

ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
SERMON 29C 2025
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In the city of Paris there is a monument to an unknown Jewish martyr. On the monument are the words "Remember Amalek." I thought they were strange words for who can tell their meaning. Amalek would probably only be known to followers of Judaism, or perhaps Christians well versed in the Old Testament. Even so, why remember Amalek.

Amalek was the leader of a nation, described in Genesis 36 as the "chief of Amalek" among the "chiefs of the sons of Esau". The Amalekites were the enemies of the Hebrews. The phrase comes from Deuteronomy 25:17 'Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, how they surprised you on the road and cut off all the weak people at your rear, when you were parched and weary, and they did not fear God.

So why remember Amalek? Are we to remember and fear nations that are aggressive towards us Are we to remember and be glad of the freedom won from our enemies by God? Are we to remember and be angry at the waste of human life lost in battle. Are we to remember and feel sad that we cannot find an acceptable way to deal with our so-called enemies. Are we to remember and see our guilt for our part in the suffering of the world – to remember and seek reconciliation?

I think remembering is necessary for all of these reasons. For the Jewish people, remembering such foundation stories as the naming of Jacob to Israel depicted in our first reading today is of up most importance. It gives them identity and purpose. The Amalek monument is a memorial to those victims of the holocaust. It speaks of the horror of all those times when an attempt has been made to destroy nations. Remembering is vital for it stirs to action. Remembering is an act of prayer.

To remember is not just to think back to recall the past. It is to learn from the past and even to make the past come to life. That is what we do when we gather here and read the scriptures. For to remember is to see the past in our present. To remember Amalek is to remember we still need to persevere in getting rid of the wrongs in our world. There is still a need for battles to be fought –not literal battles of nation against nation, or people against people. The battle for justice to prevail is still required. Amalek needs to be remembered. That's why the story of Jacob wrestling with God is so important. For Jacob wrestles with God for justice, to remind him of his promise to Abraham.

And so, Jesus tells us it's important to remember. That's the point of the parable about the unjust judge. The widow keeps reminding the judge of his duty to give justice. She persists in making him remember his task and her need. Finally he gives her the justice she seeks.

Jesus says, God is willing to give justice. God is not like the unjust judge who had to be continually reminded. If the unjust judge gave justice eventually, how much more will God give justice to those who ask for it.

Today we hear frequently that justice is not done. Justice is not done to right past wrongs. Justice is not done in the result of criminal cases in our courts. It often appears that the only result of justice is bitterness for those who are the victims. It is sometimes difficult for us to see justice being done around us, and we can also then have the difficulty of seeing where God gives justice.

This parable of Jesus presents us with many difficulties when we are unable to see God giving justice quickly as the story suggests he will. When we don't see God giving justice then our faith starts to waver. Is God there or not? Does God care that we have no justice? Justice here may mean different things to different people. For some it might be an overseas cause. Others it might be to fight some battle or perceived injustice in their work place or in their community. Or we may just feel that life is unfair, that things happen to us beyond our control and we wish that God would act and reveal his justice.

This is the point when we do well to remember Jacob's wrestling with God. It seems in some strange way that through this process of struggle God acted and blessed. We still need to fight for justice even when we feel like God is absent, or that we are struggling with our faith.

For we are asked to be as persistent as the widow in our search for justice. God is with us; justice will be done. Jesus says we need to go on praying for justice, working for justice, even when God seems to be doing nothing. God is in fact working in our efforts to bring about justice. Persistence is necessary. If we do not persevere in seeking justice we will not see God bringing justice. It is only when justice happens that we can see its fruit.

The fruit of justice is reconciliation. The peoples of the world will not be reconciled until justice prevails. So, we begin to see how essential justice is, our work for justice is to bring about reconciliation. And when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? Will there be enough of us who have the faith to persist in seeking justice? Will there be enough of us like the widow, a poor humble woman against the powerful judge. Yet she had the faith to persevere in her cause for justice.

Remember Jacob and in remembering believe in the power of God.

A power which works with us in bringing justice to our world.