

Some Words About...

by Terence Y. Mullins

This article appeared in *Lutheran Partners* (www.elca.org/lutheranpartners), January / February 2006 • Volume 23 • Number 1

***Hupomimnesko (remind)* – ὑπομινέσκω**

The Greek word *hupomimeskein* meant to remind — either one's self or another.

The Wisdom of Solomon says that when the dread of death was threatening to destroy everyone, a blameless man intervened and “reminded them of the oaths and agreements given the fathers” (18:22). Josephus writes that when Herod was being considered for kingship, his sponsors reminded “them of the loyalty which Herod had shown the Romans” (Antiquities 14, 384).

New Testament

In Luke 22:61 Peter had just denied Jesus for the third time. The cock crowed and “Peter remembered the word of the Lord.” Jesus witnessed Peter's faithlessness. That must have been especially humiliating. And Peter would have remembered not only that Jesus had predicted his denial but also his own facile boast that he would go to the death for Jesus. Peter could not take it any more. He left the high priest's place and wept bitterly.

Luther considered John 14:26 as crucial to applying Christianity to the world. He saw the revival of Greek and Latin in the universities as a gift of the Holy Spirit, because the vernacular was easily corrupted by careless or tendentious users to serve their particular purposes. The original language of Scripture served as a corrective. He said, “Though the Gospel has come and daily comes through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it has come by means of the languages, by which it was spread abroad, and by which it must be preserved.”¹

We, too, see people twisting our language to their own ends. Luther complained of such people, “They do not look at the plain words of Christ when he says that the Holy Ghost will bring to your remembrance not what you shall order and command but what I have commanded and said to you.” Luther said that Christ was “careful to prevent anyone from bringing man's laws into the church.”²

In the second chapter of 2 Timothy, Paul tells his young assistant, “what you have heard from me with many witnesses, entrust to faithful people who will be able to tell others” (2:2). And he says he endures all “for the sake of the elect so they may obtain salvation” (2:10). He adds the encouraging words of the gospel (2:11–14) and says “remind them of this” (2:14). It is not just outsiders who need to hear the gospel. The saints need to be cheered, comforted, and instructed just as others do. In the words of the hymn,

*I love to tell the story,
for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting
to hear it like the rest.*³

It is on a different level that Paul writes to Titus. He is instructing him in organizing the church in new territory. Toward the end of the section of good advice on what is expected of Christians, Paul says, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities” (3:1).

The epistle of 2 Peter is addressed to “those who have received a faith as precious as ours” (1:1). There follows a list of the blessings received from such a faith and the qualities properly exhibited by the faithful followers (1:2–11). The writer says, “Therefore I'll always remind you of these things, though you know them already” (2:12).

The author of 3 John says that Diotrophes, a pompous big shot in the congregation, had been badmouthing him and bossing members around. “When I get there, I will remember what he is up to,” the author writes (v. 10).

Writing to a congregation dealing with men who were turning the grace of God into lust, and were denying Jesus Christ, the author of Jude says, “I want to remind you, though you already know this” (v. 5) — and he goes on to retell stories of people who were punished for their faithlessness (vv. 5b–11). The stories to which he refers here include references to the *Book of Enoch* and the *Assumption of Moses*. It is therefore generally assumed that there was a strong gnostic presence among those to whom Jude wrote and that gnostic vices were infecting the community. He rather harps on such examples (vv. 14–19) and can hardly keep encouragement from being mixed with foreboding (vv. 20–23) until at length he finds a note of joy in speaking of God (vv. 24–25).

Today

There were no videocams in Jesus’ day. His followers had to remember his words and deeds and pass them on. There is a lot more than first appears behind the opening words of Luke’s Gospel, “the things that have been done among us just as they were delivered to us by those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning.” And there is a haunting poignancy in the lines at the ending of John’s Gospel, “there are many other things which Jesus did.” Jesus’ followers remembered, and because they remembered we do not have to rely on philosophical speculation or cunningly devised myths. There is no excuse for Christians wishing that their enemies might be assassinated when Jesus clearly said “Love your enemies.” The Holy Spirit reminds us of the words of Jesus. Listen to him.

¹ Martin Luther, “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish Christian Schools,” *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. IV (Philadelphia edition, 1931): 113.

² Martin Luther, “Answer to Emser of Leipzig,” *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. III (Philadelphia edition, 1930): 340.

³ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* #661; *Lutheran Book of Worship* #390.

Terence Y. Mullins is a pastor, writer, and editor of curriculum. He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.