

# I remember me

August 23, 2015

Exodus 20:2

Philippians 1:1-6

My husband and I traveled to Quebec City in Canada this summer. There, as you know, French is the priority language instead of English. People began to speak French first to me, but I spoke English, and then they changed to speak English. They can use both languages fluently.

Touring the city, more and more I came to understand why they have to speak in French, although they are citizens of Canada. They are French Canadian. Many French people had lived in Quebec before the war between England and France, but England got the victory. As the result, Quebec belonged to England. French people in Quebec did their best not to lose their own history and culture. In order to remember who they are, they inscribed “Je me Souviens” on the wall of the Capital building as well as on the license plate. They never forget they are French and keep their history and culture among those who speak English and live in English culture.

When we took a city tour bus to look around the city, the guide told us, “We were very afraid of being French and speaking in French in the world of English. But we never gave up our identity, our language and our culture. We tried to survive well. Now our younger people try to learn French in order to know the history and culture of France. Yes, we succeeded to keep our history and culture.”

I agreed with that guide. All of them want to keep their language, history, and culture to live as French Canadian. We can call this “communal memory.” This communal memory is the center of their identity. Through the memory, they succeeded in passing their culture down to their descendants. Charles R. Foster wrote that memory is central to the vitality of any community. It is the repository of the community's past.

Therefore, people of Quebec are people of memory.

Israel is a people of memory. Israel has also their communal memory.

It is described in Exodus 20:2. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Israel made this as the communal memory for their people. They kept this word, and taught it to their descendants. Israelites never forget this memory of the wonderful works that God did for them. This communal memory gave vitality for their future.

Because of their communal memory, Israelites could survive in any hard conditions.

When they scattered to everywhere on the world, they never forgot this memory. Wherever they lived, they never forget they are the people of God and they always remember the wonderful works of divine redemption in the past and they anticipated the divine redemption in the future.

Therefore, people of Israel are the people of memory.

Do we have any communal memory in this faith community? Sure! We have our communal memory like the French in Quebec and the Israelites. Then, what is the communal memory of our Christianity? Jesus Christ gives salvation for all people with his death.

God loves and welcomes all!! This is our communal memory. So we embrace all people, whoever they are. There are love, forgiveness, openness, justice and peace in the memory.

Few days ago, my daughter told me, her pastor emphasized, “fear God, or you will be judged and punished at the end of the world. God never accept sins.”

Some pastor’s words are judgment and punishment instead of love and forgiveness.

Of course, there are judgment and punishment in the Bible, but these are not the first word of God. God shows us his love and forgiveness first.

My daughter was not happy because she didn’t agree to her Pastor’s preaching.

We, Christians have very different life style and opinion toward the world. Our own memory about God guides us to many ways to serve God and people. Nevertheless we are all children of God, if we have communal memory. To me, the one essence of the word of God is that everybody is equal. Man and woman are equal, and Jews and Gentiles are equal. This is my memory about God’s word and I believe this is one of our communal memory. But I have experienced that many Christians don’t consider this. They confuse equality and difference.

Thus severe discrimination happened between man and woman everywhere, but some people don’t think it is unfair and they don’t realize that it is against the will of God.

I doubt if they are true Christians, but they are Christians. Whenever I confronted people to do unfairly to me, I felt deep sadness. But Jesus told me, try to embrace them, and wait for them to open their eyes. It’s very hard to wait for them to see the spirit beyond their own belief. I believe it is very important for us to wait the time of God. I hope God makes them open their eyes to see the wider, bigger and deeper spirit.

Fortunately, in this place, I have met God who loved everyone without discrimination.

I have a good memory about God in this church. This memory helps me to overcome bitterness from inequality and to live together harmoniously, and I still keep my own integrity. Our church

is to show hospitality, warm welcome to other people. When I came to the church, I saw “welcome” in Korean on the outside board. I have enjoyed the peace of God for 4 years in this church. Now, in a month, I will go back to Korea. I will take your communal memories with me.

What is the most important issue in the world of Christianity? It is to welcome each other and to love one another. This morning we sang a hymn. God welcomes all, strangers and friends. God's love is strong and it never ends. This is the core of our communal memory. It will make us keep love and sustain ourselves and have bravery and hope for the future. I hope the next generation will keep this communal memory in this multicultural town.

Charles Foster wrote: “Through the elders of the congregation and the saints of the faith tradition, church education introduces people into the communal memory of the church.

The function of memory is not to pull us into the past. It fuels the efforts of communities to live with hope into the future. “ Paul said to Philippians: I thank God whenever I remember you. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” As Paul said, I want to say this phrase to you. “Whenever I remember you, I will remember your hospitality, love, justice, and openness.” These memories will make us very hopeful and full of vitality.

May God’s peace and goodness be with you forever. Amen.