

“FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Psalm 78:1-7

Introduction.

Family Reunions are important. Special family reunions are especially important. Grandma's 80th birthday, mom and dad's 50th anniversary, two Tolsma weddings in two weeks. It is important to mark and remember special moments where we see God's hand and God's special grace in our lives.

In the next eight days three families in our church are going to celebrate a 90th birthday, Grete Einfeld, Joyce Honcoop and Gert Huisman. That's a big deal.

You all blessed Phama and me with a generous gift of two nights in La Connor, WA on the occasion of my 40th anniversary of my ordination. We used that gift two weeks ago to celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary. Special events and milestones are important and should be celebrated.

We are celebrating 125 years as a congregation. What are we celebrating? 125 years of turning the page on a calendar? 125 years of doing what churches do? 125 years of all our good efforts and work and ministry?

No, we are celebrating 125 years of God's greatness, goodness, grace and mercy. 125 years of God's faithfulness, God's provision, God's kindness. We give Him all the glory, all the praise, all the credit. It is all about Him, all His doing. If God had not done this it wouldn't have happened.

We don't sing great is *our* faithfulness, but great is *thy* faithfulness, morning by morning, day by day, year by year.

God is sovereign over time and history, it is all His. God ordains all that happens in time and history. God directs the course of all events in the world and in our individual lives.

The milestones in our lives are evidence of God's greatness, goodness and grace. They are, as I like to say and remind you, they are cause for worship, cause for pausing to give thanks and giving glory to God.

This is His church, and it exists for one primary purpose, to glorify Him and bring Him glory.

Psalm 78.

We all fear the day when we might start forgetting things. We all have dealt with that in our parents or grandparents. Some of us are aware of it creeping in on us as we get older. We call them senior moments. We don't like the idea of forgetting.

There is another kind of forgetting we don't want to do, called spiritual Alzheimer's. That is an especially dangerous disease, to forget God and His goodness and grace.

The antidote for spiritual Alzheimer's is found in Psalm 78. Psalm 78 urges us to be a backwards people, a backwards facing or backwards walking people.

To remember the sayings of old.

To remember the things we have heard and known, things our forefathers have told us.

To remember the glorious deeds and wonders God has done in the past.

There is a sense in which living in the past is the best way to live going into the future.

God has given us a testimony, His Word, in which is recorded who God is and all that He has done for His people so that we can continue to have faith and hope for the future. We have a God who has revealed Himself and written down for us His ways, His will, His salvation.

This is a gift not only to us but to our children, so that they might know God, that they might have a hope and a future, and not be like that generation of men who forgot God and His works and commandments, who became stubborn, rebellious and disobedient.

We need a sanctified memory, a memory sanctified by knowing and remembering God and what He has done from the beginning of creation and all through salvation history.

Psalm 78 goes on to recount the Red Sea story. The Red Sea is the story of all stories. Out of all of God's OT deeds and works and wonders, the exodus of the children of God through the *Red Sea*, was the most dramatic act of redemption, the most spectacular display of God's glory and power and grace and mercy.

As NT people we have our own Red Sea story, the most dramatic act of redemption, the most spectacular display of God's glory and power and grace and mercy. The event that the Red Sea is only a shadow of and points to.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when Jesus divided the waters of sin and death and Satan and hell, when Jesus tore the veil opening the way for us to be reconciled with God.

When we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ and trust Him by faith for our salvation from sin and death, that becomes our personal Red Sea, an event we should remember and recount over and over again.

But the grace and blessings don't end there. Israel had their countless smaller stories of God's greatness and goodness, His blessings and provision. Water out of a rock, manna falling from heaven. Enemies defeated, miracles of healing and life.

And that is true for us, each of us have our countless stories of God's greatness and goodness, those times His blessings and provision becoming personal, intimate, right now.

When Psalm 78 urges parents to pass on their faith they didn't just do it in teaching, not just in commands, do's and don'ts. Notice verse 7 says forget not the works of the Lord, not just the words of the Lord. Over and over again in the Psalms and the OT part of Israel's worship was recounting the glorious deeds and mighty wonders God has done.

Psalm 77:11-14 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. 12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?

14 You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.

They told stories that taught who God is and what He is like, stories that revealed His glory and greatness and goodness, His abundant provision of needs, His manifold blessings.

Just in our worship this morning we read in the call to worship of God's mighty deeds. In the song One Generation we sang of His marvelous acts. In To God Be The Glory we sang of great things He has done.

We have been reflecting on and telling the stories of what God has done over the past 125 years, stories that show God's greatness, His mercy and grace, His goodness despite our sin and shortcomings.

Do the same thing in your homes. Tell stories to your children and grandchildren. Tell stories of how God answered a particular prayer, how God brought you and your spouse together, how God provided your home, how God directed your path, how God guided in a particular decision or provided for a particular need. Tell the story of a sin God convicted you of and gave you forgiveness. That will be a tremendous help to your children.

Include your children in prayers for particular needs in your family right now and then when God answers, mark it, make note of it, exalt God for it. Make it a cause for worship. Boast in God.

Everyday look for what God has done to us, for us, through us. Do it in a way that causes joy, gratitude, happiness, blessing.

Psalm 78 says tell the stories to your children *so that* ... in order that, with the end result that.

Psalm 78:7-8 so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;
8 and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Here is just a brief snippet of the blessing Lisa Quehrn wrote in response to my request for stories, more of which I will share this evening.

Our biggest blessing is when the church took care of us after the [Nooksack] flood of 2021.....tearing apart the house, transporting all the items to the dump, cleaning, washing clothes, storing things for us, helping unpack my kitchen and China Hutch items, monetary gifts and so much more.....we really could not have made it through those next 5-6 months without our church by our side. Thank you seems like too simple a sentiment. All of this was part of God's Providence for our lives. ... God knows everything and plans everything and makes sure you are ready for everything. He is in charge! He knew we needed you as part of our life!! Lisa Quehrn

Do you see what the Quehrn's saw? They saw the providence of God and they have embraced His goodness in it. Lisa told that story in Chapel at the Christian School.

You are not the author of your life; God is. That means every aspect of it—every location, situation, relationship, triumph, defeat, sunny day, and dark night, God is in it all.

Work hard to cultivate a deeper and deeper awareness of God's providence and sovereignty in all the things of your life and in all the times and seasons of your life. And tell the story.

God doesn't reveal the glory of His providence and sovereignty for nothing. He means for it to be received and remembered and rejoiced in. He means for us to make something of it. Another way of saying it, is He means for us to see it and savor it, appreciate it. Ponder it over and over, taste and see how the Lord has been good and is good.

Let me give examples of the benefit and effect knowing and noticing and loving His providence has in our lives.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences leads to a more God-centered life and deeper worship. Everything is cause for worship.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences causes us to see how everything in our lives is part of His design, everything is from him and through him and to him, for His glory.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences humbles us that sinners like us have received such an underserved salvation and kindness from God.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences keeps us from thinking the things that come into our lives are trivial, mundane, unimportant. This really is God's world and even the falling of a hair from our head has spiritual meaning.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences helps us be patient in our greatest trials knowing God's purpose and power and goodness are behind all things. It deepens our conviction and assurance and faith in the hardest circumstance. It gives us joy and courage and hope. Seeing the hand of God in absolutely everything strengthens your faith.

Seeing, savoring and sharing God's providences in our daily lives now prepares us for an eternity of glorifying the sovereign God of the universe whose mercies never end and whose grace is unfathomable. (Providence, by John Piper, 693ff.)

I have said the before the most beneficial and spiritually rich autobiography you can read is the history of your own life and what God has meant to you and is doing for you from the beginning of your life to now. You should re-read it over and over again, and you should read it out loud to those around you, especially your family. We will do some of that tonight. Please come to hear the stories of God's goodness in our lives as a conclusion to our 125th anniversary celebration.

Implications and application.

In the video of Mick Vander Griend's last words played Friday night he was asked what advice would he have for us and our future.

He said three things. Pray, pray, pray. Take care of each other. And step up to lead and serve in the body. Don't just take, but give back. Mick lived all of that.

To that I would add this to the next generation of First Christian Reformed Church.

Do not forsake your father's and mother's teaching, training, and faith.

Be a lover of God's Word, in it you have everything you need, you have all the tools necessary for living in this life so that you will have life in the world to come. Our future depends on knowing, loving and obeying the Word of God.

Be a worshiper of God, this will keep you from the idolatry of our age, and from the constant lust of flesh and pride of life.

Love God with all your heart, with all you have, and love His Church. It is the most precious thing to Him, He bought it with the blood of His only Son. Love His Church.

This table is for remembering and receiving the greatest and goodness of God. Taste and see that God is good. See and savor the greatness and goodness of God.

We receive it humbly because our sin is the cause of it. We receive it joyfully because while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us and rose for us and gave Himself to us and for us, and He has redeemed us.

This is a picture of that Red Sea event that shook our lives and forever changed the course of our lives and is cause for worship.

Prayer: Holy Father, take pity on us, for the truth is, we are finite and flesh, we are weak and foolish, prone to forget. Don't let our conscience grow cold and our heart grow hard; don't let us fall into such sin and selfishness that we cast off and reject your will and ways, God, don't let us make shipwreck of our faith on the rocks of this culture. By your Word and Spirit guard our hearts and minds, give us spiritual wisdom and discernment. Protect our church, the flock under your care, the precious blood-bought body of Christ. Be to us our heavenly Father and the Redeemer of our eternal souls. For the sake of Jesus, Amen.