

Title: Whispers of the Spirit

Text: John 14:15-31

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Somewhere, located in that special place and in a box that still smells faintly like another decade, there's a stack of records. Not CDs or playlists on Spotify. Not something you can shuffle or skip. I am remembering those actual records, now slightly warped, sleeves worn thin, and corners softened by time and use. The kind of albums and singles we had to handle carefully, like they might bruise if we weren't paying attention.

And if we have listened to one recently, not just for nostalgia, but really listened, we know they don't begin with music. A record begins with a whisper. The needle lowers as we wait for the song to begin. We hear that soft crackle, knowing the needle is properly in the groove, and we wait for the music to play. In that quiet, almost sacred beginning moment before the first note arrives, we anticipate the song. It's easy to miss if you're distracted. That sound is easy to talk over and miss, but if we lean in and give it our attention, we realize the music doesn't just start. The song emerges from the moment.

And after the music starts, we can hear beneath the melody we thought we knew so well other sounds. These sounds are faint and hidden. Like voices just under the surface of the song. Not loud enough to take over, not clear enough to control, but present and guiding us by gently cueing the next line.

There is a whisper beneath the music. And I've come to believe that is very close to how the Spirit works. The Spirit is not replacing the melody of our lives or overpowering it. But the Holy Spirit quietly moves beneath our lives, faithfully whispering truth. Reminding us of who we are when the words don't come easily.

Because we do forget, don't we?

We forget not all at once or dramatically, but slowly, like a record wearing down. We misremember the way a familiar song becomes background noise. We forget our way as love gets crowded out by fear, busyness, or the thousand small urgencies that convince us they matter more.

Yes, we forget who we are. We forget what love requires. We forget the One who first sang us into being.

And sometimes, if we're honest, we forget because remembering would ask something of us. But Jesus, on the night before everything changes, does something remarkable. He doesn't hand his disciples a system. He doesn't give them a deep theological manifesto and a strategy for success. He doesn't even give them certainty. What does he offer? He gives them a memory.

He takes the bread and the cup. And he says, "Do this in remembrance of me." His actions are not just a ritual or a nostalgic exercise. What he offers them (and us) is a way of being held inside a truth they would not always be able to hold on their own.

Because Jesus knew them. He knows they will forget. They will forget who they are when the rooster crows, and fear takes over. They will forget what he taught when the pressure rises, and

they hide in a locked room. He knows they will forget their courage, their clarity, and even their love. And so, he points them to something simple, tangible, and repeatable. He shows them a table. He gives them a meal. He offers them a whisper they can taste.

He says to them, “Remember me.”

Not because he needs to be remembered, but because he knows they need to remember who they are in him. And maybe that’s the connection I didn’t fully see until I sat with Virginia Parr.

May I tell you her story? When I met her, she was in the early stages of dementia, and after six long years, I saw that her memory was slipping away. The once familiar names were gone. Time was unraveling in her journey to the end. The threads that hold a life together came loose, one by one. Our once easy conversation was difficult at best or nonexistent at worst. Her recognition of me and others was uncertain.

This decline was so severe at one point that, when I got there, I found she was unreachable. I was there for a pastoral visit and to share communion, but I could not reach her where she was in her memory. And so, I sang. I sang the words, “Jesus loves me, this I know...” And in singing that song, something in her responded. Not loudly. Not completely. But truly, she made the journey to the present.

Later, when the bread and cup were placed before her, she was confused. “What is this?” she asked. And if we’re honest, that’s not such a strange question. Because stripped of explanation, it is just bread. Just a cup. So, I said the words, those powerful words of memory, “On the night that our Lord was betrayed...” And something shifted.

She grew still. And then, she joined in. Not because she remembered everything. But because something or someone remembered her. And that’s when it became clear to me. What happened at that table long ago is still happening in our present. Jesus did not just give us something to remember. He gave us a place where memory finds us. That’s why when I am offering the children’s moment, I have us sing the words, “Jesus loves me, this I know...” I want them and us to remember.

I want us to remember a place where, even when our minds falter, even when our clarity fades, even when we feel far from who we thought we were, the truth comes back to us gently, like a whisper. “This is my body... given for you.” “This cup... poured out for you.”

Jesus’ words are not shouted or forced. His words are offered. And in that offering, something deeper than memory begins to stir inside us. Because at our Lord’s table, we are not just recalling an event. We are being re-membered. We are joined again to an age-old story, and our lives enter into the Alpha and Omega. Our lives are put back together.

Friends, we are restored to ourselves. Yes, we are restored to God and reminded, not just of what Jesus did but of who we are as beloved children of our good Creator. We are reminded of whose we are.

Friends, despite what others want us to believe, we are not accidents. We are not afterthoughts. We are not defined by our forgetting. We are, as we were in the beginning, God’s own creation. We are called, before we did anything, before we proved anything, and before we forgot anything, “Very good.”

And the Spirit's work, the whisper beneath the music, is to keep bringing us back to that truth again and again. When we forget, the Spirit whispers: "You are still loved." When we wander, the Spirit whispers: "You are still mine." When we feel lost, the Spirit whispers: "Come back to the table."

Because the table is not just a memory of Jesus. The table is our meeting place with him.

And maybe that matters especially now. Because we are living in a moment, here in this church, in this community, and in this wider world, where it is easy to forget. We find it easy to forget grace. We find it easy to forget patience. We discover it easy to forget that the person across from us is also someone God called "very good."

We are in a season of transition, which is a conscious season of waiting. And all transitions invite us into a season that invites both hope and anxiety. Everything in us wants clarity and direction. We want a voice that tells us exactly what to do next.

But Jesus offers something different. He offers presence. He says, "I will not leave you orphaned." Jesus says the Holy Spirit is already here and already whispering to us. The Spirit is already inviting us, not just to figure things out, but to come back. We are invited to return to the table, return to the truth, and into the quiet, steady reminder that we belong to God.

And from that place and from that remembered identity, everything else begins to take shape.

Love becomes possible again. Forgiveness becomes imaginable. Hope becomes more than wishful thinking.

Not because we have it all together. But because we have been gathered and held. We are remembered.

So maybe the invitation is this: "When the music of your life feels loud and confusing, listen for the whisper. When the words don't come, return to the table. When we are not sure who we are anymore, let ourselves be reminded."

Because the Spirit is still speaking and still guiding. The Advocate is still at work restoring.

And the One who gave himself at that table long ago is still giving himself now in bread and in cup. The Spirit is present with us in a quiet, persistent grace whispering beneath it all, saying to us: "You are mine. You are loved. You are and always have been... very good."

So, listen and remember. So, come and be restored. Come to the table remembering whose we are and sing, "*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. For the bible tells me so.*"