



THE STORY OF
Everything
LUKE 24:27

Story of Andras Toma.

A Hungarian man was found in a Russian mental hospital in the summer of 2000. He had been a prisoner of war from January 1945. Due to health issues was transferred to a hospital, but due to the fact that he was in a hospital rather than a prison camp he was persona non grata for the Hungarian authorities; he was presumed dead in 1954. Was kept largely in isolation and was unable to communicate with anyone else – he didn't speak Russian and they didn't speak Hungarian. He was identified by a doctor who grew up close to the Hungarian boarder and so recognized the old rare dialect used by Andras (the hospital had long presumed his mumblings were the mumblings of a madman). After being repatriated one of the first things he asked for was a mirror. It had been five decades since he had seen himself. Can you imagine not being aware of the physical changes of your body from that of a 20 year old soldier to that of an emaciated, grizzled man of 75? How we see and understand ourselves is a product of our memories. Even kids develop in this way: Dad do you remember when...and they can go on about everything from the ridiculous to the sublime. "Do you remember when I laughed so hard my drink came out my nose!" to..."Do you remember when Grandma died and I saw you cry; I was sad too."

Today, we consider two historical psalms, so-called because they look at significant parts of Israel's history as recorded in the first five books of the bible (the books of Moses). Given that we are now in Joshua on Sunday morning it is a great time to look at these two psalms: 105 and 106. We could also call these psalms of remembrance for it is the key theme. Remembering is something the people of God are frequently called to do: what we are to remember, how we are to remember, and why we remember.

Turn to Psalm 105:

Begins like this:

***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!***

***³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!***

***⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!***

***⁵ Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,***

The one we praise is the "Lord our God" and his "judgments are in all the earth". What is he like? "He remembers his covenant forever. (v8)" What follows is the historic evidence for this as the psalmist tells Israel's story, remembering the wonders God has done:

-he remembers God's covenant with Abraham (v. 9-15)

-he remembers the story of Joseph in vv17-25

-as a famine hits the land, the psalmist writes, "he sent a man", and through this man Joseph God made his people fruitful and powerful before their enemies.



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-from vv26-45 he remembers God sending Moses and bringing the people deliverance and freedom via the Exodus.

Look through the psalm and see all the verbs that show God's intentions and actions starting with he remembers. He commands, he sends, he makes fruitful, he turns, he sends again, he speaks, he gives, he strikes down, he brings out, he covers, and finally, he opens. What a picture this last one is: "*He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river.*" A desert is a lifeless wasteland, but for God! Who brings life to the lifeless – nobody but God, and since Paul identifies this rock with Christ, what a beautiful foreshadowing of the new life we have in Christ! Then v42 tells us why God has done his wondrous acts: "For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant." How precious a truth, how glorious a God is this? God not only remembers his promise, but he remembers Abraham! Our Sovereign God is our Sovereign *personal* God.

Psalm 105 begins with the command to praise the Lord, to remember the wonders he has done and it ends with: "*that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord!*"

All of God's blessings—all of the works that Israel was called to remember and give praise for—were meant to lead to obedience.

A summary of Psalm 105 might read like: *Remember the wondrous works that God has done to enable you live joyfully and obediently in the land I have given you.*

As a people they were to be a display of God's power and goodness to the nations.

This brings us to Psalm 106. If the tagline of Psalm 105 is "**Remember his wondrous works**", the tagline of Psalm 106 is simply and sadly, "**They forgot his wondrous works.**" Last week Luke did a great job with Psalm 77 and considering what we are to do when we suffer: we cry out to God, we remember God, and we trust God. Being a victim of suffering is hard, be it physical, emotional, relational, financial etc. You know what might be even more dispiriting? When you suffer because of yourself. When you fail and you cannot look around at anybody else or any other circumstance as the source of your suffering. You look in the mirror and see failure. This was Israel. They had everything in their favour because they had God's favour. Every line of Psalm 105 shouts the faithfulness of their God! Psalm 106 is also a historical psalm of remembrance – but a remembrance of failure.

The introduction is similar—in verses 1-5 we see a declaration of praise, a request for blessing, a plea for salvation. But from verses 6 to 43, we see that the Psalmist is urging a different kind of remembering—not as much what God has done as what his people have done. And it is not easy reading: the psalmist recounts the way that Israel had repeatedly *failed* to do precisely what Psalm 105 said they should do.



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We read the psalm before so let's just summarize the verbs and actions like we did in 105:

They...

- did not consider (v. 7)
- did not remember (v. 7)
- rebelled by the Red Sea (v. 7)
- forgot his works (v. 13)
- did not wait (v. 13)
- gave in to their craving (v. 14)
- tested God (v. 14)
- envied Aaron and Moses (v. 16)
- worshiped an idol (v. 19)
- forgot God their saviour (v. 21)
- despised the promised land (v. 24)
- did not believe God's promise (v. 24)
- grumbled (v. 15)
- disobeyed (v. 25)
- ate sacrifices offered to "lifeless gods" (v. 28)
- provoked the Lord (v. 29)
- took on the customs of other nations (v. 35)
- served idols (v.36)
- sacrificed their children (v. 37)
- shed innocent blood (v. 38)
- defiled themselves (v. 39)

Look at the trajectory. It all starts with not remembering. They did not consider his wondrous works or remember his steadfast love (v7). The point of remembering was to obey and through this loving obedience be a light to the nations, a testimony and display of the mighty works of God to the people.

This bad remembering lead to bad behaviour.

Then it gets worse. Verses 34-39 describe a gruesome, pathetic scene: God's chosen people, chose to bow down to false gods, child sacrifice, and murder. Their acts made them "unclean" and polluted their land – polluted with blood. "Unclean" to an Israelite was a sobering state: someone unclean was isolated from God and the camp, and foreshadows the nation's coming exile.

What about us? What can we learn? Where do you turn when you look in the mirror and see a failure. These psalms tell us there is hope for failures like you and me!

1. We remember God's Wondrous Works

The greatest of these works is his salvation. When we fail, to often we respond in one of two bad ways: we resort to shame or we resort to effort (we resolve to try harder). The sin of self-reliance is behind both of these responses. The Christian doctrine of salvation is



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the death-blow to *all* self-sufficiency. The initiative is God's. The work is God's. The maintenance is God's. The future is God's. Your failures past, your failures present, your failures future, by faith in Christ, are all cast into the see of God's forgetfulness. You did not earn or deserve your salvation, you will not, nor cannot, keep it by your efforts. Our flesh will constantly seek to resurrect human effort to please God, and when we fail, all the more! I love how Spurgeon puts it: "Man's business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, 'Lord, save, or I perish.' Man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel that he can do nothing at all." When we fail we look to the Lord and remember his works.

What does it mean to remember? I am not opposed to putting up favourite verses on the refrigerator, but this is also where we put our grocery lists and doctor's appointments. The kind of remembering God speaks of in the bible is more than what it takes to remember to get the milk or go to Dr. Smith. This remembering is a centering of our hearts and minds upon the Lord. It is an alignment of our affections, that causes conformity of our actions to our true identity. Think of an affection you have for a person. Thinking about them, reminiscing, recalling commitments made, trials overcome etc. Does it not have the affect of renewing and strengthening your affection? This is why Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." He doesn't say this like you grandma who may say "if you *really* loved me you would phone more often!" He is stating that if you receive my love, and thus set your affections back toward me, it will be natural to follow me and speak of me.

Thankfully, our obedience is not dependent upon ourselves; look back to Psalm 105:4, and the command to "*Seek the Lord and his strength*". We are not meant to walk and do life on our own!

2. We tell of God's Wondrous Works

First note that telling requires remembering. We cannot speak of that which we don't remember. There is something in the telling of stories. Western culture has moved away, somewhat, from storytelling, but they are profoundly powerful. In my seminary training I had friends from the Middle East who spoke of the cultural importance of storytelling in the sharing of their faith. In the Ancient Near East, it was all the more critical. The bible encourages us to tell each other the stories of God. Stories of his attributes and works, and specifically his works in our own lives.

"Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (Heb 3:13)

The New Testament reveals that encouragement was a regular part of the early church's life together (Acts 13:15, 16:40, 18:27, 20:1-2, 27:36).

Rom 15:4-5

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May

A Tale of Two Psalms – Psalms 105-106
CBC Ilderton

Rev. G. S. Prickett
28 March 2021



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the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,”

They shared Scripture-saturated words with each other to spur one another on in faith (Acts 14:22), hope (Rom. 15:4), unity (Rom. 15:5; Col. 2:2), joy (Acts 15:31), strength (Acts 15:32), fruitfulness (Heb. 10:24-25), faithfulness (1 Thess. 2:12), perseverance (Heb. 10:25), and the certainty of Christ’s return (1 Thess. 4:18).

This is why we are encouraging you all to immerse yourself in the Story of Everything, to see the outworking of our Sovereign God’s hand through history. This is our story! Moreover, our own stories need to be told. We used to occasionally tell “God at Work” stories – ways God was at work in our congregation – maybe we should get back into that habit. But can I encourage you that you don’t need to wait for the church to serve these stories to you through a program: go find them or tell them yourself! Ask the Lord who you may encourage and give them a phone call. Think of how encouraging it is if someone were to phone and say, “I see God at work in your life”, citing a specific example. Or share a scripture that has been particularly encouraging to you. Be discerning and prayerful for everyone is different in terms of how they receive encouragement, but generally, it is great to encourage with:

- 1) scripture
- 2) specific evidence of God’s grace, and
- 3) make it a habit!

Even with all God has done for us and the encouragement of others, we will still fail. What hope is there for failures?

3) Remember the God who remembers!

Lets remind ourselves of how Psalm 106 ends, even after all the failure.

Psalm 106:44-48

*44 Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress,
when he heard their cry.
45 For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
46 He caused them to be pitied
by all those who held them captive.
47 Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.
48 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, “Amen!”
Praise the Lord!*



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Thankfully, there is more to the story than our ability or our inability to remember as we should. God remembers!

- vv 44-45: *“Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.”*

Despite our forgetting and failure... God remembers. Again, remembering is not just mental recall, but to centre the heart and mind. God does this because it is his nature. He remembered and then acted in accordance with his nature – his steadfast love.

Why does God remember? Why does he save us in spite of ourselves. He remembers for two reasons:

Psalm 106:8:

“Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known.”

He remembers and is faithful to his promise because it is in his nature to do so, and to forget his people would be against his character. For *his name's sake*, he remembers us.

“for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.”

He remembers and is faithful to his promise because he loves his forgetful people and he delights in showing mercy. For *our sake*, he remembers us.

God does not forget like we do. He remembers his promises to guide and bless us.

We can have confidence that even when we are forgetful and idolatrous, God is not. This does not give license to be forgetful or to live carelessly, but is a reminder that God's love is a determined, persistent love. It is a love that is bigger than all our forgetfulness.

This is good news of Psalm 106.