

MEMORIES OF MONAGHAN

Tourists who spend a holiday in County Monaghan can take a number of pleasant memories back home with them. One of the memories that is sure to abide is that of the warmth and friendliness of the local people. The beautiful, rugged landscape and places of interest like Rossmore Forest Park and Loughno Leisure Park attract countless tourists each year. Bragan Scenic Drive, west of Emyvale, is a favourite spot for those who prefer a cycling holiday. County Monaghan, with its many streams, rivers and lakes is an angler's paradise. Lough Muckno is renowned not only as a favourite spot for anglers but also as a centre for water sports, such as water-skiing and canoeing.

Music lovers are also well catered for. Country & Western fans head for Castleblaney. The Annual Rhythm & Blues Festival attracts many enthusiasts to Monaghan town. Gifted exponents of Traditional Irish music provide entertainment in most of the towns in the county. The Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Iniskeen and the Lace making centres in Carrickmacross and Clones provide the tourists with not just souvenirs, but also fond memories of their visit to County Monaghan.

Unforgettable Memories

Undoubtedly the most effective way for the visitor to get a realistic insight into the history and memories of Monaghan is to spend time with some of the local senior citizens and to listen as they recall events of bygone days. They will tell you that while there were certainly good times there were also some that were not so good. They may refer to the 'Annals of Ulster' where it is recorded that the Plagues of 549 and 666 were particularly devastating. Saint Tierney, who founded an abbey in Clones, died of the plague in 550.

Perhaps the most abiding memory that has been handed down to the present generation is that of the Great Famine. It is estimated that County Monaghan lost 40% of her population between 1846 and 1851. Magheracloone was the area worst affected. A Clergyman described the scene during the famine as follows - "Thirty funerals passed a certain crossroads in the course of a couple of hours. Corpses are found lying on the roadside or around the hedges."

The majority of those who were affected by the famine lived in small cabins with mud and straw roofs, most of which leaked in bad weather. When the weather was wet the rain fell on them as they lay in bed. Some didn't even have a bed and lay on a sop of straw on the floor. When the blight destroyed the potatoes the people tried to survive on stirabout or on broth made of meal, boiled turnips and water. Hunger soon bred disease. Typhus, dysentery and fever devastated whole communities. In 1847 the fever was rampant and claimed the lives of countless children.

Many of the unfortunate families resorted to the workhouses in Monaghan town, Clones, Castleblaney and Carrickmacross. These were the only official agencies for the distribution of relief. During the famine the workhouses were severely overcrowded and consequently conditions deteriorated. Families were separated. The women and children lived in one section while the men lived in separate quarters. Everybody was provided with food but it gradually became scarce as the numbers of inmates rapidly increased. Many of those admitted were already suffering from disease and the workhouse soon became a breeding-ground for infection. Inmates and staff alike succumbed to the fever. Attempts were made to organise

emigration, especially for the children. In 1847 some were sent to England and Australia. In 1849 twenty-four pauper girls from the workhouse in Carrickmacross were sent to Australia. They were given six socks, two shoes, two aprons, needles, thread and 12 ½ p. each for the journey.

The Famine Relief Works was set up to enable men to earn some money with which to support their families. Part of this work involved the task of breaking stones. The amount of their earnings was determined by the size of the heap of stones they had broken. On a good day a man could earn 1p. Dozens of emaciated, fever-stricken men died while working at Dunraymond. Thousands of men, women and children died in their little cabins and in the workhouses. Many died from hunger while others succumbed to disease brought on by starvation. Memories of such events would not be forgotten.

Memories can Haunt

The fact that memories abide not only in this life, but also in the next, is clearly documented in the Scriptures. In Chapter 16 of Luke's Gospel we read of how Jesus told His disciples of a man whose memories haunted him when he was in Hell.

Memories of his lifestyle

This man had been wealthy. He dressed in the finest clothes and feasted on the best of food every day. He remembered how privileged he was in comparison to a man named Lazarus, a hungry beggar whose sores were licked by dogs as he lay at the rich man's gate. He was hoping to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

In Hell the rich man was reminded that he had to leave all his wealth behind him when he died. He was also reminded that the torments he was now enduring in the fires of Hell could not be eased. His suffering was so intense that at this stage he would even have accepted help from the wretched beggar. However, Lazarus had left all his sufferings behind and was now rejoicing in Paradise. In Hell the rich man was reminded that nobody could help him now. It was too late.

Memories of his Family

He remembered that he had five brothers at home and that they were just like he had been. He knew that unless they repented of their sins and turned to God they would one day join him in Hell. So he requested that Lazarus, the beggar, should leave Paradise and go to tell his brothers of the great danger they were in. But he was reminded that his brothers had the same privilege and opportunity that he had squandered – access to the Scriptures. He was reminded that if they did not believe the Scriptures they would never be persuaded of their need to repent and get right with God.

Memories can Motivate

Dear Friend, we all have memories of bygone days. Some of those memories are very precious to us. But perhaps, like the rich man, there are things we have neglected to do. God forbid that we would wait until it is too late to attend to these things and then spend eternity haunted by our memories and regretting our foolishness. The rich man left it until it was too late. But you and I have the opportunity today to put things right. Remember how that poor lost soul in Hell finally realised that unless his family believed the message of the Scriptures they would join him in that place of everlasting torment. Perhaps it is now time for you to seriously consider your own situation and avail of this opportunity to get right with God while there is still time to do so.

According to the Scriptures:

» **Everyone is a sinner**

‘As the Scriptures say, ‘No one is righteous—not even one...For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard’.¹

» **All sinners are subject to sin’s penalty**

‘And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.² “But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”³

» **Salvation cannot be earned or merited through good works or religion**

‘He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.⁴ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it’.⁵

» **There is only ONE way of salvation**

‘Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”⁶ For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”⁷

» **All sinners must Repent**

‘God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.⁸ And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God’.⁹

» **Only those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved**

‘Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.¹⁰ Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us’.¹¹

Friend, the Scriptures remind us of the fact that Jesus suffered and died upon the cross as a substitute for all who will repent of their sins and put their faith in Him. ‘But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed’.¹²

Have you ever responded to God’s invitation? - “Come now, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.”¹³

Have you ever invited Jesus into your life as Saviour and Lord? He said, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”¹⁴

Friend, do not delay! ‘Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.¹⁵ For God says, “At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation’.¹⁶

Your Greatest Memory

How wonderful it would be if, in the years ahead, you could look back to today and say, *“That was the day I repented of my sins and put my faith in Jesus. That was the day I realised that Jesus paid the penalty for my sins when He died on the cross as my substitute. That was the day I asked the Lord to come into my life and to save my soul. That was the day I received Pardon for my sins, Peace with God and the Promise of a home in Heaven.”*

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Scripture References

1: Romans Ch.3 vs. 10, 23	2: Revelation Ch.20 v. 15
3: Revelation Ch.21 v. 8	4: Titus Ch.3 v. 5
5: Ephesians Ch.2 vs. 8, 9	6: John Ch.14 v. 6
7: John Ch.3 v. 16	8: Acts Ch.17 v. 30
9: Luke Ch.13 v. 3	10: Romans Ch.3 v. 24
11: Romans Ch.5 v. 1	12: Isaiah Ch.53 v. 5
13: Isaiah Ch.1 v. 18	14: Revelation Ch.3 v. 20
15: Isaiah Ch.55 v.6	16: 2 Corinthians Ch.6 v. 2