

WD March 11, 2024

“Say It Again!”

“Huh!” “What!” These were usually the first words from my great grandpa. My Grandfather was really hard of hearing. My grandmother would call out, “Oscar, its time for lunch.” He would call out, “What?” She would call out again a second time. This time it was a little louder. And then again, a little louder until he finally responded with understanding. Funny thing--Now I catch mom doing this with dad, (also great grandparents). Circle of life, I guess.

What I hope to draw your attention to today is how much the scriptures repeat itself. Maybe because sin makes us hard of hearing or like the disciples, dull in our understanding. Scriptures repeat words, phrases, ideas, all with the intention of highlighting it and for us to gain saving knowledge from its words. In a nutshell, if the Bible repeats words, phrases or truth, its important and needs to be paid attention and because we usually have to be told more than once to remember it.

For example, when Moses was teaching the next generation of Israelites toward the end of the wilderness wanderings he laid a heavy emphasis on obedience. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 says,

⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Moses repeats this again in Deuteronomy 11:18-20. In other words, keep God’s Law integrated into every aspect of your life. Jesus himself speaks a great deal about righteousness in his Sermon on the Mount integrating the Law into every day interactions. The message is simple. God considers obeying His commands as a form of righteousness. It is also something noted about Abraham. His obedience was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6, James 2:3).

Hundreds of scripture passages are also devoted to God as Creator. Next to God as our Salvation, creation is a huge running theme throughout. Genesis 1 and repeated in Genesis 2 tell us who created everything. Many psalms such as Psalm 8 speak of God as Creator. Job 38-40 is famous for God telling Job about how he laid the foundations of the world and set the boundaries of the waters. John 1 proclaims that all things were created through the Word made flesh. Colossians 1:16 tells us that all things are created by God.

All of this is very significant and closely connected to the idea of marriage and the binary nature of man and woman. Genesis 1:27--“God created them in his own image. Male and female, He created them.” And of course, we remember what is said about marriage. “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. – Genesis 2:18, 21-24. Jesus himself repeats this definition in Matthew 19:4-6. The repetition comes full circle in Ephesians 5:21-31 laying heavy emphasis on marriage being in the image of Jesus’ relationship with his church.

Consider how Jesus repeated his mission statement to the disciples at least three times emphasizing the cross and resurrection. Jesus teaches in Luke 24:7, “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” “ We see it also in Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19 and Luke 24:26 on the road to Emmaus. We see it also in Mark 8:31-33, 9:30-32 and 10:32-34. This teaching was very hard for the disciples to accept as noted when Peter took Jesus aside and tried to stop it. And in Matthew 17:23 we are told that the disciples were filled with grief. This grief would explain why it was probably repeated many times to the disciples. Grief makes a lot of things harder to hear. The suffering, death and resurrection talk was repeated so much that even Jesus’ enemies catch on to it perhaps because of Judas’ betrayal. This why they coerce Pilate into sealing the tomb and placing a guard. Matthew 27:62-66 says it this way:

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days

I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵ “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Of course, the most important repeated teaching of God’s Word in the minds of Christians what comes after the crucifixion of Jesus, His rising after three days. All of the Gospels speak about Easter morning. Luke 24:5-7 for example, famously shares the words of the angels at the tomb. “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

We remember also Acts 2:24 in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” And then again in Acts 3:15 “And you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.” The whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 speaks about the resurrection. And 1 Thessalonians repeats the thought once more, “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.” Many passages in the New Testament speak of Jesus’ resurrection and the rising to life of those who believe in Him. Its repeated often in scripture because the resurrection is central to our salvation.

Repetition is an effective tool for the Lord. I know people that can quote movies line for line because they have seen it so many times. I know kids who sing songs word for word with great excitement because it’s been on the radio so often. Most of us learn our times tables through repetition and through pages of problems to solve. Repetition is an effective tool especially when what is learned is put into practice. I can change my brakes on my car in less than an hour most of the time because of repetition.

Maybe this is why we see repetition commanded and put into practice in things like the Passover as a way of remembering what God did when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Perhaps then it stands to reason that it is good to celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday each year. It’s important to have such a thing as a church year that highlights the activity of God so that like the Israelites with Passover, we may continually remember what makes us God’s people. Jesus wants us to remember and celebrate what has been given through Him.

Perhaps a fitting way to end our thoughts today is by using another form of repetition which emphasizes the superlative. Isaiah 26:3-4 gives us two.

“You will keep in perfect peace (literally *peace, peace*) those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. ⁴Trust in the Lord forever, for *the Lord, the Lord himself*, is the Rock eternal.” May Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then give you perfect peace. May we have ears to hear the repeated, daily grace, forgiveness, and promise given to us in God’s Word. And may we gratefully ask the Lord to say it again, and again.

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John 3:30