

Remember!

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. It's good to see you all this morning. We're continuing our series in the Psalms today, and we're looking at not one, but two Psalms, Psalm 105 and Psalm 106. These are sometimes called historical Psalms because they recount large sections of Israel's history in the context of prayer and praise and confession.

So let me invite you to turn to Psalm 105. If you're at home, grab your Bible. If you're here in the sanctuary and you didn't bring one, we'll have some of the verses of Psalm 105 and 106 on the screen. These are long Psalms, so we're not going to actually read all of them together, but we're going to start by reading the first 11 verses of Psalm 105, and then a little later we'll jump into Psalm 106. But as we come to God's Word, let me pray for us as we begin.

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you would be filling our vision this morning as we come to your Word. God, help our minds and our hearts to be attentive to what your Spirit is saying to us, and help us to get a fresh glimpse of your glory, your power, your love. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Psalm 105. Oh, give thanks to the Lord. Call upon His name. Make known His deeds among His peoples.

Sing to Him. Sing praises to Him. Tell of all His wondrous works. Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and His strength. Seek His presence continually.

[1 : 45] Remember the wondrous works that He has done, His miracles and the judgments He uttered. O offspring of Abraham, His servant, children of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is the Lord our God.

His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word that He commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant that He made with Abraham, His sworn promise to Isaac, which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, to you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.

And then the rest of Psalm 105 recounts the story of the people of God from Abraham all the way to their entrance into the promised land. Now, as we jump into this Psalm together, it's good to ask, why is Psalm 105 recounting, retelling this history? Is it just because it's a pretty good story, a way to sort of entertain the people of God? Well, it is a pretty exciting story, but obviously there's more to it than that. Is Psalm 105 recounting this history just because it's true, because there are facts that we need to know? Well, it is a true story. It's history. These things really happen, but there's more to it than just sort of getting facts into our heads. So why recount, why retell this history?

Well, the answer is actually right there in the beginning of Psalm 105. Look with me again at verses three and four. Verse three says, glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord in His strength. Seek His presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that He has done.

So in verse three, the invitation is to rejoice. The point of telling this history is because as the people of God, there are times when we need joy. And then in verse four, the invitation is to seek the Lord's strength. The point of telling this history is because there are times as the people of God when we are weak and we need strength. And joy and strength come only from knowing the Lord. And to know the Lord, we must know, as verse five says, His wondrous works. That is the way in which God has acted in history. To know God, we must know what He's done. And that brings us to the main verb of Psalm 105, the verb, the verb, remember. Remember His wondrous works. Do you need joy in the midst of sorrow?

[4 : 33] Strength in the midst of weakness? The Psalm says, remember. Remember His wondrous works. Now, this biblical call to remember is more than just to sort of bring something to mind, more than merely to sort of recall something. To remember in the Bible is really to sort of re-center your

mind, your heart, your will around the central facts of the story of what God has done. So remembering in the Bible isn't sort of like a shopping list that you would take to the store. Oh, I got to remember to pick up milk at the store. No. Remembering in the Bible is more like what a married couple does on their anniversary when they remember their wedding day. Their wedding was a life-shaping event. And to remember it is to get back in touch with the profundity of that reality. And then to redirect and replot one's life accordingly. To put your mind and your affections and your decisions in line again with that reality. And so running throughout the Old Testament and on into the New Testament is this biblical call to remember what God has done, to remember His wondrous works.

So ask yourself, are you this morning in need of a healthy dose of biblical remembering? Are you feeling sorrow? Are you feeling weak? In your sorrow, in your weakness, are you starting maybe to feel a little despair? You know, every saint in the Bible and in church history has had to contend with sorrow and weakness. If you're feeling those things, it doesn't mean that you're failing as a believer. But Psalm 105 comes to us when we need joy, when we need strength, and says, here's the key. Remember the wondrous works of God. Remember the history of what He's done. Now, it's worth noting how kind of countercultural this admonition is. Most of the world's wisdom will tell you to look to yourself for the strength and the joy that you need. I think this popular wisdom was captured very nicely in the Disney movie Frozen 2. Anybody here seen Frozen 2? Okay, anyone who has a daughter that's under 10 has probably seen Frozen 2. But this is the climax of Frozen 2. Elsa, the main character, sort of reaches the end of her hero's journey, looking for answers. And finally, the answer that she's been looking for comes to her in the lyrics of a song that says, Elsa, you are the one you've been waiting for all of your life. You're the one you've been waiting for all your life. Now, of course, there's a healthy place, isn't there, for a healthy self-understanding. There's no virtue and self-condemnation.

In Christ, we're children of God, heirs of the kingdom. This is true. But friends, the biblical way through sorrow and weakness into joy and strength is very different than the world's way. The psalm says, remember God's wondrous works. He's the one you've been waiting for all of your life. Now, in particular, Psalm 105 is about remembering the wondrous works of God specifically related to his covenant with Abraham. God made a covenant. That is a binding promise to Abraham that his offspring would inherit the land of Canaan. Now, we're not going to read all of the psalm, but let's scan down through the psalm and let's remember God's wondrous works related to this promise.

[8 : 21] Look at verses 12 through 15. God protected the patriarchs when they were merely sojourners in the land. Verses 16 through 22. During the great famine, God sent Joseph ahead of them. He was sold as a slave, but then elevated to authority. In verses 23 through 25, God brought the people to Egypt, grew them in number even in the midst of the world's hatred. And then in verses 26 through 36, God sends Moses and Aaron when the people are in slavery. He sends plagues upon Egypt, his signs and miracles. Verses 37 and 38 tell us how God brought the people out of Egypt, not in poverty, but with silver and with gold. In verses 39 and 42, God led and fed his people in the wilderness, cloud and fire, quail and bread, water from the rock, and all of these wondrous works because God remembered his holy promise and Abraham his servant. And then in verses 43 through 45, kind of the summary, and so God brought them out, God brought them out of slavery and gave them the land for their possession that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Wondrous works of God.

Now, what does all this have to do with us here today? Well, friends, if you're a believer in Jesus, the Messiah, then you are a part of the family, the spiritual family of Abraham.

That's what Paul and the other apostles say over and over again in the New Testament. When we're united to Jesus, the Messiah, by faith, we become united to the family of God by faith. So when we're reading this story, this story is actually your family story too. Isn't it fun to look through old family photo albums?

You know, you get to, well, we don't have a lot of actual physical photo albums anymore, do we? But isn't it fun when you actually find one, like buried in the attic or something, and you pull it out, and you get to look through these old photographs, and you get to think of the stories and lives of your grandparents, or maybe even your great-grandparents, or maybe you're someone who likes reading the history of the places where your family is originally from. Maybe your family history, your family tree goes back to Europe, or to Asia, or to Africa. So reading about those particular

places and people groups gives you a sense of sort of story and purpose. But as a believer in Christ, the Messiah, when you pick up the Bible, you are reading your spiritual family history. In fact, by virtue of belonging to Christ, this story, this history is more true of you than any other story, any other history.

But what about this particular promise of the land of Canaan? How does that promise interact with us today as Christians? Well, let's take a moment and frame that promise. And consider that promise in light of the big story of the Bible. Where does the promise to Abraham fit in the big story of the Bible?

[11 : 35] Well, friends, when Adam and Eve lost their home in the Garden of Eden because of their sin, when they lost their dwelling in the land, God's plan wasn't sort of suddenly lost at that point. God's desire to have a people in his place under his rule, a kingdom that would stretch through all the earth. That plan wasn't over. God had a plan of redemption all along. So when God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, it was a start of re-establishing his kingdom, part of this bigger redemptive plan to restore humanity to a people in God's place under God's rule. And in the time of the Old Testament, God made that initial promise to Abraham true. He did give them the land. They were God's people in God's place under God's rule. But that wasn't the sort of end of the storyline. Now that the Messiah, now that Jesus has come, the promise to have a people under God's rule extends to every corner of the globe.

And the Psalms actually talk about this all the time, that the reign of God's king would one day be to the ends of the earth. And this is what the writers of the New Testament understood.

In Romans 4 verse 13, Paul mentions this promise to Abraham. He sort of references it in passing. And he says, the promise to Abraham and his offspring is that he would be heir, not just of the land, he would be heir of the world. You see, Paul understood the land promise to Abraham and his offspring as connected, just like the rest of the Old Testament understood as connected to a longer storyline. This promise of the land of Canaan was just a foretaste, just a seed of God's kingdom extending to the ends of the earth.

And here we are, sitting literally from the perspective of the Bible, in the ends of the earth. New Haven, Connecticut. This is not the center of the universe. We are sitting at the ends of the earth. And here we are, God's people, under God's rule, King Jesus, looking forward to the day when the whole earth will be full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

You see, the spiritual kingdom of Christ fulfills that promise to Abraham. And one day when the king returns, the whole earth will rejoice. The trees will clap their hands, the Psalms say. Those waters will roar at his glory and the glory of his people.

[14 : 14] Now, I say all this to say that this history, this history of God's wondrous works, brothers and sisters, this is your history. It's our history.

So when we're feeling sad and weak, remember the wondrous works. God keeps his covenant to a thousand generations. Did he protect the patriarchs when they were sojourning in the midst of the land, wandering to and fro? Did he send Joseph ahead and elevate him miraculously to authority to protect and preserve the family of God? Did he cause the people to flourish in Egypt, even though they were surrounded by enemies? Did he bring Pharaoh to his knees, humiliating all of Egypt's so-called gods?

Did the Lord liberate his people? Did he lead them and feed them in the wilderness? Did he give them a home? Yes! Then know that the Lord will protect you through trial and provide for you in want and lead you the whole way home. Why? Because God keeps his promise. So rejoice in him. Be strong in his strength.

Your God keeps his promises. Look and remember his wondrous works. Read the scriptures not as a dry religious text, but as your history, the history of God and his faithfulness to his people.

Look back over your own life and start to see where God's wondrous works have touched down in your own life. And everyone who has placed their faith in Christ can point to at least one wondrous work that outstrips them all. The fact that your loving Father has brought you from death to life in Jesus the Messiah.

[16 : 18] Don't think that your life is devoid of wondrous works. God has breathed spiritual life into you, given you his Holy Spirit, made you a part of his kingdom, and is inviting you to take his kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Remember his wonderful life. Remember his wondrous works. But, you know, remembering our history can be a bit of a two-sided coin, can't it?

You know, when you pull out those old family photo albums, you see and remember the good times, but you also see in those faces and in those moments captured in photographs, you see the reminders of your family's brokenness too, don't you?

The failures. The marriages that didn't last. The anger that gets passed down from generation to generation. You see the addictions. You see the abuses. You see the failures.

If we're going to remember our history, we need to be ready to encounter it, warts and all. And that's why there's no mistake that right after Psalm 105 comes Psalm 106.

[17:40] Psalm 106 is also a history psalm. In fact, it recounts large stretches of the same Old Testament history as Psalm 105, but the tone is very different.

The first few verses begin with a call to praise, but soon it takes a very different turn. So let's look at Psalm 106, and I'm going to read verses 1 through 6 for us, and these will also be on the screen here if you're in the sanctuary.

Psalm 106, verses 1 through 6. Praise the Lord. O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord or declare all His praise?

Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, when You show favor to Your people. Help me when You save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of Your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.

Both we and our fathers have sinned. We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedness. And then, from verse 7 all the way to verse 43, the psalm recounts the history of the people's sin and rebellion.

[19:03] Scan with me through this family record, through this uncomfortable family photo album. In verses 7 through 12, at the Red Sea, after God had just liberated them from slavery, shown His mighty works at the Red Sea, the people rebel.

In verses 13 to 15, in the wilderness, the people have a craving, start complaining against God. In verses 16 through 18, they rebel against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Then in verses 19 through 23, they make a golden calf, exchanging the glory of God for an empty lie.

In verses 24 through 27, they refuse to take the promised land, thinking that the enemies in the land were more powerful than the God that they served. And then in verses 28 through 31, they end up yoking themselves to the Baal of Peor.

That is, they started worshiping a false god and engaging in all of these destructive religious practices. In verses 32 through 33, they anger God at the waters of Meribah, again complaining against Him and His goodness.

In verses 34 through 39, after God gives them the land, they end up compromising with the people of the land and worshiping their gods rather than driving them out. In verses 40 through 43, in anger, the Lord hands the people over to the nations.

[20:16] Many times He delivers them, but the people still persist in their rebellion. This is a very honest psalm, isn't it? There's no whitewashing of the history of Israel here.

And it's written from the perspective of someone, the psalmist here is writing from the perspective of someone who sees the same rebellious tendencies in their own heart, in their own life.

You see, when I read the story of the Old Testament and the people's hard-heartedness, I'm reading my family story, my own story. And again, note how countercultural this is to admit one's moral failings.

To place myself not in the company of the righteous, but in the company of the sinners. But again, what's the purpose here?

Is Psalm 106 here simply to grind our faces in the failings of our forefathers and foremothers? Is Psalm 106 here simply to pile condemnation on our heads? To put us down in the dust and leave us there?

[21:25] No. No. Look again at verse 4. Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people.

Again, that verb, remember. But now the prayer isn't that we would remember God, but that God would remember us, remember us when he shows favor to his people.

You see, we confess our sins not to grovel in them, but to remember how much we need a Savior and to come again to the unimaginable reality, not merely that we can remember God, but that God

chooses to remember us even in our sin.

After all, even this psalm that is so full of the people's failure also recounts the Lord's mercy. Verse 8, The people rebelled at the Red Sea, and yet God saved them for his namesake.

Verse 23, The people worship the golden calf, and yet God allows Moses to stand up for them, and God relents of his anger. Verse 30, The people go after foreign gods, and yet God raises up Phinehas, and the plague is held back.

[22 : 38] Verse 43, The people become just like the nations around them, even sacrificing their sons and daughters to fake gods, and they fall under foreign domination. But still, many times, God delivers them.

The reference there is probably to the period of the judges, those military saviors, those rescuers that God raised up to rescue the people from foreign oppression.

The mercy of God, always sending rescue for his people. Verse 45 sums it up.

It says, For the people's sake, he remembered his covenant, and he relented. That is, he relented from judging according to, because of, the abundance of his steadfast love.

For the people's sake, he remembered his covenant. Again, we hear that language of covenant, of God's binding promise.

[23 : 46] And what Psalm 106 starts to show us is that the covenant that God made with his people was about a lot more than just a piece of land. The heart of the binding commitment that God made was that he would be their God and they would be his people.

What was his would be theirs and what was theirs would be his. In other words, at the heart of the covenant was communion, was fellowship, was union with God.

And this covenant, though we from our end persisted in forgetting it again and again and running after other gods and other lovers and other lords, God from his end never forgot.

And God took the initiative again and again unilaterally to uphold the covenant with his people and he sent Moses and he sent Phineas and he sent the judges and he sent David and the kings.

And so, in verse 47 of Psalm 106, the psalmist, probably in exile, lifts up his voice to God with a prayer that God would do it again.

[25 : 05] Save us, O Lord our God. Gather us from among the nations that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. Verse 47 is a prayer for God to remember his covenant and to come to arrive and to save.

God, here we sit in exile because of our sin. Come. Come. And isn't that exactly what this season of Advent is all about?

Advent literally means arrival. Arrival. It's the season of the year when we re-enter that longing for God to arrive.

We need God to come because our sins are great because we haven't upheld our end of the covenant and because we need a rescuer. You know, historically, Advent is actually a penitential season of the church's sort of rhythms of prayer.

Advent's full of a lot of sentiment right now and sort of things like that, but it started out as a time for the church to pray prayers of repentance and humility together and remembering our great need for a Savior.

[26 : 33] it's the time when we remember once again that our biggest need isn't that we would remember God, but our biggest need is that God would remember us.

So, brothers and sisters, this Advent season, what is there in your story, in your history, if you were to tell it warts and all, what is there today that you would need to confess?

What sins and failures in your life have you been denying or hiding or maybe excusing? What sins have you inherited from your family that still plague you, that you haven't been able to remove and rid from your life?

Psalm 106 is an invitation to confession. But it's an invitation to confession in the context of great hope because the history of the people's failure is matched by the history of God's mercy and rescue.

And so, when we confess our sins, we do so with the same humility but also with the same confidence. The same confidence that starts off Psalm 106.

[28 : 04] Psalm 106 starts, Oh, give thanks to the Lord for He's good for His steadfast love endures forever. And friends, how much more can we say that this morning?

Knowing that God has sent not just Moses, not just Phineas, not just Deborah or Gideon or Samuel or the judges, not just David and the kings, knowing that the fullness of time has come and that God has sent His own Son.

You see, God always had to fulfill the covenant for us. He was always faithful on His side, of course, but what about our side? And this is the wonder and the mystery of Christmas, isn't it?

When God took on human nature, He could now fulfill the covenant from our side for us. God in Christ, in our place, in our human nature, He upholds our end of the relationship for us.

And now, no matter what history holds, what's His is mine and what's mine is His. He will be our God and we will be His people forever. And that promise is open to all who place their trust in Christ, the great covenant keeper.

[29 : 28] So take heart, brothers and sisters. This is your history. This is your God. God. The history of Psalm 105 starts in the land with the patriarchs and ends in the land with conquest.

And then the history of Psalm 106 starts in slavery in Egypt and ends in exile. But what about the history of the whole Bible? The history of the whole Bible begins in a garden with God and it ends in a garden that's become a city with God.

and at the center of that city is the Son, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God, the Savior who's come, the Lord Jesus Christ. And if your history is bound to His, then let your heart rejoice and be strong and know that there is absolutely no failure that can undermine the faithfulness of your Savior.

Amen? Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we pray, come, forgive us our sins, strengthen us, give us your joy, help us to remember that you hold all things in your hands and you love us.

We pray this, Father, in the name of Christ. Amen.