



Sermon – October 10, 2021
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

Psalm 78:1 – 8, 68 – 72

Matthew 13:34 - 35

As you grab your seat, let me invite you to open your Bibles with me to Psalm 78. That's where we're going to spend our time this morning. Psalm 78. And as you're turning there, let me just address the elephant in the room for a moment. Oh, wait, there are no elephants in the room because the Aggies beat the Crimson Tide last night! Ha ha ha ha ha ha. Now I know some of y'all in that fourth quarter, you were talking to God, you were making promises, you were saying prayers, and I just want you to know that He heard those last night. And I'm inviting you to respond to fulfil those commitments today. Whatever He's leading you to do in this moment. If you're a guest with us, we want to welcome you home, whether you're here in the room or online, this is a perfect time to come and connect with our church. We've just finished a march through the book of Colossians over the course of a year. And for the next several weeks, we're going to be working our way through a sermon series called Every Generation Reaching the Next Generation. We're going to take our time to work through passages like this one in Psalm 78 and then other portions of the Bible to see God's heart for the next generation. And that's something that's at the heart of who we are as a church. As a matter of fact, if you've been with us for a while and you're thinking of stepping towards membership, I want to encourage you to take that step to join during our response time today so that you can be with us during our New Member Workshop next weekend. And I want you to take a moment to think with me. Our church is 96 years old. We started on September 11, 1925. 81 people met in the Brazos County Courthouse. There was a preacher that day who was a missionary from China who was in town to preach that opening message. And could you imagine if we could have rewind, rewinded the clock all the way back there to be with them in 1925. And if you asked them the question, what will things be like at Central as a church 96 years from now? I wonder how they would have answered that question. First of all, they might have been blown away by the air conditioning and the convenience of the indoor plumbing, the sound system we had here. But one thing I know they would have hoped for is that the same heart for the Gospel that marked them in the founding of our church would be found today. As a matter of fact, if you were to go back to that first Sunday, not only did they hear a missionary from China preach that day, on their first day gathering, the 81 people that met there, took their first offering for world missions. And that's been at the heart of who we are from the very beginning. In fact, the original name of our church

speaks to our next generation focus. Before we moved to Coulter Avenue back in the 1950's, when our church was founded in 1925, for those first 25 or 30 years, we were known as the College Avenue Baptist Church. Right there on College Avenue in the heart of downtown Bryan. That major thoroughfare from Bryan to the campus. From the very beginning, our heart, our focus, our passion has been in reaching that next generation. But let me tell you something. That next generation focus doesn't just go back to the beginning of our church, that goes back to the beginning of the people of God. Because what we're going to notice this morning as we work our way through Psalm 78 is that with the Old Testament people of God, we see this heart for the next generation. And it's going to capture our attention right here if we look at Psalm 78 beginning in verse 1. Follow along with me this morning. A Maskil of Asaph:

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.

Let's take a moment to pray together. And as you ready your hearts to pray, pray especially for my voice to hold up after four quarters at Kyle Field.

Father, we turn our hearts over to You. We want to come to Your word this morning in total surrender. In submission to all that You have for our lives as individuals and as a church. And I pray that this morning You will stir in us a passion for the next generation that will be unfading, unrelenting, and that will follow after what Your word calls us to today. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Psalm 78 is one of the longest psalms in the Bible. And it's written by this man named Asaph. He was one of three worship ministers appointed by King David to lead the people of God in worship. And if we were to work our way through the whole text, what you would find is it's telling a story about the nation of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. And it's not always a pretty picture. It's a story of rebellion then repentance, rescue and rest. But sandwiched there at the front of it, framing up the whole story that Asaph will tell in this song, that would have been sung in the public worship of the people, is this reminder of why it is they're singing. What it is that's the heart behind why they look back at what God has done in prior generations. And the reason they look back to God's faithfulness in past generations is to be able to look ahead to encourage the next generation about His faithfulness in that generation. When we talk about Central having a heart where everyone of us is committed to having the reality that every generation is reaching the next generation, this is not some new direction for our church. It's a new reflection on what's been true from the beginning. It's not some new vantage point, new vision about where we're going. It's a fresh vantage point of where we've been and where God is calling us to go in this next chapter. And here's what we're going to find. If we want to be a church where in our hearts we are committed to every generation reaching the next generation, Psalm 78 is going to show us two realities that need to be true right here in our Central family.

You'll see the first one in these verses we're already read. In verses 1 through 4 notice how he talks about how we must declare God's faithfulness to the next generation. Declare God's faithfulness to the next generation. So if we want to be a church that reaches the next generation,

we need to remember what God has done in our generation. And be able to declare it to those that come after us. So how can we remember that reality? How can we remember what God has done in our midst? Well, look back at verse 1. He says it begins by listening and reflecting what God has done. That's why he says there,

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

You know, when you read this, it almost sounds like the start of the proverbs. When Proverbs 1 is calling us to give ear to the wisdom that is to come. And why is it that we need to listen and reflect? Well, verse 2 tells us that answer. He says:

²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,

This word, parable, is translated in the book of Proverbs as proverb. It's that term that gives us the foundation for that book. It's this idea of, of revealing something. Making something known. And it goes hand in hand with this term, dark sayings of old. There's this element of revealing the mystery, taking what is ancient, perhaps that we don't fully recognize and making it known to each one of us. That's what the psalmist is going to do here. And these words in verse 2 might sound familiar to you. You don't have to turn there, but you'll see on the screen in Matthew 13 when Jesus begins His teaching ministry and He begins to teach in parables. He picks up on this language from Psalm 78 when He says this:

³⁴All these things Jesus said to the crowds in the parables; indeed, He said nothing to them without a parable.

Now here it comes.

³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

So in both cases, both in Psalm 78 and now here in Matthew 13, this term, this idea of parables, of taking what is mysterious and making it known, what is hidden and now revealing are picked up in both passages. So that we can make known the forgotten ways of God. That's what Asaph is speaking of here in Psalm 78. He's saying, don't forget what has happened in the past. And the reason is, that when we stop long enough to reflect on our past, notice what verse 3 tells us is true. He says:

³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.

He shifts from the singular to the plural. He moves from the present tense to the past tense. He says, we have heard these things, we have known these things. In other words, they've happened to us, we've encountered them, but they've been forgotten, overlooked. We've lost sight of God's faithfulness in the past and when that happens, it can rob us of declaring His faithfulness to the next generation. So how has God been faithful right here in our church at Central over these last 96 years? Well, did you know, I was looking back through some historical archives that we have here at the church. And I came across some church bulletins from the 1940's and the 1950's. And one of the things it talks about in there is the fact that there used to be campus

classes you could take to learn the Bible from a minister connected to Central for class credit at Texas A&M. Could you imagine that happening today? I don't think so. Hey, I got a theology PhD, maybe they'll let me do it. Maybe we can put in a good word for us to make that happen. It was wired into who we are. To reach and to focus on that next generation. As a matter of fact, when we made the move from College Avenue to Coulter Avenue back in the 1950's, it was because of the next generation heart that we saw in our midst. And as a matter of fact, we bought 8 acres of land which the skeptics at the time said, "Why do you need so much land? What are you going to do? Grow cotton on it?" To which I hope somebody responded to them, "No, but we're trusting that God will make the fields white unto the harvest." That was the heart behind what God was doing during that transition. And we know the way that Central's story continued over the last 3 decades through the faithful ministry of this church where we outgrew our work at Coulter. We came here and I still remember sitting on this side of the worship center back in 2003 when we had the first Sunday gathered in this room and rejoicing in God's kindness to us. But I wonder how often we can be so focused on the future that we forget about God's faithfulness in the past. And what the Psalmist is reminding us of here is that if we want to reach the next generation, we need to remember God's faithfulness in our generation. And that's why he brings our attention now to Psalm 78:4. What we're called to do in light of our past. He tells us there that we must declare God's faithfulness to the next generation. Here's how he says it.

[4We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.](#)

You see that word, tell. It's to announce or declare. In fact, it has this picture of making a written document, to recount something in an official way. That's the image that's there. I still remember when I came as your new pastor last year, John Maurer was serving as our Legacy Adult minister and at one point he brought in this packet with all the details about the Legacy Adults ministry at Central. This thing was so thick it was thicker than a Jimbo Fisher playbook. It's massive. And I still remember on the front cover of that packet it had a theme verse for the Legacy Adult ministry. You know what it was? Psalm 78:4. Because John's heart then, Tim Skagg's heart now, my heart as your pastor is exactly the same. That our generation might be focused on declaring the words of God to the next generation. And what is it we're to declare? Look back at verse 4. He speaks about declaring both who God is and what He's done. So it speaks about what He's done there when he talks about His glorious deeds and the wonders that He has done. It speaks about who He is when it talks about His might. And those pictures are giving us glimpses into what it is to declare that God has done. Asaph is calling Israel to do that then and God is calling us to do that today. Now up here at the pulpit and on the screens you'll see a picture here in just a moment. I was going through our historical archives and I came across this image. This is from 1946. This is a picture of all of the participants in vacation Bible school in 1946. Those young kids that are there in that picture may be pushing 85/90 years old today. You see how many of them there are? Do you see the numbers that are gathered and the volunteers behind them to pour their lives into that generation? And that generation has become this generation. And now Psalm 78 is pushing us to reach the next generation. But as I was working my way through our historical records this week, I was blown away by another church bulletin I saw from the 1950's, 1958 to be exact. The pastor was Robert Polk and he was writing a short paragraph in the church bulletin to talk about a youth-led revival that was coming up. And I just want you to hear these words. Remember God's faithfulness in our past so that it can

push us to pursue and declare God's faithfulness to the next generation. When he's talking about these, this youth-led revival to come, back in the 1950's, he's echoing language here from Psalm 78. Here's what he says in the church bulletin.

With their energy, enthusiasm, loyalty, faith, and potentialities for Christian service, our young people mean much to Christ in His church. Jesus calls youth to serve Him. The fulfillment of the task to which the church is called lies largely in the hands of youth. The world is sending out its call for youth and it is often hard for them to hear the voice of Christ. But yet there are many who do love and serve Jesus in spite of ridicule and secular culture. We rejoice in their brave witness for Him.

That sounds like it could be true today, right. But listen to how he goes on. He says:

We seek to provide leadership and facilities for our youth so each one can have the fullest opportunity for development of a Christian character.

Jesus was devoted to youth. His most beloved disciple was the youngest of the 12. The ideal Jesus held up before His followers was that of a heart perpetually young. Let us never minimize the potentialities of youth. And I'm just praying that will be true for us in this day, in this next season. This echo of Psalm 78. That we would declare the faithfulness of God to the next generation. He talks about these facilities. He talks about investing in this generation. It was right there at the core of who we are and we never want to lose sight of that reality and it's a reality that is pictured there in the first half of this passage in Psalm 78 when he is calling us to declare God's faithfulness to the next generation.

But I want you to notice, beginning in verse 5, you're going to see a second thing that must be true if we want to be a church where every generation reaches the next generation. Here's how he says it there beginning in verse 5. He says second, we need to foster God's faithfulness in the next generation. Look at verse 5. He says:

⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appoint a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, Why? ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; ⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

So notice here, the psalmist doesn't just call us to remember God's faithfulness in the past, but to foster God's faithfulness in the future amongst the next generation. And how does that happen? Look back at verse 5. It tells us it all starts with Scripture. Look at what it says there. It speaks about, he established a testimony in Jacob, you see the word testimony, and appointed a law in Israel. These words, testimony and law, were different terms to refer to the word of God given to the people of God so that they might follow the commandments of God. He says, if you want to foster faithfulness in the next generation, it must center on God's word. That might seem counterintuitive to some people. They might think that in order to reach the next generation, what you need to do is water down the Gospel, to simplify the message, to not focus so much on a bloody cross, but on life principles, or ways to find fulfillment in the pursuit of your destiny.

But I can tell you this, this younger generation that's there at our college gatherings or up in our student wing or gathered in our preschool and kid's building, what they are looking for is not a part time Jesus who can make their life a little bit better. There is a hunger for God's word amongst our people. And here's what I want to do. I want to challenge you over the next four weeks as we're working our way through this series to go on a journey through God's word together. Maybe you saw when you walked in the sanctuary these packets that are at the door. They're there, they're called our 511 Reading Plan. And what we're going to do over the next four weeks is I'm going to challenge you to pick up one of these packets and work through it with your family. Or if you're not in a family setting, with a roommate or a trusted friend. The challenge here is that over these 4 weeks, we want to go on a journey through God's word together. And here's one of the ways I want to do it. If you've got your phone with you, I just want to invite you to pull it out right now. Because up on the screens, what you're going to find is a word that you can text to get our daily Scripture reading together as a church. And I'm going to do this along with you right now with my phone out. And I'm going to grab this number and text this word. Because starting tomorrow, we are going to begin in this 4 week reading plan where over the next 4 weeks there will be 20 times that we will text you in the morning with a reading prompt that will spur you on to read God's word on your own. I've just text that word to that phone number and I want to challenge you to do the same thing. So that you can get on and connected to that reading plan starting tomorrow.

In addition to that, the reason this is called 511 is because the challenge is, we want to encourage you to do what Israel was doing here in Psalm 78. To focus on the testimony of God, the law of God, His word, 5 times a day on your own, 1 time a week, actually 5 times a day would pretty epic, right? I meant to say 5 times a week on your own. 1 time a week with your spouse if you're in a marriage setting, and 1 time a week with your family. If you're not married then work through it with a trusted friend or a roommate. Just something to spur us deeper into God's word. Because what Psalm 78 is showing us is if we want to reach the next generation, if we want to foster faithfulness, we don't bypass the word of God to do that, we build it as our foundation that everything is built upon. And notice what happens. Why should we seek to foster faithfulness in the next generation? Well, we're going to see the answer to that in verse 6. It gives us the purpose. If you'll look back there, he says:

⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.

So what's this purpose that Asaph speaks of here? He tells us two things. If we want to foster faithfulness in the next generation, if we want to center ourselves on the word, here's the reason why we do it. Two reasons: to know and to go. So when you look back at verse 6, he talks about to know. This sense of knowledge that's there. That the next generation might know Him. And the language here about know is this intimate knowledge. It's a phrase used elsewhere in the Bible to speak of marital relations, with that level of intimacy. It's not some sort of knowledge, like one of our college student's who's cramming for a mid-term, who's just piling as much information into their brain as they can for a short time and then they're going to promptly forget it after they hold it in their brains for that brief moment. That's not what the next generation is designed to do. Instead, it's like the knowledge of a spouse. One that spans not a moment but a lifetime. One where there's a depth of knowledge, a hunger. That's the type of knowledge we want to see flourishing in our next generation. That's why every week when

we gather in our college gathering we are centering the message on God's word. It's why we get together on Sunday nights in the student ministry for a verse by verse study in Zeal. And we memorize Scripture in Awana. We want the next generation to know. But as verse 6 also tells us, we want the next generation to go. So if you'll notice the way that it speaks there, it talks about how the next generation might know them; the children yet unborn and arise and tell them to their children. So how is it that they go? Well, here you have one generation, our generation, seeking to foster faithfulness in the next generation so that then they can foster it in the generation after them. Do you see it? There's three generations of faithfulness right here. Where we are raising up in order to send out. And notice what happens as a result of this type of effort with the next generation. Look at verse 7. He says:

⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;

In other words, we are investing in the next generation so that they can recover and pursue God's original design for their life. And when that happens, when they are captivated by God's word, when they are transformed by faith in Jesus Christ, when they are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God, it brings a spiritual result in their life. It brings a hope, a heritage, and a holiness. So you see there in verse 7, this hope, he says, set their hope in God. In other words, we are fostering a faithfulness that is pleasing to God. It says there, there's a heritage, that they are not forgetting the works of God. We're trying to help them cultivate a legacy that is pleasing to God. And then there at the end of the verse, a holiness when it speaks about, but to keep His commandments. That they might live in a way that is pleasing to God. But I want you to notice something when this text gets ready to end. Because even in the midst of the way forward, there's a warning. And that warning comes when you read in verse 8, if you'll notice what it says.

⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

So Asaph is giving this warning here. That if we're not intentional in reaching the next generation, that they might end up like many in our generation. Who walk away from God, who do not set their heart with steadfastness upon God. And we're going to focus on exactly this danger next week in our message from Judges 2 when we look at the reality that we are always one generation from losing the Gospel in the church. And that if we are not faithful today, we cannot expect them to be faithful tomorrow. And so Psalm 78:8 gives this warning and then the whole rest of the chapter, up until the end, shows us how this warning played out in the history of Israel; in their unfaithfulness, in their stubbornness, in their rebellion of heart. You see him talk about it first in the wilderness, and then in the exodus, and now right here in the promised land. Asaph is telling us story after story after story of the older generation falling short of God's design.

But I want you to look with me at the end of the chapter. Turn over with me to Psalm 78 beginning in verse 68. Because in the midst of the rebellion, in the midst of the wreckage, in the midst of the unfaithfulness is a Gospel hope. And look at how he speaks about it in Psalm 78. In the midst of the darkness, there is light. In the midst of the hardship, there is hope. And where is that light found? Where does that hope appear? Here's what Psalm 78:68 says:

⁶⁸but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. ⁶⁹He built his sanctuary like the highest heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. ⁷⁰He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. ⁷²And with upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with a skillful hand.

Here's what you need to see. That even in the face of our unfaithfulness, God is faithful to His covenant. And you see the imagery that he is using here. These pictures that find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. It talks about choosing the tribe of Judah and we see the Scripture pointing forward to one day God raising up a Messiah who would be the lion from the tribe of Judah. You see him speak there of the building of the temple and we see Jesus telling the Pharisees around Him, tear this temple down and in three days I will rebuild it. I am the temple of God. He speaks there of God raising up David. And what we find in the New Testament is that Jesus comes a new and better David. Who keeps the promises of the covenant, who lives a sinless life, who dies in our place so that we can be set free from sin. And the way that he does it is in fulfillment of the end of this passage where it highlights the reality that David was a shepherd to the people of God. And what we see Jesus in His own words declaring is, I am the good shepherd. The one who lays down his life for his sheep. If we want to be a church where every generation reaches the next generation, we can't lose sight of the covenant hope that is here in this passage.

As I was working through some of the historical records to get ready for this series and this week, I came across this pink packet of paper that I will cherish for a long time. You see, many of you know that back 15/18 years ago, I worked on staff here at Central in the College Ministry. Started in 2004 and just a few months into my tenure, there was a woman in our church who filled out this package. She was a college student. Her name was Christina Knips. She walked the aisle one Sunday. She joined this church. And we had people at that time during the membership process fill one of these forms out. Talk about how they came to know Christ. To help us figure out how to get them involved and invested in our church. And 17 years ago, she came forward on a Sunday to join this congregation. She was a faithful member here as she went through here time at Texas A&M. I watched her get married right here in this worship center. And over the course of the last decade plus, I've seen her move to Houston, become a faithful wife and mom to three incredible kids, and to watch God raise her up and flourish in her Christian life. And our church, during the season that we had her here to invest in her, made a profound impact that is still shaping her as she is living out life as a middle-aged woman totally disconnected from our church for the last 15 years. You know why this particular package meant so much to me today? Christina Knips is my sister, her maiden name, Christina Bethancourt. What a joy to see her picture, to hear her words, and to know her story. And here's my prayer, Central family, that God would use this next season to grow in us a heart for the next generation so that we might see many more come through this church just like her, just like Psalm 78, walking in the faithfulness that God has called each one of us to.

Let's pray together. Before we pray this morning, just want to ask something special of you today. If you'll bow your head and close your eyes, if you find yourself this morning resonating with this passage, resonating with this call that every generation might reach the next generation, I just want you to signal that between you and God right now, just in the quietness of your own

heart. While our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, if you desire to be a part of this church, reaching the next generation, would you take a moment as our heads are bowed to raise your hand right there in those chairs around you. If you're in, if you're saying, this is what I want to be about. If this is what you want to commit to as a church, will you express that commitment right now? You can put those hands down. I just want to take a moment to pray over all of us, but in particular, for those of you who raise those hands this morning.

God, we're crying out to You, Lord, that You would stir in us a heart like You did in the people of Israel in Psalm 78. A heart that will not run from You in rebellion, but seek You with everything we have through the faithfulness that can only come through Your Spirit. We're praying that as You work in our lives, God, that You will work in a way that not only shapes our generation, but empowers us to be part of Your story in raising up the next generation. That we might see You do abundantly more than we can ask or imagine. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.