let me remind you.” What he reminds them of is the Gospel he had preached when he first came to their city. He gives them what in Greek is called the “kerygma”, a brief summation of the facts surrounding Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Why does Paul do this? To shore up their faith and to correct certain errors which had crept in. It seems that the Corinthians had truly believed Jesus had been raised bodily, but they had lost sight of what this event meant concerning their own future state. It seems some were claiming that there would be no future resurrection of believers. Rather, they were settling for some form of Greek immortality of the spirit. Paul would not have them ignorant of this fact. So, he tells them what he had already told them. He reminds them.

What about Christians today? Do they need reminding. Absolutely! It is for this reason attending public worship weekly is so important. By gathering with other Christians on Sunday we proclaim the resurrection, but an equally important reason for assembling is to be reminded of the facts of the Christian Gospel . . . the kerygma.

This reminding takes place in the regular cycle of the public reading of God's Word Written, in sermons, in the Lord's Supper, and in many churches in the recitation of either the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds, both summaries of the faith going back almost to the dawn of the Christian era. No wonder the writer of Hebrews cautions his readers not to stay away from their meetings, as some were apparently doing (Hebrews 10:25).

A sign out front of a church read "Six days without God makes one weak." It may be a lousy pun, but the point is well taken. We need reminding. It leads to greater faith, encouragement and perseverance. Determine, unless providentially hindered, to be in the Lord's House this coming Lord's Day.

A Prayer for Sunday Mornings: O GOD, who makest us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of thy Son our Lord; Vouchsafe us this day such blessing through our worship of thee, that the days to come may be spent in thy service; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

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