

“THANKSGIVING MATH AND HISTORY.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

November 27, 2025, 10:00 AM

Text for the Sermon: Psalm 105:1-11, 43-45

Introduction.

The bane of all schoolteachers are students who ask, “Do we have to know this for the test?” or worse yet, “What difference is knowing this going to make in my life?”

Those comments may apply more to the subjects of math and history than any other. Feelings run pretty strong on these two subjects, either you are hot or cold. What is the use of algebra? Who cares when the war of 1812 was?

This morning I want to help teachers out by giving them a strong argument for the importance of being able to do math and history. Without those two subjects I submit you can't be a Christian. Without those two subjects you can't do thanksgiving, you can't give thanks or be thankful.

Math and history are essential, especially spiritual math and spiritual history.

Psalm 111:2 *Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.*

What does study mean? To study something means you examine it, you research it, you mull it over, you commit it to memory, you ponder it, you look at it from different angles, you work at understanding it, you apply it, you grow from it, you let it shape life.

The works and words of God are so great, they are worthy of that kind of study. Those who love God revel in the beauties of His creation, they delight in the wisdom of His providence, they are amazed with wonder at His divine grace. A lifetime is not long enough to plumb the depths or scale the heights of the works of the Lord. And eternity won't be long enough, for God's works and ways are infinite.

We are called to study God's works, God's deeds, grace, goodness. His wonders of old. And in order to do that you have to do spiritual math and spiritual history.

The Psalms are a wonderful textbook for learning how to do spiritual math and spiritual history. Listen to how the saints of old repeatedly did this.

Spiritual Math.

Psalm 9:1-2 I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will *recount* all of your wonderful deeds.

Psalm 75:1 We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near.
We *recount* your wondrous deeds.

Spiritual math is counting and recounting all that God has done before us and for us. To do that you are going to have to work with some pretty big numbers. In fact, you won't be able to count all the way to the end of it.

The act of counting and recounting was essential to Israel's identity, so they could keep accurate accounts of God's boundless grace to them, so they wouldn't fall into the terrible sin of forgetting.

Spiritual History.

Counting also means you are a student of history, studying what God has done and is doing.

We are all called to be living historians of God's grace and goodness and kindness and generosity.

Psalm 77:11-12 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.

Psalm 105:1-2, 5 Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!
2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
5 Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.

Just to read Psalm 105 you wouldn't know there was anything particularly special about it unless you knew some spiritual history. It doesn't have a title or an author or a little intro explanation like some of the Psalm. But Psalm 105 is actually a

Thanksgiving Proclamation written by King David on the day the Ark of the Covenant, the ark of the Lord's presence was brought back to Jerusalem into the tent of the tabernacle.

Psalms 105:1-15 is found in I Chronicles 16. It is both a historical psalm and a thanksgiving psalm. It combines and connects history and thanksgiving.

The ark of the covenant is the symbol of God's presence, of God's faithfulness, of God's grace. It is the very heart of Israel's religion and worship. It is filled with spiritual meaning and significance.

David goes to great length to give the ark of the covenant, the ark of God's presence the attention and worship it deserves. The worship is joyful, including choirs and trumpets and cymbals and harps, stringed instruments, wind instruments and percussion.

The entire Psalm recounts the spiritual history of God's faithfulness to Israel, from His promises to Abraham to the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the Promised Land. By recounting Israel's history, the psalm highlights God's love, mercy, and His covenant promises.

We are exhorted again and again in Scripture and especially in the Psalms to give thanks to the Lord, to make known all that He has done, to sing praises for all of His wondrous works.

Tell. We are not just to keep this to ourselves but to say it out loud, to make it known to the world around us. God's continual amazing grace should be a topic of our conversation with each other.

People love to hear stories, so tell amazing stories of God's grace in your life or family. Talk about personal encounters with God's amazing saving, healing, helping grace. Tell stories of incredible coincidences that are incredible providences.

Our older saints in our church and in our families should be living historians, constantly reminding us of what God has done for us. Tell your story, write your story.

And we shouldn't just be historians of the grace of God in our lives. We should read the history of God's grace in other people's lives. In the Bible, in history, in nature, in biographies, missionary stories. In the lives of friends and family. Ask people to tell stories of God's remarkable and miraculous grace.

When you receive a gift or a benefit or a blessing, you say something and you do something. You give thanks, you express gratitude and appreciation.

Notice the daily providences and faithful provision of God. Increase your God-awareness, all around you, all the time. Stir yourself up in your devotions with contemplations of God's hand in your life.

Thanksgiving is not just an emotion, but an action rooted in remembering God's past deeds. Thanksgiving is not just a private act, but a communal/corporate act that includes making God's deeds known among the nations and telling of His wondrous works to others.

Thanksgiving is not just a spoken act, but sung, to express our hearts joy. Out of the heart let the mouth sing.

How far back do you have to know spiritual history? How far back does the history of God's good providence stretch? Before the foundations of the earth. Back to paradise, back to Egypt, the Red Sea, the wilderness, back to the Promised Land. Back to the patriarchs, the prophets, the king. Back to all the promises of God through all His covenants with His people.

Back to the incarnation, life and death of Jesus, back to the apostles, the Gospels, the Acts of the apostles, the letters of the apostles.

Trace as much of God's electing saving grace in your life as you can. Trace as much as you can of His acts of sovereign kindness in your life, each manifestation, each expression of it.

Go back as far as you can and then walk your way forward like the children of Israel. Go back to your Red Seas, your Mt. Sinai's, your Jericho Walls, your impossible situations and how God was with you and lead you through the wilderness, through the wanderings of life's journey.

The older we get the farther we can look back over the long journey of life. And the older we get the more clearly we can see the hand of God, the workings of the Spirit, the workings of God's providence.

Why should we know math and history, spiritual math and spiritual history? How will it benefit us? Let me count for you some of the benefits and blessings.

We should draw great comfort out of recounting and remembering the providence of God in our past, comfort in God's merciful love and kindness.

We should draw great confidence in seeing His hand in our past and knowing that He is with us now in the same way.

When we connect our faith to our past experiences, we see God's hand and His goodness and steadfast love. This strengthens our faith in the present and our hope in the future.

Thanksgiving grows the more we do math and history, the more we count and remember. And this leads to worship and praise and gratitude.

One of the repeated aspects of the psalms is how they worship God by looking backward.

We should draw great hope in anticipating the providence of God for our future, that all our future is in His strong and sovereign hand. We must live by faith with the confidence that the sight of the past gives us.

I find when I recount the providences of God's mercy in my years past, I re-live the sweetness of it all over again. I taste the sweetness, I suck fresh enjoyment and pleasure out of God's grace and faithfulness.

Do you wonder about the future, do you worry about the future, are you anxious about tomorrow? Do back and take another long refreshing drink from what God has already done.

In biblical religion one of the most *dangerous* things is to forget math and history, to forget to remember what God has done. It dishonors God when we forget His great works.

One of the signs a culture is under divine judgment is a loss of wonder in the greatness of God's works. The prophet Isaiah warned about this 2,700 years ago:

Isaiah 5:11-13 *They do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, nor do they consider the work of His hands.* Therefore, my people go into exile for their lack of knowledge

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Count and remember the goodness of the Lord.

Recount and remember to bolster your faith and confidence in God.

Recount and remember when you feel defeated or discouraged or like God has abandoned you.

Recount and remember to suck a fresh sweetness out of God's mercies in years past.

Conclusion.

So now, today is a feast day, a holy day set apart to delight in the God whose steadfast love endures forever.

To all of you I say, go to your homes, gather with friends and family, be filled with good food and more filled with thanksgiving. Fill this day and week with outbursts of thanks to God, thanks for life and health and strength, thanks for your spouse, parents, children, relationships, employment, provisions, possessions, church, all His good gifts that are all an expression of His steadfast love for us. Tell stories of His grace.

And most of all, above all else, for Jesus and our forgiveness and salvation, for the Gospel of His great grace, for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and His church and eternal life. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.

Go taste and see, hear and tell, recount and remember, the Lord is good.

Prayer: Holy Father, I pray that you awaken in all of our hearts a greater longing to magnify you at every opportunity. Give us grateful hearts that glorify you and the greatness of your goodness and grace and glory. Most of all make us thankful that as good as this life is, it is not all there is and the best is yet to come. And now for all we have received and all we are about to receive, make us truly thankful, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.