

**May 27** – Memorial Day, as Americans have come to know it, began in the years immediately following the Civil War. We remember those who had given, as Lincoln beautifully said, “the last full measure of devotion” to defend their nation. Memorial Day is an important national moment. It is right and wise to remember the great price some have paid to preserve the historically unprecedented civil and religious freedoms we Americans have the luxury to take largely for granted. But the importance of Memorial Day is more for our future than it is for our past. It is crucial that we remember the nightmares and why they happened – and not repeat them. Christians, of all people, understand the crucial importance of remembering. Christians are “memorial people” because the whole of our faith depends upon remembering. Those who persevere into the glorious future are those who remember the gracious past. That’s why God has surrounded us with memorials. The entire Bible itself is a memorial. We meditate on it daily to remember. The Sabbath was a memorial to Israel’s freedom from Egyptian slavery ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#)), and the church switched it to Sundays as a memorial to Christ’s resurrection and our freedom from sin. Israel’s great gathering feast days were memorials ([Exodus 13:3](#)). And now each time a local church gathers, each Lord’s Supper celebration ([1 Corinthians 11:24–26](#)), each baptism, each Christmas celebration, and each Easter celebration is a memorial. The future of the church, globally and locally, and of each Christian depends largely on how well we remember the gospel of Jesus, all his precious and very great promises, and the successes and failures of church history. (And not repeat the failures).

**May 28. Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.** Earlier in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:11-12), the apostle Paul addressed the report of some Corinthian Christians who had come to visit him that the Christians in that Greek city were dividing into factions. They apparently drew the dividing lines by choosing their favorite church leader. In today’s passage, Paul made it plain he saw no value at all in playing that game. He said he and an eloquent Christian from Alexandria, Egypt named Apollos both served the same function: working together to nurture God’s vineyard—God’s people. But they both realized it is God who produces the growth in human hearts and lives. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, “What he has a problem with is the idea that anyone might play off him and Apollos against one another, within some personality contest based on the human standards of ‘wisdom’ and rhetoric.... Paul is just as cross about people putting him on a pedestal as he is about anybody else being there. There is only one pedestal in the kingdom of God, and only one person to be put on it. But it isn’t a statue to be put up as a monument in a town square. It is a cross; and the Messiah who hung and died on it passed judgment on all human fame, celebrity, popularity and reputation.” What does it mean to keep Jesus on his cross at the center of your inner vineyard, and not any of Jesus’ human servants who help to water the vines?

**May 29. Read Matthew 7:12, 15-20.** Jesus didn't offer quick, easy surface change. He focused on the deep inner roots from which life springs. Like prophets before him, he warned about false prophets (cf. Jeremiah 6:13-14; Ezekiel 22:28). They challenged Jesus' followers, too (cf. Acts 20:29). But Jesus' main concern was not for us to play "gotcha" toward others, even false prophets. Jesus wanted us to know how to recognize them because following them can damage the roots of our life, and the kind of fruit we bear. Jesus said we learn about a tree's inner makeup from the fruit it bears—grape vines bear grapes; apple trees bear apples. In the end, the key spiritual reality is not how good we look publicly, but whether our way of life springs from our connection with God or not. We often apply these verses mainly to religious leaders who fail morally—but the principle works the other way too. Are there people you have learned to trust more as you have seen the fruit of their life and work? What kind of "fruit" do you find most persuasive? How closely does your inner life align with the public "face" you show at church? What makes inward reality more valuable than outward show in God's sight?

**May 30. Read John 15:5-8.** We have learned during these daily readings that Israel loved the image of their people as a vineyard God had planted. But one of Jesus' sweeping, startling claims was that Israel's faith found its fullest expression in him. "I am the vine" dramatically altered the way people usually thought about the vineyard image. But in personalizing himself as "the vine," Jesus also made another vital point clear. Christ-followers do not commit ourselves to an abstract set of ideas; we commit ourselves to the person of our divine human Savior. "Producing fruit" was, of course, an image of what a vineyard-keeper expects the carefully-tended vine branches to do. How can you go about your daily business committed to bearing fruit for God without becoming obsessed with externals or turning your spiritual commitment into a dry, detailed set of rules you must follow to earn salvation? Sometimes "ask for whatever you want" confuses us. But remember: the preface to that was "If you remain in me." What kinds of things would a person who was fully abiding in Christ ask for?

**May 31. Read Matthew 26:26-30.** Matthew, mainly following Mark's account in Mark 14:22-26, put few details in his account of the Last Supper. But anyone who knew the Jewish faith would have known that the last hallel (hymn of praise) Hebrews sang at Passover was Psalm 118. Hebrews 7:1-2 saw Jesus' action prefigured in the brief story in Genesis 14:14-20. In that story, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought bread and wine to Abraham, and received a tithe from him. Psalm 118:6 said, "The Lord is for me—I won't be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" Verse 17 said, "I won't die—no, I will live and declare what the Lord has done." How do you think those words strengthened Jesus as he sang them in the Upper Room just hours before his crucifixion? How do those words speak to any fears you carry in your heart? How did Jesus' use the fruit of the vine to symbolize all the joy and newness he will share with his people in a world made new? Have you made the heart commitment that you choose to be there to share the kingdom "wine" with Jesus?