

## **We Will Tell the Next Generation**

**Psalm 78:1-72**

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Amen. Please be seated. If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Psalm 78 as we continue to work through the Third Book of the Psalms together. This is one of the longer Psalms in the Psalter, and in order to help us follow it, I'm going to break up our reading tonight as we work through it so that it doesn't run together. But the outline provided I hope will give you some sense of where Asaph is going in this particular Psalm.

He begins with eight verses of instruction. He actually calls us to pay heed to the instruction of God's word, to give heed to the law of God, the instruction of God, the Torah, and then to pass on the truth of that word to another generation. Now, that exhortation is given to us in the first eight verses so that we will pay particular attention to the lesson of history which is recounted all the way from verse 9 to verse 64, and it is not a pretty picture.

What we see in that section of this Psalm is the description of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, just as much part of the wonder-working blessings of God in the Exodus and in the wilderness and in being brought into the land of Canaan as any other part of Israel, and yet, in the end, you'll see, the Northern Kingdom went the way of idolatry. And for those verses, from verse 9 to 64, a pattern is repeated. God does wonders; God's people fail to appreciate the glory of what God has done by failing to trust in Him; by spurning His instructions and His warnings and His exhortations; and ultimately they fall into idolatry.

Throughout this period of time God in His mercy brings seasons of judgment, and for a season they come back to Him. But in the end, when they have gone the way of following after idols, His final judgment comes.

And that leads to the third and final section of the Psalm. You see it in verses 65-72. In contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Northern Kingdom, we see God's faithfulness to the Southern Kingdom, and especially as it is typified in the tribe of Judah. The tribe of Judah was not particularly notable in the days of the judges for its great deeds or exploits, and yet in the time of David it would be the tribe of Judah that would take leadership in the affairs of Israel. It would be within the bounds of Judah that a capital would be established. It would be within the

bounds of Judah that a temple would be permanently placed where Israel would worship God in one place together, in contrast to the mountains of the North where idolatry would persist. And it would be in this land that David would be set up as the king, and his line of kings would continue after him.

And so in this Psalm we are called to heed the instruction of the Lord; we are given a negative example from history of those in the people of God who did not heed God's wonders, His provisions, His exhortations, His warnings; then, we're told of God's faithfulness to His people in spite of their unfaithfulness as manifested in His provision and promises to Judah.

So let's begin by reading the first eight verses of this Psalm together. We'll stop there and then we'll work through, as we expound the word tonight, the rest of this Psalm. Before we read God's word and hear it proclaimed, let's look to Him in prayer and ask for His help and blessing.

*Lord, this is Your word, and we thank You for it. We know that Your word is truth, and that You intend to sanctify us by Your truth. We pray, O God, that by Your Spirit You would cause us to respond to the truth with faith, with belief, with trust. We pray as well that we would learn from the lessons of those who were amongst Your people in times past who did not heed Your provision, Your warnings, who forgot Your power and Your promises. We confess, O God, our own fallibility to these temptations, and so we pray that by Your Spirit You would keep us and humble us, and cause us to be faithful by Your grace. Teach us wonderful things from Your law, O God. We ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Hear the word of God.

“A Maskil of Asaph.

“Listen, O my people, to my instruction;  
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.  
I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings of old,  
Which we have heard and known,  
And our fathers have told us.  
We will not conceal them from their children,  
But tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,  
And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

“For He established a testimony in Jacob,  
And appointed a law in Israel,  
Which He commanded our fathers,  
That they should teach them to their children;  
That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born,

That they may arise and tell them to their children,  
That they should put their confidence in God,  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments,  
And not be like their fathers,  
A stubborn and rebellious generation,  
A generation that did not prepare its heart,  
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

Amen. Thus far this reading of God's holy, inspired, and inerrant word. May He add His blessing to it.

These words of instruction are given by Asaph to the people as they assemble for the worship of God, and they are called not simply to listen to those words of instruction for themselves, but listen so as to pass them on to the generations to come. Asaph is going to give them a history lesson. He's going to ask them to learn from history, and then pass along what they learn from history. Notice how he speaks. He says,

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.”

In this passage Asaph is reminding us that history is not always self-evident as to its meaning. We can go back and look at certain things in history and not quite understand what is going on, even when it's already happened. But he is prepared to not only recount what happened in Israel's history but also to explain its meaning, so that we can draw a lesson from it and pass that lesson on to our children.

Notice that this lesson as recorded in verses 9-64 is primarily a negative lesson. It's a lesson about the people of God forgetting His promises, forgetting His wonders, failing to trust in Him, not heeding His warnings, forgetting His power, despising His provision and protection. It's not a pretty story. It's a depiction of how Israel responded to these glorious manifestations, these miraculous manifestations of God's care.

Now, the method of instruction is very interesting. You'll see at least four components to it. One component is, of course, simply warning. The Psalm as a whole functions as a warning. It recounts what some people who are part of the people of God, the community of Israel, had not done in response to God's wonders. And so there are warnings here.

And then there are exhortations. The very first eight verses of the Psalm constitute an exhortation: an exhortation to us to listen; an exhortation to us to

pay attention to history; an exhortation to us to pass along what we learn to our children.

But then there is also in this Psalm a rehearsal of God's mercies and character. This is the third way that we see the Psalm teaching us what God has done in the past: God's power; God's plagues against Egypt; His miraculous provision for the people of God of manna and of quail in the wilderness. These things are recounted as a rehearsal of God's mercies to tell us something about His character: He is powerful; He is providing; He is kind; He can be counted on.

But we also see throughout this Psalm a recounting of the ingratitude and disobedience of Israel. And do you notice how often that theme is repeated? Let me ask you to look through the Psalm with me for a moment.

First, look at verses 9 and 10. This begins the description of Ephraim (and by the way, Ephraim is picked out not because of anything that is recorded in the Bible that they did particularly bad in battle, but because they are representatives of the most influential of the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, and so they serve as a picture of the whole Northern Kingdom that eventually went after idolatry after the days of Jeroboam, if you'll remember your Old Testament history.

But we're told this about them at the end of verse 9 and in verse 10 and 11:

"They turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; they forgot His deeds and His miracles that He had shown them."

But that's not all. Look down to verse 17 and 18, and 19. We're told that

"...they still continued to sin against Him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert. And in their heart they put God to the test."

Verse 19: "They spoke against God"; and then, verse 22, "...they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation."

So again we have a recounting of their ingratitude and disobedience, but it doesn't stop there. Look down to verse 32:

"In spite of all this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wonderful works."

Then look at verse 36:

"They deceived Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue, for their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant."

Look at verse 40 now:

“How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power.”

Then look all the way down to verse 56:

“They tempted and rebelled against the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted treacherously like their father; they turned aside like a treacherous bow. They provoked Him with their high places, and aroused His jealousy with their graven images.”

Now in all these things the Psalmist proposes to teach us in the warnings of the Psalm, in the exhortation of the Psalm, in the recounting of God's mercies, and finally in the recounting of the ingratitude and disobedience of Israel.

### **I. A call to instruction - Learn from history and pass it on.**

Notice that the first section of the Psalm, this call to instruction, this call to learn from history and pass it on, itself is broken into two parts. In verse 1-4 we see the opening exhortation to hear this instruction and to pass it along. But now in verses 5-8 we see the second part, and in that second part of the introduction we have an explanation of what the law is for, what we are to learn from God's word. Let's pay close attention to it:

“For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children....”

Now, by the way, that gives us a fundamental definition of what “Law” means in the Old Testament. Very often when we hear the word “Law” the first thing we think of is a law that is made by a civil governor, by a state legislature or by the Congress of the United States and passed into action by the President of the United States. But in Israel, the first thing that would have come to mind when you heard the word “Law” was instruction. It's a far broader category than the way we typically think of law. It entails instruction - positive instruction, instruction by example, negative warnings. But here we're told that God has appointed this law as a testimony, and He's commanded our fathers that they should teach it to their children.

Now, what is it supposed to do? Look at verse 6: “...That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children....” What? Verse 7: “...That they should [three things] put their confidence in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments....”

Notice the three positive things which are to result from the study of God's word, God's Law, God's instruction. The first thing is that we would put our confidence in God, that we would have a personal trust in the living God, that we would set our hope for this life and salvation and everything else in our God rather than trusting in ourselves, our own wisdom, our own devices, our own craftiness; or trusting in the world or finding our satisfaction in the world. No, we are to trust in God.

When we do not trust in God it either leads us to despair or carnal security. When we put our trust in anything other than God, we'll either end up in despair or carnal security. We will either come to the point where we realize that there is no security in the things that we are trusting other than God and will despair, or we will get comfortable trusting in those things even though it is a chimera, even though it is something that will not last, even though it is not something that is substantive, we'll get secure in our delusion, we'll be self-deceived. And so the first thing that the Law is to teach us is to put our confidence in God.

The second thing that the Law is to teach us is that God is sovereign, and so our thinking about Him should be humble and grateful. Notice what it says: "...They should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God." The works of God are listed over and over in the passages that we're about to read. Those works are mighty acts whereby He brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and provided for them miraculously while they were in the wilderness, and those mighty acts are to remind God's people of His sovereignty for them and over them, so that their minds are dominated by the realization of God's sovereign grace. If you show me a great Christian in any age, from the time of Jesus and His apostles to yesterday, I'll show you a Christian whose mind has been dominated by the realization of God's grace. Paul was such a person. Augustine was such a person. Luther was such a person. Calvin was such a person. Whitefield, Wesley, and Edwards, and on and on you could go. These were men who realized the greatness, the largeness of God's grace, the greatness of His power. And so, the Law is to teach us not to forget the works of God.

When we are in the midst of trials, those trials look very big. The Law is designed to put all our trials in perspective by drawing us a picture of an infinitely bigger God, a God who already has done great and marvelous and jaw-dropping works for the people of God. So the Law is to cause us to have our faith in God, or to put our faith and trust in God. But also the Law is designed to make us humble and grateful when we think of the sovereign works of God.

Thirdly, however, notice that the Law is to move us to obedience. Verse 7:

"They should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

In other words, when we realize the greatness of God's grace, when we realize

the power of His works, when we realize the trustworthiness of His promises, we are to respond to that in obedience. We are to show our gratitude to God for His mercies to us by keeping His commandments. And so the Law, the instruction of God's word, is designed to promote all these things: trust in Him; a realization of the greatness of His power and grace; and to move us to obedience to His will, to keep His commandments. God's grace reigns in righteousness.

But notice (verse 8) negatively what the Law is to reveal to us — what the instruction of God's word is to reveal to us:

“That they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

## **II. The unfaithfulness of the Northern Kingdom — Accusations against Ephraim.**

So the Law here, the word of God here, the instruction of God's word, was also to provide a negative example of something that was not to be followed, and that was the unfaithfulness, the unbelief, the rebelliousness, the stubbornness, of those amongst the people of God who had not truly trusted in Him. And that is the story which is recorded for us in verses 9-64.

Let's read the first section that describes their attitudes towards God. The whole section contains a series of accusations by God against the Northern Kingdom, and it describes their unfaithfulness. The first part, in verses 9-16, is an overview, and it shows how even though God had done great wonders in the Exodus those wonders were quickly forgotten by the people of God. Hear God's word.

“The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, yet they turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; they forgot His deeds, and His miracles that He had shown them. He wrought wonders before their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters stand up like a heap. Then He led them with the cloud by day, and all the night with a light of fire. He split rock in the wilderness and gave them abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.”

Here in the first section the first accusation that is made against Israel, in the shape here of the Northern Kingdom, is that God's wondrous works had been forgotten. They had failed to remember what God had done for them. Now doesn't that make great sense in light of the opening exhortation of this Psalm, to make sure that we don't fail to tell the next generation the wondrous works that

God has done. This generation forgot the wondrous works of God. Even in the wilderness they forgot the wondrous works of God, and so it makes perfect sense that this Psalm would open up with an exhortation to us: Don't let your children fail to hear the wondrous works of God — because that's precisely what this part of Israel would do.

And then secondly, look at verses 17-31. Here we see a further sin. If the first sin was a culpable ignorance of God's wondrous works (that is, they forgot what God plainly declared in His word and by Moses and through the prophets to Israel about what He had done on their behalf), if this culpable ignorance, if this forgetting of the works of the Exodus is the first sin mentioned, notice the second sin: it's a lack of faith; it's unbelief. God's providence in the wilderness was questioned by His people. They didn't have faith that He would provide for them. They had a contempt for His promise to give them what they needed. Listen to God's word, beginning in verse 17.

“Yet they still continued to sin against Him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert, and in their heart they put God to the test by asking food according to their desire. Then they spoke against God; They said, ‘Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?’”

By the way, notice that question and compare it to the Twenty-third Psalm, which says what? “You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.” So here they are in the wilderness saying, ‘Can God provide a table for us in the wilderness?’ and the Twenty-third Psalm's answer is ‘You better believe it! The most glorious table that you can possibly imagine.’ But that's not their heart. Their heart doesn't believe, and so they ask,

“Can God provide a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing; can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people? Therefore the Lord heard and was full of wrath, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also mounted against Israel; because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation. Yet He commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven; He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them food from heaven. Man did eat the bread of angels; He sent them food in abundance. He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He directed the south wind. When He rained meat upon them like the dust, even winged fowl like the sand of the seas; then He let them fall in the midst of their camp, round about their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled; and their desire He gave to them. Before they had satisfied their desire, while their food was in their mouths, the anger of God rose against them, and killed some of their stoutest ones, and subdued the choice men of Israel.”

Now, as you read this whole passage you're remembering the stories which have already been recorded for us by Moses in the first five books of the Bible, but he

is telling them emphasizing especially in this passage their unbelief, their failure to believe that God could provide what they needed. They had a lack of faith.

Now, that lack of faith, which started with the failure to remember the works of God, will end up in idolatry. If you look down to verses 56 to 64, you see the ultimate end of unbelief. It starts off with forgetting God's wonders, then it becomes full-fledged unbelief, and it will eventually be idolatry. There is a straight line from unbelief to idolatry. Failure to trust in the living God will always end up in idolatry, because you have to trust in something and if you don't trust in the living God, you'll trust in anything, and that's idolatry. Well, we go on.

The third accusation that's brought against Ephraim you see in verses 32-39. God's punishments and warnings and mercies to them are unheeded by them, and we see here God's judgment and then their remorse (not really repentance). And then, even in light of their lack of repentance we see God patiently showing mercy to them, God's longsuffering to them in mercy. Look at verses 32 and following. Hear God's word.

“In spite of all this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wonderful works. So He brought their days to an end in futility, and their years in sudden terror.”

“When He killed them, then they sought Him, and returned and searched diligently for God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their redeemer. But they deceived Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant. But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; and often He restrained His anger, and did not arouse all His wrath. Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return.”

And we can remember this cycle in our study of the Book of Judges: sin, judgment, repentance, restoration; sin, judgment, repentance, restoration; sin, judgment, repentance, restoration — the cycle goes over and over, and the Psalmist tells us here...what Asaph tells us here is that there is not a genuine repentance on the part of Israel, and yet God forestalled a final condemning judgment.

Then again in verses 40-55 we go back to the Exodus and their failure to realize the power of God displayed in the plagues. They miss the message of the plagues.

This is the fourth section, beginning in verse 40.

“How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the

adversary, when He performed His signs in Egypt, His marvels in the field of Zoan, and turned their rivers to blood, and their streams, they could not drink. He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them. He gave also their crops to the grasshopper, and the product of their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hailstones, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones, and their herds to bolts of lightning. He sent upon them His burning anger, fury, and indignation, and trouble, a band of destroying angels. He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, but gave over their life to the plague, and smote all the first-born in Egypt, the first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham, but He led forth His own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; and He led them safely, so that they did not fear; but the sea engulfed their enemies.

“So He brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained. He also drove out the nations before them, and He apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement, and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.”

This whole section is a display of God's power. Six of the ten plagues are recorded, and it's a reminder of how God in His power had secured their release, and then the crossing of the Red Sea and the engulfing of the Egyptian army is recounted again as a reminder of God's power. And then, God driving the Canaanites out of the land, and settling them in the Promised Land is a reminder of God's power. That message had been missed.

This is a recapitulation of the point that was made in verses 9-16. And what does it lead to? Failing to trust in His power and provision? Well, that is described in verses 56-64. The consequences? Idolatry.

Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; they turned aside like a treacherous bow. For they provoked Him with their high places, and aroused His jealousy with their graven images. When God heard, He was filled with wrath, and greatly abhorred Israel; so that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men; and gave up His strength to captivity, and His glory into the hand of the adversary. He also delivered His people to the sword, and was filled with wrath at His inheritance. Fire devoured His young men; and His virgins had no wedding songs. His priests fell by the sword; and His widows could not weep.

Here we see the final judgment on that Northern Kingdom for their sin. Their idolatry had finally come to seed. This is the morality tale that is told by the Psalmist. We were told ahead of time, in verse 8, that we should not be like our fathers: to forget the works and power of God; to fail to trust in God; and, thus, to

commit the sin of idolatry. That's the warning lesson to us from this part of the Psalm.

### **III. God's faithfulness to the Southern Kingdom — God's provision for and promises to Judah.**

But then the Psalm ends on a glorious high note, and you see it there in verses 65-72. This is the third part of the Psalm, and it recounts God's faithfulness to the Southern Kingdom, His provision for Judah, His promises to Judah. Listen to what is said here.

“Then the Lord awoke as if from sleep, like a warrior overcome by wine. He drove His adversaries backward; He put on them an everlasting reproach. He also rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has founded forever. He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.”

The Psalm concludes with five statements about what God has done towards Judah for His people as an expression of His power and His provision. The first thing we see in verse 67: “He rejected the tent of Joseph, and He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.” I want to just say in passing that there are those today who want to emphasize a co-ordination between being the elect of God and being within the visible people of God, and in this passage we see a glorious reality that “not all Israel is Israel,” and that's not just a New Testament truth, that's an Old Testament truth. These are people who are within Israel, but we're being told of them in verse 67 that God rejected them. In other words, being within the external bounds of the people of God is not identical with being the elect of God. This again shows the power of God, and it shows the prerogative of God in His decree. He chooses to reject Joseph, the tribe of Ephraim — this tribe that had been so prominent in the days of the judges.

And in verse 68 we see a second thing: “He chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.” God in His mercy set His favor upon Judah, and established Judah and Mount Zion which He loved. Again, there's no reason for doing this that is described as related to Judah. It's not that Judah was better than Ephraim. It was not that Judah wasn't going to fail Him like Ephraim failed Him. Remember, it will be in Jerusalem that the cries go up, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” The Lion of the tribe of Judah will be rejected by the tribe of Judah in that very city, but we're told here...why did He choose Judah at this point?...He loved them. Just because He loved them. It was God's sovereign grace.

Thirdly, notice what we're told in verse 69: "And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has founded forever." It was in Judah, it was in Jerusalem where His temple would be established. No longer would the tabernacle move nomadically, but would be established in the City of David in the Temple Mount, and built by Solomon would be the temple.

Fourthly, in verse 70, "He chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance." And the irony again is this young shepherd boy being brought to be eventually the king of His people, Israel, in Jerusalem.

And finally, in verse 72, "So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands." David was a faithful king, in contrast to the one who had gone before him and in contrast to the ungodly kings of the North. He was a faithful king, who shepherded his people with the integrity of his heart. Here God's provision for His people and His promises to Judah are spelled out.

And so what are we to learn from this? The history lesson asks us to remember what God's works were, to put our confidence in God, and to walk with Him in faithfulness. It also asks us to remember what our forebears had done when they failed in their stubbornness and rebelliousness to trust in God. It reminds us that there was a time they forgot God's works; they failed to believe in Him, and they followed the way of idolatry. And then it shows us God's mercy in His provision for His people Judah.

What is the lesson for us? No matter what trial we face in this world, God's power is greater than any trial. No matter what we are tempted to put our confidence in, God alone deserves our faith and trust.

If we go the way of trusting in something other than God, we will go the way of idolatry, and we will find the judgments of God described in verses 56-64 visited upon us. But as we remember the works of God and put our confidence in Him and respond to Him in gratitude by obeying His commandments, then we see the mercies of God in His provision, in His choice, in His worship, and in guidance through His shepherd David.

Now ultimately this Psalm points to God's provision for His people in David's greater Son who would come to shepherd His people and guide them into the land which God had provided for them. May we tell that story to the next generation. May we remind that generation not only of God's works which He has revealed to us in His word, but may we remind them of God's works for us in our lives, tell our children and their children what the Lord has done for us, point them to faithful men and women through the ages.

All around them our young people have people telling them in this generation that this God that they have been taught is not true, that this God that they have been taught, this religion they have learned is not reality. They're told 'That's OK for you to believe, but you shouldn't impose that on other people.' It's undermining their confidence in the word of the living God, and this Psalmist is reminding us that when that clarion call from the world goes out to our young people we must be ready to meet them with the recounting of what the living God has done in history for us, to remind them and ourselves again of His marvelous works and of His trustworthiness, and to make sure that we put our faith wholly and only in Him. May God bless His word as we do so. Let's look to Him in prayer.

*Our Lord and our God, we thank You for this Your word. We recognize our own biography in this story all too clearly. We recognize the times when we have not remembered Your mighty acts for us. There was a day when some of us felt You so near, we felt we could have reached out and touched You, so close were You to us in grace in the day of our salvation. And yet in latter years we have forgotten the wonders that You have done for us, and we've not trusted You as we ought, and so we have been tempted to worship gods of our own making. But, O God, the only God who is is the God who has revealed Himself in His word and in His works, and that is You; and the gods of our own making are no gods, so we pray that by Your grace we would worship and trust and serve no god but God, the one true God who has revealed Himself to His people. We give you the praise and the glory for this, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Stand for God's blessing.

*Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith through Jesus Christ our Lord, until the day break and the shadows flee away. Amen.*

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