



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 26, 2009

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 78:1-8

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Amos 7:10-17

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78

Second Lesson: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

### **Keep Repeating the Praiseworthy Deeds of the Lord**

So more may know Him

So more may trust in Him

You wives here this morning; how many of you think your husbands have selective hearing? Any of you? Someone was honest in front and raised their hand. It seems like most of the time I hear women accuse men of that, but sometimes I think we all believe that; that someone actually heard what we said but they ignored it because they don't want to acknowledge it. But maybe sometimes it's just that we don't hear so well. I know I don't hear like I used to be able to. There are a lot of times when I have to say to people "huh" or "pardon me" or "could you repeat that?" Whether it's selective hearing or just not being able to hear well, when you ask someone to repeat it or you have to repeat yourself, it gets frustrating, doesn't it? And when you get frustrated, what do you do? You quit repeating yourself, right? You say, "Oh, never mind" and then snap about that or maybe about something else. But it's frustrating to have to keep repeating yourself.

But now this morning, our God comes to us in this Psalm, the Psalm of Asaph, and reminds us of how important it is that we don't get frustrated and that we keep repeating the praiseworthy deeds of our God. Because sometimes you and I get frustrated and think we've already said that once and we don't need to say it again because we've already talked about who God is and what God has done. "We told that person that. They should know better. If they don't know better, it's their own fault."

That's not the spirit we are to have. We are supposed to have the Spirit of Christ. We should have that spirit of patience; patient love that we heard this morning in our Bible study about the flood – that kind of love that continues to keep on repeating the praiseworthy deeds of our God over and over and over so that more people may know them and so that more people may put their trust in them. Because in order to put your trust in them, you have know them.

These words of Asaph go on a lot longer than just the part we sang or the extra verse I just read to you when I read the text. This Psalm goes on for some 72 verses. It's a pretty long Psalm. He not only says, "Keep telling the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord," he goes through and lists them all. Then he talks about the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord in contrast to the unfaithfulness of God's people. Especially he talks about the unfaithfulness of Ephraim, or the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which we heard about in

our First Lesson today. Amaziah and Jeroboam, both from the North, both from the Northern Kingdom, always had godless kings and were falling away from God. They are rebuked in this Psalm for setting up false idols, false gods, and false altars. Every time they are rebuked, it then goes on to portray how patient and gracious God is. How God, in spite of how his people rejected him over and over and over, continued to deliver them when they turned to him, when the Philistines came or whoever else it might have been, and how God was patient and loving.

But the Psalm also reminds us that God's patience and love will one day come to an end because it tells us that God ultimately then rejected the Northern Kingdom, and it did go off into exile, and God gave the gift of the Savior through Judah and his servant David, and it talked about the faithfulness of David.

It's all in there in the Psalm and it goes over and over the history of the children of Israel. The wandering in the wilderness, the plagues that delivered them from Egypt; it's all in there. Read through it later today. But the Psalmist is saying "Don't take this for granted or you are going to end up like the Northern Kingdom who turned their back and God and whom ultimately God turned his back on them because they had rejected him."

So keep telling God's praiseworthy deeds. Keep holding them in front of one generation and the next generation and the next generation so that people will know what a gracious, loving, merciful God we have and not just take that for granted, but rejoice in it and treasure it.

You and I get to hold before each other even more of the praiseworthy deeds of God. You and I get to hold before each other God himself becoming flesh, living in our place as one of us, being perfect because you and I can't be perfect, and then taking every last one of our imperfections or sins and carrying it to the cross and dying to take away the guilt and punishment our sins deserve. That's what you and I are to hold in front of each other all the time.

In our congregational life, I would say we are really good at doing this, and we devote a lot of energy into doing this for people that are up to about 13-14 years old, when they get confirmed. About 67 cents of every dollar gets devoted to ministering to that group of our congregation, that 14% of our congregation. And it's a good thing that we minister to our children. But I missed it in here, unless I skipped a verse, I don't think God said to do this only until you are 13-14 years old. I think he said keep on doing it over and over and over because we continue to need to know the praiseworthy deeds of our God and know them better and better and better because you and I still have that sinful nature in us. That sinful nature wants to wander on its own way and chase its own tail and go in its own direction.

I saw examples of that recently. This last week and a half I was gone. I was out staying with my brother-in-law in South Dakota. He owns a bar. We helped him with odd jobs and spent some time at his bar at night and got to talk to a lot of people. Last Saturday

they had a big event, so Paula and I tended bar for him from about 6p.m. until close. It's interesting to see people, people I know that stood up with my in-laws and stood in front of the altar of God that we worshipped at while we were out there and said "I would rather die than fall away from God," that thing we say in our confirmation vows.

Both weeks we were out there, I never saw one of them that I saw at the bar in worship on Sunday morning. Another thing I kind of noticed is that the longer these people were staying at the bar; well I came to the conclusion that alcohol doesn't make us smarter the more we drink it. People were getting dumber and dumber the later the night got. The other thing I thought about is that we say we would rather die than fall away from God? I got the impression that the only thing that was dying that night was brain cells.

I'm assuming that's not just in that location, but that's everywhere. There are people there that at least know the praiseworthy deeds of God, or at least heard them, and now they seem to have slipped their mind. They seemed not to be forefront in their minds. I talked to a man who had grown up Catholic. We sat and talked a long, long time about how he isn't active in a church and now he thinks maybe it would be a good thing. We talked about the only answer to salvation is Christ. I don't know which direction he is going to go from this point forward. But someone had to remind him of the praiseworthy deeds of God and someone needs to continue to do that.

I talked to a woman who had grown up in the Philipppians for 30 years. She was the daughter of Baptist missionaries, but now she doesn't have a whole lot to do with the Lord. We talked about the sinful nature and how we are prone to doing stupid things and we need God's help so that we are forgiven.

I have to believe that around here there are a lot of people also that stood in front of one of God's altars and said "I'd rather die than fall away" and who apparently, at least to human eyes right now, appear to be drifting away from their Savior. They need someone to tell them about the praiseworthy deeds of God and lead them back to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that assures them that they are forgiven, because many of them are struggling with the things they've done in their live that they think they just can't be forgiven anymore or that God wouldn't let them back or God wouldn't want them back. So someone has to tell them that God is pretty doggone patient and incredibly and immensely loving.

I suppose I could start hanging out at bars every Saturday night and do that, but I have a feeling some of you would get upset with me if I started doing that. So I'm guessing it's going to have to be done by some of you. If you notice in this Psalm, it doesn't say pastors and teachers should tell the praiseworthy deeds of God to the next generation. It says each of us should tell the praiseworthy deeds of God to the next generation. And each of us will have that opportunity to hold God's incredible, immense love in front of people that are hurting, that are uncertain, that are drifting, that don't know how desperately they need it at that moment. But you and I have been called by our God to do this when he put the Spirit in our hearts, and as he continues to keep that Spirit

thriving in our hearts through Word and Sacrament. That's what he put us here for because more and more people need to know them.

The more we know them, the more we will put our trust in them. That means that we will hang on to them. We will trust in them even when our senses say, "They're not working. They're not doing what God has said they will do." The Psalmist says "They would put their trust in God and not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." They wouldn't be like those who fell away.

Putting our trust in these deeds means that we believe in them even when our senses are saying, "God, where are you? God, why are you letting this happen? God, why is this going on? God, why is that going on?" You and I, living in this world, are going to face all kinds of things that make our stomachs churn. We live in a sinful world and we ourselves are sinners. Sometimes it's going to be decisions that we made. Decisions we made that led us in the wrong direction and away from God and we are going to say, "God, what can I do now? I don't know if I can trust in you anymore."

Sometimes it will be the things of living in this world, the effects of sin – disease, uncertainties in jobs and things like that, or in relationships. There will be those times when we will be tempted not to trust in God. So the more we have spoken that Word to each other and to ourselves, the more we will put our trust in him as an automatic fruit of the Spirit and not doubt or challenge him; because there are going to be plenty of times that will be like that.

I saw a clip on a TV show, a cable show that shows clips of TV shows. That's an odd concept, but that's what I was watching. It was some new show, I think it was on Cartoon Network, but they had teenagers and they told them a story and a bunch of things. They put them on a roller coaster and they had an earpiece in their ear and a microphone on them. They send them through a roller coaster and they ask them questions about what they just told them; simple questions, simple stories, simple things. The clip was of one guy that was on this roller coaster and as soon as the roller coaster started, he was screaming his head off like it was the end of the world; like you see people do on roller coasters. They were asking him these questions. Every now and then, in between screams, he would gasp out an answer that wasn't even close to what the guy was talking about. But the concept is under that stress, under that duress, can you still remember what you need to remember? This was to make some money. It's kind of interesting.

But think about it. How often are our lives like that roller coaster? Where we are being tossed and turned and our stomachs are coming up into our throats and we are facing all kinds of things that make us uncertain? Can we still keep focused on Jesus at those points in our lives? Can we still put our trust in him when our senses are saying, "I don't think its working"?

That's why it's so important that we keep putting the praiseworthy deeds of our God in front of our eyes, that we keep growing in our knowledge of him and our knowledge of

the Word, that we keep growing as we use the Sacraments and see his incredible and immense and intense love for us as he give us his very body and blood that took away our sins for the forgiveness of our sins.

We need this. You and I need this. Asaph wasn't just whistling into the wind when the Holy Spirit told him to write this Psalm. It's important for our daily lives. We have the Word. We need to share that Word with ourselves and all the other people we meet. It doesn't earn us heaven, but we do it because God has freely given us heaven.