

Passing Along the Faith

Psalm 78:1-7 (November 8, 2020)

Psalm 78:1-7

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 ancestors have told us.

⁴We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

⁵He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children;

⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;

Historical Context

Psalm 78 is another historical or “memory” psalm that the people of Israel used in community worship, as part of their celebrations of God’s goodness to Israel; and as a reminder of the harsh realities of Israel’s past failures to be faithful to God and to God’s gracious Covenant, through which they had been so blessed. The memory of those failures was to be part the daily tradition of a father repeating those stories to their sons. The events of the past are presented as a lesson for the present generation.

Theme: Passing Along the Faith

Blessings come in large and small measures. We are blessed if we live a comfortable life and have a fulfilling intellectual and social life. We are blessed if we live in peace with our neighbors and are free of crime. We are blessed if we can move about without harassment. Modern Christians describe blessing in terms of prosperity, liberty, and self-fulfillment.

Yet, tradition does not immediately come to mind when we think of blessing, but it should. The relationship we have with God depends on the faith that was passed to us or the values we pass to our children. This is an intangible treasure that far outstrips wealth or the ability to choose of happiness. If we are faithful to God, we are compelled to imbue that fidelity in the next generation. If we do not at least try, then our commitment is questionable.

As the second longest psalm in the Bible, Psalm 78 addressed fidelity as a witness to the next generation.