



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 27, 2009
1st Sunday after Christmas
Psalm 111
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 111
Second Lesson: Hebrews 2:10-18
Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Remember; the Lord is Gracious and Compassionate

Did you ever walk into a room to get something, get there, and can't remember what you were in the room to get? So you stand there, look around, and try to figure out what in the world you were doing. Maybe you go back to where you started to see if it comes to you. Did you ever meet somebody and start talking to them and you know you should know their name, but you have no clue what it is, so you just keep talking hoping they will identify themselves in some subtle way so you don't look like a complete fool? Did you ever miss an important appointment because you forgot all about it?

We do some of these things at times, right? That's why at this of the year there are all kinds of calendars sold, right? Some calendars you can tuck in your pocket. There are calendars for your smart phones, even your dumb phones, I suppose. There are all kinds of tools and things you can use because we have a hard time remembering things at times.

The Lord, who knows us through and through, who has made us and has watched us lose that perfection he created us with, knows we're not so bright anymore, right? He knows we're sinners, and as sinners, sometimes we forget what's truly important. That's why there's a pretty interesting phrase in that Psalm that we sang and that I just read to you again. "He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and compassionate."

God caused his wonders to be remembered. How does he do that? Did he give you some kind of tickler file to stick in your head some place so you remember his wonders? Does he sell you a calendar? Does he give you a program? In a certain sense he does. He did it both for his Old Testament people and for his New Testament people. Think about it. Go in the Scriptures and see how often he talks in Scripture about remembering these things and passing these things from one generation to the next. It's all over in the Book of Psalms. The Book of Deuteronomy, the second giving of the Law, its stated purpose, its theme is to tell the people that didn't see these things about these things so they don't forget it, so they remember what God had done in delivering his people from Egypt. Then, just in case they might forget some of those things, what did God do? He gave his Old Testament people the Passover celebration that they were supposed to every year celebrate so they would remember what God has done, his wonderful acts, his great works. And as a part of that celebration, they were also to focus on his covenant and his faithful words, his steadfast precepts, his trustworthy

precepts. This Psalm talks about remembering God's great works and his faithful Word. In essence, it's a depiction of what they did at the Passover celebration. They were to remember how God delivered them from slavery and how God did all these mighty acts, all the different plagues that they were to talk about. You can even look in some of these Psalms. When you read the Book of Psalms, it lists all these things over and over. The history of the children of Israel in song form is in the Book of Psalms.

God is serious that he wants us to remember these things and focus on them because he knows how we are. He knows how quick we are to forget when Satan comes and starts whispering in our ears that God doesn't love us. When things don't go exactly the way we want, when we want, how we want and why we want, Satan is quick. He's learned a lot over the millennium, right? He's learned a lot about whispering in our ears about how God is not gracious and compassionate. God is punishing you for your sins. God doesn't love you. God's Word is not believable. God's Word is not trustworthy. And he's got a lot of people to buy into that garbage. What he is shoveling on people is sticking at times.

That's why God causes his wonders to be remembered. He spent 1600 years using various people at various places, in different languages, to record for us his wonders so that they might be remembered. He's given to you and me, on this day, and in this place, and in this age, big letters, little letters in our Bibles, Study Bibles, Devotional Bibles, Bibles on audio tape, Bibles on CDs, Bibles on MP3 players, Bibles on videotapes, Bibles on DVD. He's given us so many different ways to get into that word so we can remember that maybe we get paralyzed by choices. It's kind of like when you're standing at the paint store and there are 38 different shades of white so you have no idea which one to pick.

So Satan wants us to say that there are so many choices we can't really find one that's going to work for you, so don't even try. Unfortunately, you and I buy into that at times. So we miss remembering the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord.

I think the Lord knew what we are like. I think the Lord, as I said, knows us through and through, because he made us. So he knows that not everyone is going to be someone that loves to sit down and read. There are some of those in our congregation that love to sit down and read the Scriptures and know it incredibly well because they just love to read. But there are also those that are visual learners, or they learn by doing or seeing. Do you ever think about how the Lord met that for us? He met it in the Passover with that blood they had to put on the doorposts. That's pretty visual. The lamb they had to slaughter and then eat and consume completely because their delivery was right at hand. That was pretty visual. That was pretty much hands on learning, wasn't it?

Think about what he's done for us, the covenant that he is faithful to for us. We are going to hear words about "This is the covenant in my blood which is poured out for you for forgiveness of sins," right? God causes his great wonders and his acts to be remembered, not only by recording them in the Bible, but in the Lord's Supper. He says, "Do this in remembrance of me." A big part of what we are doing when we come

to his meal is to remember who he is. At this time of the year, maybe we remember and we reflect on this incredible truth that we just sang. God became flesh. God clothed himself in our humanity and became truly human.

Now, as we come to that Supper, he gives us that very body and blood to assure us that the reason he came to earth, the reason he left heaven, was accomplished and he met all of his goals. He didn't miss a single appointment. He kept every appointment. He met every objective and goal and thing on his "to do list," which was to keep the Law perfectly in our place. He did it.

Then, he took all those imperfections, all of our sins, all of our doubts, all of our accusations against God as though we know better than God, he took every one of those sins that you and I commit, and he carried them to Calvary and he died. Bethlehem and Calvary are not far apart. They both exist for the same purpose – that's to redeem us.

He came. He lived. He grew in stature and knowledge as a human. He obeyed the Law as a human in our place. Then, because he was also true God, his life and death in our place could count for everyone. And God, who knows that we need to be caused to remember this, gives us this Sacrament so that we do exactly that. So we don't just sit there and think, "Oh, everyone is going to look at me as I walk to the front of the church." So we, for a moment or two in our lives, take our thoughts off ourselves and put them on this incredible God who loved us this much that he died for us. We can realize that when he gives us the small piece of wafer and the small sip of wine. He also gives us his body and blood so that our sins are forgiven, so that we remember the wonder of Bethlehem that led to the unexpected glory that is Calvary and the empty tomb.

It was all done for us. This covenant, this precept, this Word of God is steadfast forever. The works of his hands are faithful and just. He kept every promise he has ever made. He keeps them in his time and in his way, but he never turns away from them. He promises his love to us. In Word and Sacrament, he promises he will cause us to have the Spirit living in our hearts to remember, to rejoice, because we are redeemed.

If that Spirit doesn't live in your heart, my heart goes out to you, because you'll never understand the glorious and majestic deeds of the Lord.