

Remember me

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

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Sometimes, when I find it hard to pray, when faith, hope, and love are threatening to dry up, I zero in on a handful of desperate pleas from a handful of desperate people who come across Jesus in the Gospels. A hated tax collector in the Temple, for example. *Have mercy on me, a sinner.* A thoroughly befuddled Peter after Jesus had spoken strange words about “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood.” *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* A leper on a hillside. *If you are willing, you can make me clean.* A blind beggar on the road to Jericho. *I want to see.*

Sometimes I line up these statements, ruthlessly yanked out of context, and I examine them on the page. Sometimes I think that my whole prayer life could be encompassed by these naked entreaties. Sometimes I think that all the longing the world has ever known—the hopes and fears of all the years—could fit inside these spare, sparse words.

*Have mercy on me, a sinner.*

*To whom shall I go? You have the words of eternal life.*

*I want to see.*

*If you are willing, you can make me clean.*

I don’t often listen to choral music, but I had the [London Fox Taize Choir](#) looping through my headphones as I tried to put a few thoughts together for an information night a few weeks ago at our church related to our sponsorship of Syrian refugees. One song that I have been dwelling with is called “Jesus Remember Me.” Over and over, the few words repeat, drilling down into my soul. Another desperate plea from another desperate person.

*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

The words fall from the lips of a dying criminal on Skull Hill. He is not named, of course, so let’s call him Criminal B. It doesn’t say what he has done. It might have

been something terrible. Or not much of anything at all. Empires have never needed particularly good reasons to break bodies and put them up on grim display as both trophy and warning. Criminal B says that he is “getting what his deeds deserved” (Matt. 23:41), but who decides which deeds deserve which punishments can often seem a rather arbitrary and unpredictable business.

There he hangs, with his guilt, his longing, his desperate need. *Remember me*, he says, looking over at another battered and broken body hanging on another Roman cross. Remember me.

I wonder, is there a more human cry than this? To not be forgotten? To not come and go and leave no trace? To not just fade into the background of a story that seems to care little for us? To not just disappear?

In photos that came via e-mail weeks ago of the Syrian families our church is working to welcome to Lethbridge, Alberta, they were sharing a meal together in Lebanon. The room looks spare and sparse, just like the words mentioned above. There were few chairs, nothing on the walls. It’s hard to tell what kind of building they were in. They could be anywhere. It’s hard to tell much of anything from a few photos. But those faces. Even though they looked tired, apprehensive, uncertain, it was so good to see those faces.

I wonder if there is anything more difficult about the experience of being a refugee than the constant threat of being *forgotten*. Of just being one more face in an enormous swarm of needy humanity. Of losing your place in the queue or of having a door closed for some arbitrary reason that is impossible to understand. Of having the world’s attention shift elsewhere. Of being the victims of “compassion fatigue.” Of being on the road to God only knows where, alone, tired, hungry, directionless, disposable. Forgotten.

It was good to share even a few words with the families joining our community, even though they still felt a world away to us, even though I’m sure our city felt incomprehensibly far away (in multiple ways) to them. Just a few words, though, to say, *we have not forgotten about you and we hope you have not forgotten about us*.

Whether we’re extending our hands to neighbors around the world or clinging to Christ in prayer, sometimes a few words are all it takes.

Remember me. Remember *us*. Please. Have mercy. We want to see. If you are willing.

And Jesus, we find, *is* willing. He does not forget Criminal B and he will not forget us. *I tell you the truth*, Jesus says, *today you will be with me*.

To be with Christ. To be remembered. To be *re-membered*—healed, restored, cleansed, granted sight, put back together. This, truly, would be paradise.

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