

The Wisdom in Remembering 9-11-2011

Try to remember the kind of September
When life was slow and oh, so mellow.
Try to remember the kind of September
When grass was green and grain was yellow.
Try to remember the kind of September
When you were a tender and callow fellow.
Try to remember, and if you remember,
Then follow.

Follow, follow, follow, follow, follow,
Follow, follow, follow, follow.

Try to remember when life was so tender
That no one wept except the willow.
Try to remember when life was so tender
That dreams were kept beside your pillow.
Try to remember when life was so tender
That love was an ember about to billow.
Try to remember, and if you remember,
Then follow.

Deep in December it's nice to remember
altho you know the snow will follow.
Deep in December it's nice to remember
without the hurt the heart is hollow.
Deep in December it's nice to remember
the fire of September that made us mellow.
Deep in December our hearts should remember and follow.
(Music: Harvey Schmidt Lyrics: Tom Jones)

Remember that song from the Fantasticks? It sings of our innocence and our lives in the “good old days” before the brutal awakening of September 11, 2001. It sings of simpler times

when we did not feel if we “see something, we have to say something.” It takes us back to the time before our trust was betrayed and we, as individuals and as a nation, were caught off-guard and plunged into despair and worry and grief.

We all remember where we were when the strange news began to circulate that one plane and then two had plunged into the Twin Towers and then another into the Pentagon and then another into the field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. If our memories have grown foggy, they certainly have been refreshed by all the ceremonies and television specials that have taken place this past week.

It is important that we remember. It is important that we reflect on what happened that day and how we have been changed. It is important that we find new, better ways of doing things that will not lead others to hate us so much that they want to wipe us out as a country. It is important that we manage to resist hating others and that we work toward understanding and acceptance.

It is important that we remember all the brave, self-less men and women who rushed into buildings about to collapse while many were rushing out. How many more might have perished had not those brave folks gone where angels feared to tread to lead others to safety. We remember them and those fearless passengers who took control of Flight 93 headed to our nation’s capitol intent on attacking our government and laying it waste. Because they were determined it was not going to happen, and because they died along with those who were so intent on working ill for us, they will never be forgotten.

There is great wisdom in remembering what went on 10 years ago. But, in remembering we need to take from the past what happened and then determine to learn from it and move forward. We cannot live in the past. It is the past. We need to ask

ourselves what we can do to make the present and future better for all.

Perhaps, as that song sang, “Without the hurt, the heart is hollow.” Sometimes we need the pain to awaken us to all we can and should become. Perhaps, we need “to remember” to help us understand that a divided nation, community and or church cannot make any progress in attempting to move forward. Perhaps, it is time, on this day, to resolve that we will all work together regardless of nationality, political party, or gender to discover solutions that will get us on track and that will help us discover that we all are humans united in a common goal—that of survival.

A reading by Chris Stedman sums it all up:

Tragedy can teach us many lessons. From pain, we can learn compassion. From division, we can learn solidarity. And when our world is shattered, as it was on September 11, 2001, we can learn to seek understanding.

On that violent day which shook us silent, America fractured. The lines between "us" and "them" grew thicker, darker, and harsher, muddying our shared humanity. We have since inhabited the shadows they cast, shouting at one another from across divides.

On this, the tenth anniversary of that heartbreaking day, we mourn and remember those we lost and all who were affected. But we are also given an opportunity: to overcome the lie of "them" and "us" and learn to live together.

The terrorists of 9/11 were guided by a narrative of intercultural incompatibility. But as people of diverse religious and secular identities, we can prove them wrong in our unity. By building bridges of understanding, we can emerge from the shadows and learn -- from one another -- how to be our best selves.

Those are thoughtful words. And that is all God requires of us, to become instruments and agents of God's peace leading us all to a wonderful world we hope and long for. Amen