

Happy Thanksliving

Overcoming Spiritual Amnesia

November 12, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a next step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture: Ps 78:1-8 (NRSVUE)

*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 ancestors have told us.*

*⁴ We will not hide them from their children;
we will 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 decree in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children,*

*⁶ that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up 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 ancestors,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

Commentary:

Asaph, a priest and worship leader in the days of King David, is credited with a number of Psalms including Psalm 78, which begins in a unique manner - *"Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."* This means more than just "hear what I am saying." The Hebrew language is very descriptive. It literally says, "stretch your ears to the words of my mouth." Asaph is talking about an active, eager and responsive listening which results in learning and obedience.

Verse two tells us why we should listen so closely. "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter dark sayings (hidden things) from of old." ([Psalm 78:2](#)) A parable is a teaching device. It is a story with a spiritual meaning or application. The gospel of Matthew later quotes this very verse from Psalm 78 as pointing towards Jesus' teaching ministry through parables ([Matt 13:34](#)).

So what is Psalm 78 getting at here? The emphasis once again is on the effort to be put forth by the hearers. 'Listen closely' — why? Because if we don't listen closely and respond in repentance/obedience, we are going to miss the point just as Israel's ancestors did. Asaph then sets forth the history of Israel as a parable of sorts, a story with a lesson to be learned for which verses 1-8, the lectionary reading for today, serve as the preamble. The rest of the Psalm recounts Israel's deliverance from Egypt and entry into the Promised Land (among other events) leading to the reign of King David. So in reality, the parable or 'hidden things' of the Psalm do not consist in hard to understand theological mysteries or riddles. Psalm 78 couldn't be clearer – through the ages the Lord has acted decisively and graciously toward his people, but they continually forget and fall away in disobedience, ultimately leading to destructive consequences. Israel's ongoing cycle of chronic forgetfulness and unbelief necessitates God's gracious forgiveness and Israel's repentance if the story of God and God's people is to continue. Psalm 78 hopes that the next generation will finally 'get it,' but as the story continues into the New Testament we realize that ultimately that God's most decisive and necessary act of grace will culminate in the cross and empty tomb. - adapted from online commentary by Ray Fowler

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. This Psalm challenges God's people to stop and give complete attention. Why is active listening so difficult for us?

2. Psalm 78 recounts history - a history of God's faithfulness in spite of human failure. Yet God's people seem to forget these history lessons and repeat their same mistakes. Do you think this amnesia is unique to Israel? Why do humans have difficulty learning from the past?
3. The Psalm challenges the current generation to pass on to the next generation *the glorious deeds of the LORD and his might and the wonders that he has done*. Why do you think this is important? When you think about your journey with God, what lesson or lessons would you like to pass on to the next generation?
4. In verse 7, the Psalmist gives a reason for passing on spiritual lessons learned to the next generation – *so that they should set their hope in God*. When you consider other alternative sources of hope in this world, why would *hoping in God* be most impactful?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Psalm 78:7 *so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;*