

## *The Wisdom of Goodness*

Psalm 106:1-13

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We're looking at Psalm 106 this morning, and Psalm 106, like last week, is a Psalm that really gives us a history lesson. It is a difficult history lesson. It's a difficult history lesson because it doesn't tell good things. It tells difficult things. But it is here for us because it means to instruct us in the way we are to live now and into the future. It is helpful and instructive to us. And our desire is to go more deeply now into a particular Psalm of history that we might receive its wisdom and most specifically that we might see and rejoice in the wisdom of the Lord's goodness.

So, let's look together Psalm 106. I'm going to be specifically looking together at verses 1 through 13. Psalm 106:1-13.

Praise the Lord!

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise? Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times! Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance.

Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness. Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel. [ESV]

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. Will you pray with me?

How great is the Lord of hosts, how merciful are your ways. We thank you for the Lord Jesus who is seated at your right hand who is interceding for this church and for the church, His body, around the world. Lord, hear His intercession. Lord Jesus and our great and merciful Father, you gave us your Spirit. And now, by your Holy Spirit may you instruct us, may you challenge us, may you shape us, and may you fill us. Help us, we pray, and open your word. Help the teacher. In the mighty power of Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

As we look together at this passage this morning, specifically what we see in verses 1-13 is actually the regular cycle of the entire Psalm. So, together what I want to do by looking at these first 13 verses is to see the cycle of the Psalm, but it allows us to see the deeper themes. And so, that's what we're going to do together as opposed to being able to preach the entire Psalm. And I apologize for not having the outline. I was too busy, and I said to our staff, I don't know what I'm going to learn this week. But I'm going to trust if there's something that I'm going to learn this week, the outline can wait until Sunday morning. So, if you have your pen and paper, now you can write the outline.

Number one, remember He is good, verses 1-5. Point number two, remember how to repent, verses 6-7. And thirdly, remember His redemption, verses 8 and following. Remember He is good,

remember how to repent, remember His redemption. This, we will find the wisdom of the Lord's goodness together.

So, remember He is good, verses 1-5. What we see in these opening verses, 1-3, that He calls us to remember His goodness for one specific overarching reason, and it's this, for His praise. It's what it says. "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise? Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!" That verse 3 isn't a separation from the first two. We're doing justice and we're doing righteousness when we remember His goodness first and foremost for His praise. We gather together every Sunday morning to go into His word, to sing His praises, to hear His testimonies, and to pray, and to confess, and to respond for one purpose only, for His praise.

It is not first and foremost for our experience. It is not first and foremost to find a place where we can find other people who think like we do and believe like we do. It is not here so that we can have programs for our children or that we can have small groups or that we can have ministries. We're here because the Lord brought us here, and our first purpose is to remember His goodness for the sake of His praise. That's why we are here. And this is how we do justice. This is how we do righteousness. We remember His goodness.

My favorite hymn, "Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with thee. Thou changest not. Thy compassions they fail not. As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness." And only secondly, "Lord unto me." We gather to remember He is good for the sake of His praise.

We remember He is good first and foremost for His praise, and secondly, for our joy. Because in Him receiving that praise and acknowledging His goodness, we find our greatest joy. Notice what it says in verses 4-5, "Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones," and then this phrase, "that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance." Do you see what he's just done there? He's saying, for your praise, now I'm going to ask you, Lord, remember me because when you remember me, I begin to see how you have provided for your people, the nation of God. And when I see that, I rejoice because I remember my inheritance is not my 401k and it is not my parents. And if they don't pass away, right? There may not be much left. You've seen the bumper sticker, "I'm spending my child's inheritance." My parents are dancing my inheritance away in North Carolina. Thanks be to God, that's not my joy. Their dancing is, not my inheritance.

But what he talks about here is not all the stuff we get wrapped up in knots about. What's the market going to do this weekend if the China deal doesn't happen? What's going to happen in an election year with all the uncertainty? What's going to happen with NAFTA, no NAFTA? What's going to happen all over the world? How is it going to affect my retirement plan and my children's gift that I want to give to them? How easily we get pumped up in the stuff of our inheritance. But he says, that's not mine. You are my inheritance, Lord. And when you receive praise and when I see what you do for your people, I find joy. I rejoice. That's what that joy is. I'm rejoicing. I'm singing.

This is the first thing he does in this Psalm. He remembers the Lord's goodness for the sake of His praise and for our joy. This is the first thing he does, and it's the first thing we do. Here's the logic of our worship. Why every Sunday do we do a song of gathering and a call to worship and a prayer and a song? Is it because we're just woefully incapable of being creative? No. It's because we start with praise. We start with praise of the one who is eternal, who was before us, who is with us, and who is eternal. We start with this.

But in case we forget, if I may quote from my favorite hymn again, "Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in the courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love." No matter the season, in and out, we start with praise and we

end with praise. Why? Because if we don't, the Psalms tell us the rocks and the trees will cry out. And I've said this to every congregation I've had the honor to serve. I for one do not want to be out sung by a bunch of rocks and trees. But He has ordained praise through the glory of His creation. He has ordained praise through the cries and the voices of our young ones.

And in the case that you're new to us, that voice you hear up front is Emily Lee who is praising the Lord and responding to my voice. She knows my voice and I know hers. And do you know what she's doing? She's saying amen. She says amen more Sundays than anybody else. I see it in her eyes, and I hear it in her voice. Why? Because she's praising the Lord. Thanks be to God the air still fills her lungs and she's here to praise. So are her parents. Thanks be to God. May we never be out sung by the creation. May He always receive His praise because remember His goodness.

Why does he go through the trouble of starting here? It is not just because he is Orthodox, not just because he's recognizing God's glory and power, but because the generations before him forgot to. That's what this Psalm is about. The Psalm is about a history lesson of how the generations before him forgot to praise God even in the face of His mighty deeds which is why after he says, remember He is good, he's reminding us also next how to repent.

Now, it's about to get uncomfortable. He begins in verse 6 when he says, "Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness." What he does first is he starts individually, and he is specific. Although, I recognize in sort of encompassing sin, he says, "iniquity." But note this, just follow along either in your notes or in the scriptures if you have them open.

Verse 13, "But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel." Verse 14, "They were given to lust and wild cravings. They became jealous. They became idolaters." "They exchanged the glory of God and sought glory for themselves," verse 20. Then in verse 24, they actually despised His good gifts. They not only didn't say thank you, they said, this isn't good enough. Verse 28, "They yolk themselves with foreign gods." Instead of worshiping the Lord alone, they decided, you know what would be good? Let's have a little slice of this religion and a little slice of this religion, and let's make it all together. And won't it be great?

Yet they practiced detestable things before the Lord, and it got really detestable. They provoked His anger. They even offered their children as sacrifice to false gods. These were the people of God, y'all, offering their children as sacrifices to false gods. They refused to obey His ways. They refused to utterly defeat the nations that God had promised they would defeat. And they just continued to pollute themselves, pollute the word of God by trying to be like other nations.

This is the specificity which he talks about. And so, he cites specific sins so that we understand first that to remember how to repent first begins by saying our fathers, both we and our fathers, have sinned. And he catalogues them. And it is a painful read. But thanks be to God, the reason why it's here, if the scriptures weren't true, it would not include these things. He gives the worst report on the people of God and their failure to follow a good and gracious God. If you're making something up to make yourself look great or God look great, why would you ever include this catalog? It's because it is true, although I recognize that may not always be self-evident to you. But I encourage you to think about the logic of that because in cataloging these sins individually and specifically, he's going to contrast it with God's utter faithfulness even in the face of individual and very specific sin.

Now, what would be great is if he stopped there. In fact, we could deal with that. Do you remember that YouTube video a few years ago where the two brothers are sitting in the shower and they have paint all over their faces and heads? And the father sits them in the shower, and he looks at them and says, "Whose idea was this?" And the older brother moves his eyes towards his younger brother, and he indicates he head like that. He says, "Do you think this was a good idea?" "No." "Look at your brother's face. Who got the paint out?" "Brother did." "How did he get it out?" "He build the stairs, daddy, with blocks." "Why didn't you tell him no? Are you guys in trouble?" "Yes Daddy."

We look at that and it's funny because we see two brothers covered head to toe in paint. And by the way, we never see the video of what happened downstairs of the utter disaster that they caused on the first floor. And it's funny. We can see these two brothers. Their shame is on their faces. They're trying to put it off on the other person. They're trying to cover it up like, I didn't really do all of it, I kind of did some of it, it was really his fault, it really wasn't my fault.

We like it when we operate in the arena of individual and specific sin. But where we get uncomfortable is where we start talking about corporate sin. By corporate, I mean the comprehensive reality of the sin of humanity means we don't have the luxury of simply saying, well, that generation did that, and because they did that, I didn't do that. So, therefore, I don't have to confess it. Well, Psalm 106 doesn't let us do that. Psalm 106 actually says, our fathers, "Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea." He says that after he says we have committed iniquity. We have done wickedness. Yes, he is referring to his sin and the present generation. But he also recognizes the nature of being a part of God's people as my sin affects you, and your sin affects me.

So, when we pray on Sunday morning our confession of sin corporately, Lord, forgive us, I'm not only asking forgiveness for my sin. I'm asking forgiveness for yours because when you sin, that hurts me. And when I sin, that hurts you.

That is the nature of being a part of the Lord's people which is why we are reminded that when the church of Jesus Christ, the PCA, a couple years ago gathered together to confess corporately their guilt and sin with regard to racism at the beginning of the denomination because it was in the south, and they had been a part of churches that had said to blacks, "You're not welcome. And if you are welcome, you get to be in the upper balcony." And so, this generation confessed the sin of a former generation, and that made a lot of people uncomfortable. But the reality is sin is utterly sinful. We don't realize just how much it stinks and how long that stain stays around, and how it affects the next generation and then the next generation. And it affects us in ways we can't always see. And we have our own blind spots. And one of the blind spots of my generation is, we're uncomfortable with corporately confessing the sins of a former generation. But the Lord's word calls us to remember how to repent. Lord, forgive me, forgive us not of our sin now, but Lord, forgive us for the sins of our fathers and our fathers' fathers.

My family is originally from the state of Alabama. One of my forebearers is a part of the original signatories to the state constitution which says a black person is not fully a person. Lord, forgive me and forgive my fathers' fathers' fathers. Lord, utterly forgive us. This is what it's telling me how to repent so that I don't slip out the side door of individualism because I grew up in the west. This is uncomfortable to my very core. But the word tells us we have committed iniquity, and that "we" isn't just me. Lord, forgive us.

But here's the beauty. The third verse from "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," "Pardoned for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine with ten thousand beside." How can the hymn writer say, "pardoned for sin and peace that endureth"? What enables our both individual and our corporate generational repentance? It is because we worship a God of redemption.

And that's the third point, remember His redemption, verse 8. "Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power." And so, in some sense just like my first point, we remember His redemption not because of how it makes us feel or how special we might think we are. The reality is we remember His redemption because first and foremost it was to demonstrate His power, His power over sin and death. And it says He saved them.

Then verse 9, "He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. So he saved them from the hand of the foe." The foe wasn't just their captors in Egypt. The foe was the Red Sea as well as an object of judgement. Here, He separates it so His people can go through and then he uses that very sea to utterly destroy their captors, their enemies.

Now, watch this. That is the blueprint. That is the logic of His redemption because that is a logic that will be played out over and over again. God takes that which was an instrument of judgement. He takes it on, He rebukes it, and He turns it into an object of salvation. That is what the cross is, right? If the seas raging were an object and an instrument of evil as the scriptures often use them as a metaphor, God hear says He rebukes it, He separates it, allows His people to go through it, and then on the other side says, I'm going to take that same instrument and I'm going to destroy your enemies.

Now, watch this. Christ took the cross, an instrument of shame, the crucifixion, an instrument of shame. And He takes it on Himself. And on it, He rebukes sin and He uses it from that place and says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And He takes the instrument and through it, we are united to Him as through the Red Sea. And He uses it to crush and defeat sin and death because on the third day, He rises again.

Do you see? This is the goodness of His redemption. Remember His redemption to show His power. And because He shows His power through His redemption, we get to enjoy this so that we can enjoy freedom. Not freedom of choice, not freedom of food, not freedom to do whatever we want, but the freedom of redemption.

In Colossians 1, "And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death and in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. If indeed you continue in the faith stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and of which, I, Paul, became a minister.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. [ESV]

This is the announcement of those who were once alienated, now through the work of Christ have been brought close. This is the pattern of God's redemption. Let us remember His redemption.

And I want to thank all of you who heard the call to pray for your pastors this week as we were at General Assembly. While yes, we did great work of the church, hard work for the church, I also got to fellowship with mentors and disciples in the faith. And I got to hug the man who was there the moment I gave my life to Christ, who showed me how to walk the life of faith, how to memorize a verse, how to pray, what in the world the reformed faith was, but who showed me how to be a man, who showed me how to be a husband, and who was faithful in always being there for me. He's the one who taught me these kinds of verses. He taught me what it was to be a minister.

And as a minister of the gospel along with Pastor John and Pastor PD, we say to you that when we remember His redemption, yes, to show His power. But for our freedom, I want you to remember – may it ring in your ears long – Romans 8:1-3,

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not in according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. [ESV]

In His body, Jesus, as was done at the Red Sea, rebuked sin and condemned it in His own flesh so that you and I can have the freedom to say, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ

Jesus,” which means my repentance is fueled by something other than my pride and weakness to defensiveness. Now, because of Christ, because I remember His redemption, I now can be radically free to confess and repent because there is forgiveness. And when I receive that forgiveness, I find freedom from sin and I find freedom from trying to protect myself.

This is the beauty of what the Lord has done. This is the wisdom of His goodness. The wisdom of His goodness is to demonstrate that He is good, that leads us to repentance, that demonstrates His redemption. And so, I close this morning with these final words from 106.

Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive. Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.  
[ESV]

Say it with me, “glory in your praise.” Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be glory. Let’s pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning for your word. We thank you for the truths that it declares to us. Lord, we ask that you would enable us to be a people that remembers you and your goodness, that remembers how to repent both individually and corporately because we have been set free through the beauty and power of your redemption. Lord, make us a people swift to praise, sure to confess, and free to rejoice in the Lord of our redemption in whose name and power we pray together. Amen.