

Wouldn't you like to receive a letter, or let's update to an e-mail or text or Facebook comment, and the first line was like the one said Paul wrote to the Philippian church, "I thank my God every time I remember you."

I think all of us would like to be remembered like that – the effect we have on the people we love, the people we meet, we work with, go to school with.

It's a fundamental question that we all ask: How will I be remembered? When all is said and done, what will people be saying you did?

Just look at the story in the Acts of the Apostles, what Peter says about Jesus as he introduces the gospel to Cornelius...how the message has spread throughout Judea and then in a few sentences is the gospel as Peter summarizes the life of Jesus with these few words in verse 38: *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*

Peter says he and the other disciples were witnesses of all this and he remembers Jesus: **how he went about doing good.**

I don't know about you, but I'll settle for that when my time on earth is finished. If it could be said about me when I'm gone, "Bruce Lancaster went about doing good, doing good things because he loved Jesus Christ and loved people!"

A summary of your life, if that was went into your obituary, or even more succinct – on your headstone – if you could write your epitaph, would you settle for that: **Went about doing good.**

Because I spend some time in cemeteries, I do read the markers, you never know when you might find a relative – and it is interesting to read those that have epitaphs – tells a lot about the person.

Some are not so favorable, like the one of this lady: Beneath this silent stone is laid – A noisy, antiquated maid – Who from her cradle talked to death – And never before was out breath.

What does this say to you? I hear some of you thinking, "I knew her!"

Will your epitaph talk about how you died, as this one: Here lays Butch – We planted him raw – He was quick on the trigger – But slow on the draw.

Or maybe you would write your epitaph that reveals your love of family and your planning for the future: When dear Papa went up to heaven – What grief Mamma endured – And yet that grief was softened – For Papa he was insured.

When you're gone, how will people remember you?

Peter remembers: Jesus went about doing good.

Not just doing something, not just going about, but going about doing good.

What you and I remember about Jesus sets the example for our life, how we follow him – how he went about doing good, how we go about doing good.

You and I know there is no lack of opportunity for us to go about doing good. Other people need us, and the other side of that truth is that we need other people.

It was a line from a movie, an older man is talking to two teenagers. He tells them that one person can do wonders, and two people can make a miracle.

I saw it happen at a small gathering at church, a Christmas party where gifts were given by members to children visiting from a children's home.

One older lady, who had suffered the pains of a conflicted family – no contact with her son or grandchildren for nearly 35 years: She didn't have to be there, it hurt more than a little; but she wanted to help.

One of the little girls from the children's home, about 5 or 6 years old, opened her gift, and then walked over to the lady, crawled up in her lap, and just snuggled.

The lady told me later, "I hadn't held a child in over 30 years, and I really wasn't expecting it; but let me tell you, I couldn't cry in front of her, but my heart was bursting with tears of joy. It had been cold for so long."

Two people can make a miracle – the one who needs you, and you, the one who needs to help the other one.

There's no lack of opportunity for lifting lives, repairing the fractures in a broken world.

I want you to remember what Hans Habe wrote: "The world is 1% good, 1% bad, and 98% neutral."

It can go one way or the other, depending which side is pushing, which side is going about doing what.

Or as John Buchanan, the Presbyterian preacher and former editor of the Christian century speaks to our day, "Silence is not an option."

We have to act – I know you believe **in** Jesus, but Jesus teaches us that believing is nothing until we act on that belief – it's not a matter of defining "who" my neighbor is, it's all about what we "do" for our neighbor.

Of course, there's Daily Bread and the Honduras ministry and Food Sunday and the Jubilee Partners and the Bethel Reading Programs and so many other organized opportunities through this wonderful congregation to do for others –

But when it comes to doing good for individuals, how often do you hear them say, "Now, I don't want you to go out of your way."

The gospel says it is not a matter of going out of our way, it's all about going the way of Jesus Christ – to look for daily opportunities to go about doing good: that neighbor standing next to you in the checkout line or passing by in a crosswalk, in the desk one row over in the classroom, maybe even one pew over in the sanctuary.

A mother and her daughter were having lunch at the mall. Sitting near them was an older woman who ate silently and appeared to be very unhappy, bent over looking nowhere, detached from all around her.

As they got up to leave, the mother walked over to the woman and said, "Excuse me, but you remind me so much of my mother, and she lives very far away. Would you mind if I gave you a hug?"

The older woman beamed and gratefully accepted the hug, and everything about her changed –her posture,

her eyes, where there was despair, delight; she looked better, life looked better!

As they got outside, the daughter said, "Mom, I didn't think she looked at all like Grandma." "Neither did I," said the mother.

I know you want to leave a story that will not be forgotten, in the words of Mother Theresa, "...to do something beautiful for God."

I like the way Nancy Morris says it, "*We know what we're here for – what to do: seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly with God; treat every person as though she were yourself. These are not complicated instructions. It's much harder to decipher directions for putting together a child's tricycle than it is to understand these.*"

We know what we're here for, what we need to be remembered for. What is it you do now, that people will thank God for you when they remember you?

A march on Washington is scheduled tomorrow on the 54th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. But did you know that's not what he said he wanted to be remembered for.

Just a few weeks before he was killed, he preached a sermon in which he shared with the people of Ebenezer Baptist Church what he hoped people would say about him when he was gone.

At his funeral, they played a part of the tape of the sermon, and this is what he said:
"If any of you are around when I have to meet my day...tell them not to talk about my Nobel Peace Prize...I want you to be able to say that I did try to feed the hungry...that I did try to clothe the naked...that I did try to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity...I just want to leave behind a committed life."

We will be remembered, but for what kind of life?

It is yours to do, to write your epitaph now – so that when all is said and done, they will say about you, "Here lies _____ who went about doing good."

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.