

Pentecost 18 / October 1, 2023

Psalm 25:6

“Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been of old.”

Remember your mercy, O Lord

How will you be remembered? What would you like people to remember about you? What would you like people to forget? What would you like people not to know? Certainly, we would like people to remember good things about us and forget the bad. King David did many good things. He had courage to stand up against the Philistines, who blasphemed the name of the Lord. He fought their champion Goliath, armed only with a slingshot, a few stones he had collected from a stream near the field of battle and faith in the name of the Lord. He wrote many beautiful hymns to the Lord, including the one that is our text this morning. He fought Israel's battles, so they would be saved from the wrath of their enemies, be preserved in the world to make the Lord's name known and bring the blessing of salvation through faith in His name to all peoples. Most importantly, David worshiped the Lord alone and served Him only.

David did some bad things that he would have wanted to be forgotten. However, the Holy Spirit saw fit to record them for all time in the scriptures. How would we feel if our misdeeds were recorded for future generations forever? The bible is unique in religious literature in that it records the faults of its leading characters alongside their good deeds. God didn't choose Israel and the champions of the faith because they were good. They were sinners like everyone else. Some to a greater degree, others to a lesser degree. Regardless of degree all were sinners nonetheless. They all needed to pray, 'Remember your mercy, O Lord for you are good!'

This is to emphasize God's holiness. He alone is without sin, by the nature of His being. It is to emphasize His power to accomplish good, even through evil people and bad things. Most importantly, it highlights His mercy. The most important aspect of God from a sinner's point of view is His mercy expressed in forgiveness. David prays, "Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord." Whether he was a young king collecting other men's wives, a warrior in his prime being excessively violent in battle, or an old man making sure the enemies that survived his death got what they deserved, David needed the mercy of forgiveness. No matter how far we are removed from the sins of our youth and advanced in Christian living, we all need the mercy of forgiveness. We pray with David, 'Remember your mercy, O Lord for you are good!'

We remember the good things David did, not for the sake of David. We remember for the sake of the Lord, who worked His good through David, despite his sinfulness. We remember David for the sake of Jesus, who descended from David and received the eternal kingdom God promised David's descendant. The holy church spread throughout the earth, encompassing people from every nation under heaven. We remember David for the sake of the salvation God worked through Jesus, his descendant in time, God from eternity. Everything God did through David was ultimately for the salvation of the world, which He accomplished through Christ Jesus. His birth, life, death and resurrection.

We remember the sins of David and other saints recorded in the bible, so we remember God's mercy in forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. We remember their sins, so we remember our sins. We remember their sinfulness, so we remember our sinfulness. Most importantly, we remember that all who come to God through faith in Christ Jesus, receive the mercy of forgiveness in time and the blessing of life in eternity. We pray with David for God to remember not our sins but to remember His mercy, for He is good.

The motto of saints like David was expressed by St. Paul who wrote, "Christ Jesus came in to the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." When we are tempted to condemn others for their sins, we remember our sins. We remember our sins, so we remember our need for God's mercy. We remember our sins, so we remember the grace of forgiveness God has prepared for all people in Christ Jesus. We remember the mercy He offers all to receive through the gospel. We remember the mercy He gives freely and abundantly to all who receive Christ in their hearts as Saviour through the word and working of the Holy Spirit. People often remember the worst about others and forget the bad about themselves. God remembers in forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. David prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me for the sake of your goodness." We remember Jesus and with David pray, 'Remember your mercy, O Lord for you are good!'

Only God is good. God is good in the nature of His being. He is holy, completely different from everything He created. God is a category of His own. He is the true singularity. God is holy in that He is without sin. His holiness consumes sin and everything contaminated with sin, as fire consumes dry grass. God is holy, yet despite human sin and the brokenness of the world because of sin, He is loving towards all that His hands have made. As the psalmist sang, He opens His hands and satisfies the desires of every living thing. He is faithful to keep His promises. He remembered His promises to Abraham, Issac and Jacob. He redeemed their descendants from slavery in Egypt. He brought them into the land of promise, so they would begin to make His name known in all the earth and so bring blessing to all nations.

He is kind, desiring our good. He forgave Israel their sins over many centuries. He cleansed them from idolatry and preserved them as His people in the midst of their enemies. He gave Jesus to be Saviour through them. As St. Paul said, in all things He works for the good of those who love Him. He is merciful. He does not treat us as our sins deserve. He does not leave us in our sins, or allow them to rule over us. He redeems us from slavery to our sins, the control of the devil and the condemnation of eternal death. He does this not because of the good we do. He does this because He is good. He does this for us despite our sins and our continuing sinfulness, because He is good. That's why David bases his prayer for God's mercy not on his goodness, but on the Lord's goodness. He prays, "For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt for it is great." With David we pray God to remember us according to His love for the sake of His goodness expressed fully in Christ our Saviour.

God expresses His goodness in mercy for the sake of Christ Jesus. He shared our humanity. He bore the weight of our sin on the cross, so we would receive the mercy of forgiveness in His name. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, sharing in the holiness of the Father and the Spirit. He made Himself human through the line of David, so that through faith in His name we would receive pardon for our guilt no matter how great it is. As a human being, Jesus is the only human who lived without sin. As true God and true man, Jesus offered the only sacrifice of atonement by which the sin of the world was taken away. Jesus took our sins upon himself, so that through His body broken on the cross they would be forgotten in forgiveness. God forgets our sins and remembers us in mercy for the sake of Jesus.

We are incorporated into the line of David and joined to the family of God through our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. Through faith in His name, we receive forgiveness in time and the promise of life in eternity. All David's psalms in some way point to Jesus. He is our shepherd. He is our king. He is our God. He is our Saviour. He covers our sins in forgetfulness for the sake of the blood He shed and the sacrifice He made on the cross. When you remember the guilt of your sins and your sinfulness, remember Jesus. Pray with David, 'Remember your mercy, O Lord for you are good!' God will hear, heal and forgive. In Jesus' Name. Amen