

## Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 9.29.2024

## PSALM 78 - HISTORY LESSON

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### **PSALM 78:1-11; 37-38; 67-72**

1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

2 I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings from of old,

3 things that we have heard and known,  
that our fathers have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their children,  
but tell to the coming generation  
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,  
and the wonders that he has done.

5 He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,

which he commanded our fathers  
to teach to their children,

6 that the next generation might know them,  
the children yet unborn,

and arise and tell them to their children,

7 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.

9 The Ephraimites, armed with the bow,  
turned back on the day of battle.

10 They did not keep God's covenant,  
but refused to walk according to his law.

11 They forgot his works  
and the wonders that he had shown them.

37 Their heart was not steadfast toward him;  
they were not faithful to his covenant.

38 Yet he, being compassionate,  
atoned for their iniquity  
and did not destroy them;

he restrained his anger often  
and did not stir up all his wrath.

67 He rejected the tent of Joseph;  
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,

68 but he chose the tribe of Judah,  
Mount Zion, which he loves.

69 He built his sanctuary like the high heavens,  
like the earth, which he has founded forever.

70 He chose David his servant  
and took him from the sheepfolds;

71 from following the nursing ewes he brought him  
to shepherd Jacob his people,  
Israel his inheritance.

72 With upright heart he shepherded them  
and guided them with his skillful hand.

MAIN THEME: THE retelling of Israel's repeated forgetfulness and unfaithfulness in spite of God's astonishing grace and faithfulness to them, encourages believers to trust in Christ's obedience and faithfulness and not forget what He has delivered them from.

## II. LESSONS LEARNED FROM ISRAEL'S PAST

- We were introduced to Asaph last week, the author of this psalm, which is the second longest psalm in the Psalter.
- The psalm begins with a summons to learn from his words of wisdom.
- *"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!"*
- The message he has must be listened to; his message must not be disregarded.
- Like a prophet, he is speaking with the authority of God.
- He is going to speak to them in parables and dark sayings from of old...employing a proverbial form of teaching in order to convey the words of wisdom.
- This style is meant to engage the hearer and calls for thoughtful meditation, reflection, and response, much like the parables of Jesus did.
  
- But these teachings, these wisdom words, are not a mystery to the hearers.
- V3 things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us,
- These things are well known. They have been passed down from the fathers.
  
- And these stories from Israel's history, from their past, must be told to each successive generation.
- "But tell it to the coming generation." (4)
- The story and its lessons are of such value that they must be passed on to every generation.
- And what specifically must be recounted?
- "The glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." (4)
- That is the subject of the history lesson.
- The Lord's glorious acts reveal his power, love, mercy, grace, and patience with his people. These are worthy of the praise of Israel.
- The gospel message must be handed on to future generations. It must be retold, over and over again.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE LESSON

- Vv4-8 supplies Asaph's purpose for the psalm.
- The lessons from God's redemptive acts in Israel's history, the mistakes, failures, and sins of previous generations, must not be repeated.
- God gave his people his law. This was appointed by God with the specific command that it be taught by fathers to their children, and by children to their children, down each successive generation of the people of God.
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
- Each generation must remember it was the Lord who revealed the divine oracles to Israel. (Rom 3:2)
- The Israelites were expected to teach this revelation to their children from generation to generation.

- Why? V7 expresses it positively. "So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."
- This is the content of living faith.
- Each generation must be urged to put their trust, their hope, their faith in God.
- Each generation must be exhorted to obey God's Word.
- Each generation must be reminded of the works and wonders of God.
  
- V8 expresses negatively what must be taught to each generation.
- V8 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.
- What follows in this psalm is that Israel's history is one long, unbroken, repeated record of unfaithfulness to God despite his astonishing grace, faithfulness, and steadfast love to them.
- Each generation must be taught the history lesson so that they are not doomed to repeat it and rebel and reject the living God.
  
- This is a sobering charge to us as parents, the immense responsibility we have to pass on living faith to our children.
- Every parent's goal should be to transmit the content of faith to their children, so that their children, and their children's children, would know God.

### III. ISRAEL'S FORGETFULNESS AND GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

- The rest of the psalm is the recounting of Israel's history.
- His purpose is to contrast Israel's repeated pattern of persistent sin, unbelief, unfaithfulness with God's astonishing grace, compassion, mercy, patience, and love to his people.
- There are two main sections that recount the history of the wilderness generation and the generation that entered into the promised land.
- Here is the portrait of the rebellious generation.

#### MIRACLES FORGOTTEN (9-16)

- Asaph addresses the Ephraimites, they were the largest of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Ephraim is representative of the failures of the entire nation, they represent the spirit of Israel's repeated apostasy.
- V9 tells of a time that Ephraim failed in battle because of their disobedience and disregard of God's covenant.
- V11 They forgot his works and the wonders he had shown them.
- V12-16 they had forgotten how God delivered their fathers out of Egypt and the miracles of provision in the wilderness.
- They were no longer moved by the history of redemption, they had forgotten God's expression of loving care and concern.
- Israel was a forgetful people. They had forgotten what God had done for them.
- We also are forgetful.
- Don't forget the miracle of deliverance you have experienced in Christ Jesus.
- Don't forget his powerful rescue, delivering you out of bondage to sin.
- Don't forget the wonders of salvation and redemption.

#### MURMURS IN THE WILDERNESS (17-31)

- What did Israel do with the miracles in the wilderness?

- V17 Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.
- Vv18-20 reveals exactly what the sinful heart is like.
- Here's what they did in the face of the powerful deeds and wonders of God—they murmured and complained.
- They demanded God give them what they craved. They spoke out against God.
- They doubted God's ability to provide for them in the desert. They doubted his saving power.
- How did God respond to their ingratitude and defiance? He gave them what they wanted.
- They stuffed themselves with all of this heavenly food, but because of their unbelief, doubt, defiance, and disobedience, God's anger rose up against them, and many died.
- The unbelieving, ungrateful wilderness generation was condemned because they were not overwhelmed by God's ability to save, deliver, and provide.

### **MEANINGLESS REPENTANCE (vv32-39)**

- V32 In spite of all this, they still sinned; despite his wonders, they did not believe.
- It was only when God disciplined them severely, that they repented and sought Him and remembered that he is their rock and Redeemer.
- But it was a shallow repentance.
- Their repentance was deceptive, they were trying to flatter God with their mouths, as if God didn't know the true intentions and motives of their hearts.
- They would worship God outwardly, but inwardly, they were defiant.
- V37 Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.
- They were determined to be disloyal to God
- V38 is the theological center of this psalm.
- It is a beautiful expression of the gospel, it powerfully encapsulates God's dealing with his wayward and rebellious people.
- V38 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.
- In God's loving grace, in his steadfast love for his people, in his boundless compassion, he forgave their sins.
- How did God atone for their iniquity? How did he remove their sins?
- The same way he always does? Through Jesus Christ.
- Romans 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

### **MASSIVE INGRATITUDE (40-66)**

- IN THE EXODUS (40-55)
- This is the second main section containing history lessons of Israel's past.
- V40-41 How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert! They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
- The history lesson is not just about what they did over and over again, but the One against whom all sin is a violation of and directed at—God, the Holy One of Israel.

- Asaph shifts the narrative back to the time of the exodus, they had forgotten God's power displayed in how he miraculously delivered them out of bondage in Egypt.
  - It is a poetic reminder of what God did for his people in Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.
  - Yet they still did not remember his power.
  - They did not remember the day when he redeemed them from the foe.
  - The plagues were not just a powerful reminder of God's terrifying judgment, but also of redeeming grace toward His people.
  - Vv52-55 contains the beautiful imagery of God leading his people out like sheep, like a flock guiding them through the wilderness.
  - The focus is on the kind and gracious care of the Redeemer, who brought them safely to the promised land.
  - God drove out the inhabitants of the land and gave his people their promised possession.
  - At every stage of Israel's history, the covenant Redeemer takes the initiative to rescue his people, guide his people, care for his people, in spite of their repeated unfaithfulness and ingratitude.
- IN THE PROMISED LAND (56-64)
  - V56-57 Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies, but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers...
  - The people in the land, after experiencing all of the wonders and miracles God performed on their behalf, didn't turn to God in full devotion —they turned to worship idols.
  - Vv59-61 retells the time when Israel suffers defeat at the hands of the Philistines. The ark of the Lord is captured. (1 Sam 4)
  - V60 He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind
  - Shiloh was the only place where a person could have access to God. Shiloh was the center of Israel's worship.
  - But now, God rejects Israel, that is, he removes his protection and allows them to experience defeat at the hands of their enemy.
- But in vv 65-66 we again have the beautiful picture of God's astounding grace.
  - He fights for them. God is pictured metaphorically as a mighty man who is awakened from his sleep and like a warrior emboldened by strong drink, acts in furious courage to rout his adversaries.
- This is the history of Israel's past. Asaph retells the history of Israel's repeated forgetfulness and unfaithfulness in spite of God's astonishing grace and faithfulness to them.
  - He is exhorting God's people to faithfulness because God has been faithful to them.

## IV. GOOD NEWS

- The psalm ends on a note of hope and promise.
- Even though God rises up and routs his adversaries, that does not mean that Shiloh will be restored and that Ephraim will be saved.
- God rejects the tent of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.
- God rejects the ten breakaway tribes of northern Israel.
- But God chooses Judah whom he loves. Jerusalem will be the location of his holy sanctuary, Mount Zion.
- This is God's sovereign, electing love. This is God's grace.
- God chooses David, his servant. David was taken from tending his father's flock and will now shepherd God's people, His inheritance. And he

guides them with an upright heart and a skillful hand.

- David would be a role model for all of the godly in Israel.
- God is giving his people a King through whom all of his redemptive promises will be fulfilled.
  
- We have highlighted repeatedly in the Psalms, the Messianic promise given to David in the covenant God makes with him. (2 Sam 7 and 1 Chron 17:11-14)
- David's descendent would be the Messiah who would save God's people and whose kingdom would be everlasting.
- But as upright and godly as David was, he too failed.
- And God's temple in Jerusalem did not endure. It was destroyed.
- Psalm 78 points us to the fulfillment of the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ, the greater David, the greater and true temple of the living God.
- Jesus is the King of glory, who guides his people with a skillful hand, for he is the one who upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Heb 1:3)
- Jesus is the true bread that came down from heaven, the bread of life. (John 6:25-33)
- Jesus is the rock who was struck and from whom living water flows. (John 7:37-39; 1 Cor 10:4)
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd of his flock, who leads his sheep to find pasture and protects them. (John 10:1-14)
- Through Jesus's life, his perfect record of obedience and faithfulness to God, he broke the generational cycle of the repeated rebellion of God's people.
- And now his record of righteousness is the basis for our justification, his record of obedience imputed to us by faith in him. (Rom 5:19)
- Through his sacrificial death and the shedding of his blood, our sins have been atoned for and forgiven.
- In Christ, we have the full manifestation of the astounding grace and love of God for sinners.
  
- Psalm 78 is a mirror held up before us that we might see our own reflection, our own sinfulness.
- We are not better than the unbelieving, unfaithful Israelites.
- We too fail to remember God's goodness and grace shown to us in Christ. We murmur, grumble and complain.
- We are stubborn. We have sinful cravings. We are not captivated by the astounding grace and mercy of our loving God.
- But man's repeated rebellion and sin can't defeat the grace of God!
  
- The retelling of Israel's repeated forgetfulness and unfaithfulness in spite of God's astonishing grace and faithfulness to them, encourages believers to trust in Christ's obedience and faithfulness and not forget what He has delivered them from.
- Don't forget what Christ has done for you.
- Don't forget your deliverance and redemption.
- Don't forget how you've been freed from the bondage of sin and have been given the will and power to walk in obedience.
- Don't forget the wonders of salvation and life in Jesus Christ.
- We too have an obligation to live out this life of faith, humbled by the grace and love of God in Christ, and do everything we can to pass on the good news to the next generation.
- May it be so in our families and in our church, for the glory of God.

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?