When was the last time you flew a kite?
You get your kite all put together, tie on the string,
and wait for a day with a good, steady breeze.
The day comes, and you go to a large open area,
lots of green grass, the sun shining, the wind blowing.
You release the kite, hang onto the string, and watch it rise into the sky.
Soaring around up there, swerving left and right,
it’s tugging at the string, as if trying to get away.
Then a strong gust blows through, the string pulls taut,
then snaps, and the kite lifts upward, free from all restraint.
Then what happens?
It begins to flutter wildly, then tumble and falls to the ground in a crash.
You run to pick it up, and discover it is broken.
There will be no more kite flying that day.
It’s time to go home to see if you can repair it.

Living today without a link to the past and the future
is like a kite that has broken free from its string.
But today people tend to live by the motto, “Carpe diem.”
Seize the day.
It’s an ancient saying from the Greek poet Horace in 23 BC,
but it gained renewed popularity 25 years ago
when Robin Williams said it in the movie, Dead Poets Society.
In the writing of Horace the phrase is part of the longer
"carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero."
"Seize the day, put very little trust in the future."
In context,
Horace was saying we should do all we can today to make our future better.
Don’t trust the future to just turn out well.
Seize today as a day to do things that might help it be a better future.

But today the phrase “carpe diem” is taken to mean just live today,
soak in the present experience,
don’t dwell on yesterday,
and don’t worry about tomorrow.
Just dwell in the now.
Carpe diem, seize the day.
People tend to live very much in the present.
And that’s good,
because there is much in the present to ponder and savor and give thanks for.
But the present without any linkage to past or future
betrays itself as chaotic and is, ultimately meaningless, like a kite with a broken string.

Our faith provides us with a sense of continuity between past, present and future,
and recognizes that all three are in the hands of God.
That dynamic is all over the Bible, Old Testament and New,
and even in the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26
You are thinking:
NEXT week is communion Sunday!
Why is he reading this text today?
Because it illustrates an important dynamic of our faith,
the interplay of past, present and future.
And it applies not just to communion, but to every facet of our faith and life.

First, the past.
Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
Remembrance.
It’s interesting in the original Greek.
The word is “anamnesis.”
Amnesia is…. What?
Amnesia is forgetting, losing your memories, even forgetting who you are.
An-amnesis is UN-forgetting.
Jesus gave the bread and gave the cup, and with each he says, “Don’t forget me.”
Almost like a string tied on a finger as a reminder, “Don’t forget!”
The meal points back to the past.
Back to what Jesus did for us in surrendering his body and blood on the cross,
so our sins might be forgiven
and we might be reconciled with God.
It’s really important because our faith is not a nice philosophy to live by,
and the stories we share are not something like Greek mythology or metaphors.
Our faith is in a real, flesh and blood person, Jesus,
who lived and died and rose again in a particular time in history,
in the past.
In this meal “We proclaim the Lord’s death.”
It really happened in past history,
and it really makes a difference today.
And forever.
   It means forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption.

While most of western society has no sense of history today,
that is not an option for us as Christians.
Our faith cannot be based on the feelings of the moment,
but must be rooted in the historical past.
Otherwise, it’s not really biblical faith.
The Jews based their faith on remembrance of God freeing them from slavery in Egypt.
Over and over again in the Old Testament we read things like,
   “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt
and that the Lord your God brought you out of there
with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.”  (Dt.5:15)
   “Do not be afraid of your enemies;
remember well what the Lord your God did
to Pharaoh and to all Egypt.”  (Dt.7:18)
All the prophets called on the people of Israel to remember this, remember that,
remember what God has done for you.
You can have faith today and live obediently today
because you remember what God did yesterday.  
That’s why telling the stories of the Bible and telling stories from our own lives 
is so very important.  
And the Holy Spirit works to make that my story, your story. 

To exercise and strengthen our faith, we remember the past.

And then there is the future. 
Paul’s closing words about the Lord’s Supper point toward the future: 
“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, 
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”  
Until he comes. Future.

Everybody thinks about the future. 
But different people view the future through different lenses. 
Some people just say,  
“Que sera, sera, What will be will be.”  
They face the future saying, 
“I don’t know. Whatever. Just go with the flow.”

Some people are pessimists. 
These are the Eyores in our midst.  
“It’s bad now, and it’s only going to get worse.”  
Some pessimists are angry, 
some are despondent, some are just resigned to future negative outcomes.

A variation on the pessimist is the worrier. 
They don’t know it’s going to get worse. 
But they fret and worry that it might get worse. 
Their thinking is full of 
“What if this goes wrong? What if that goes wrong? What if? What if?”

Some people are optimists. 
These are the Tiggers in our midst.  
Like the little boy in a pen full of horse poop, 
digging with his hands for all he’s worth. 
Somebody leaned over the fence and asked him, 
“Why are you doing that?”  
He said, “There’s gotta be a pony in here somewhere.”

The optimist is definitely more fun to be around than the pessimist. 
But they could be optimistic and be totally wrong. 
What if there is no pony?

Our faith views the future differently. 
It’s a curious manifestation of pessimism, (one might say realism) 
based on the reality, pervasiveness, and seriousness of human sin in the world. 
More than once Jesus and the rest of the New Testament warn that 
the future will see more of the ravages of sin and its destructive power. (Mk.13; Re.)

Christians have been adequately warned:  
The world is messy, bad things happen, and it’s liable to get worse, 
so do not be shocked when they do happen.

But at the same time our faith has ultimate hope for the future, 
based on Jesus conquering the powers of sin and death, once for all. 
Jesus and the New Testament tell us that God will, in the end, be totally victorious, 
that his kingdom shall come and his will shall be done on earth, 
as it is in heaven.
And his followers will have a share in that.
It is already accomplished in the crucifixion and resurrection,
and now just has to unfold in history.
So in Paul’s description of the Lord’s Supper he closes with the words,
“You proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again.”
Until he comes again.

So we are repeatedly told in Scripture,
“Do not fear.” “Do not worry.”
Because that future is ours.

So when the first Christians were hauled off to jail for telling people about Jesus,
when they were interrogated, when they were beaten,
they prayed… for greater boldness!
Because no matter what anyone did to them,
they knew the future was in God’s hands,
and the ultimate victory is his!
Do not worry.

The 21 Christians kneeling on the sand of a Libyan beach
with ISIS executioners’ blades at their throats
stayed faithful to Christ,
because they had a hope that extends beyond this life.
Do not fear.

The parent considering what kind of future their children will have
in a culture declining into sensuality and crudeness
leans on the hope that we have in Christ.
Do not worry.

The believer losing a physical battle with cancer knows
there is a spiritual battle that has already been won by Jesus.
Do not fear.

In the New International Version of the Bible
the word “hope” appears 97 times in the Old Testament and 83 times in the New.
The entire book is leaning forward into tomorrow.
And the Holy Spirit works to make that my future, your future.
We can face the future in all its uncertainty knowing one thing for sure:
The future belongs to Jesus.

And if you belong to Jesus, that’s enough.

We remember the past and what God has already done for us.
We hope for the future, when God’s work of redemption will be completed.
And there is also a sense in which Jesus is truly present here and now.

Paul’s recollection of the Lord’s Supper reminds us Jesus is with us in the present.
“This is my body; this is my blood.”
Is, present tense.
The promise is not the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation,
where they believe the bread and cup are
supernaturally transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ.
His promise is that, when we gather at the table, he is truly present with us.
In fact, he said, “For anywhere two or three gather in my name,
there am I with them.”
(Mt.18:20)

And at the Great Commission he said,
“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
(Mt.28:20)

The one in whom we put our faith is not stuck in the past,
but is present with us.
His Spirit is with us,
    bringing all the power and guidance we need to
    live out his life and carry on his work in the world today.

Think of the difference it can make to be connected to the past.

First, we can learn from the past, even from our own mistakes.
British philosopher Edmund Burke said,
    “Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.”
We can learn from our mistakes,
    and we can revel in the grace of God that has brought us past those mistakes.

There is so much that God has done for us,
    so much to give thanks for.
From the biblical history of creation and redemption
    to our own personal histories of forgiveness, reconciliation, spiritual growth,
        answers to prayer, and unexpected blessings,
            we have every reason to live joyous and grateful lives.
Because of the past we know God’s goodness, his holiness, his love, his justice, his dependability today.
So we have every reason to live today loving him, trusting him, and following him.
    Even when we don’t understand what he’s doing,
        we still love him, trust him, and follow him boldly…
            because he’s proven himself over and over and over.

And to be connected to the future:
It means we have hope.
    No matter the circumstances, we have hope.
    So we can live boldly in the present.

And what difference does it all make in a life?
His dad left when he was three years old.
His mom worked two jobs and was almost never home.
On the rare occasion she was home,
    she was exhausted and frazzled, with little left to give him.
Tended by someone paid to tend him,
    he grew up with a sense of abandonment.
When he was a bit older he sought out attention and love in unhealthy ways,
    doing whatever those around him were doing,
        just to be accepted as part of the group.
    Sexual encounters that substituted for real love.
    Drinking and drugs.
    Oh, not prostitution, not a gutter drunk or heroin addict.
        But not healthy, and never fulfilling.
He had no plans for his future, really no thought of a future at all.
Relationships came and went,
    but that nagging sense of unloveableness and unworthiness stayed.
    And stayed. And stayed.

Then one day a casual acquaintance said something in passing
    about a prayer being answered by God.
God?
    That word hadn’t come up in his life before.
“God? You believe in God? You pray?”

“Yes. Yes, to both questions.
There is a God, and he loves me.
And he loves you, too, and wants to have a relationship with you.”

It was the right word at the right time.

God loves you.
God wants a relationship with you.
Love and relationships, something he’d been missing.

It was the beginning of a journey of discovery:
God, church, prayer, Jesus, love,
real love, from God and from the people of the church,
a heavenly Father who would never leave him,
a family who would love him through his struggles.

And solid hope for a wonderful future.
He found his life anchored in what God had done in the past,
and lifted up by a future vision of
abundant life, resurrection, and the perfect kingdom of God.
The kite had its anchoring string and its lifting winds,
and could finally be what it was meant to be,
and do what it was meant to do.

And so can you.