

Sermon on Psalm 103:2  
CCRC 31 December 2021  
"Forget Not"

Dear Friends of God,

\*

What do you call to mind when you think about the year gone by?

Besides COVID.

That's an unfair question! COVID just dominated our lives this year. 2021 was a full year of COVID. Every day on the news we followed along hearing about numbers, vaccine rollouts, second shots, boosters, antivaxxers, travel restrictions, rapid tests, PCR tests, masks requirements, outbreaks, school closures and re-openings, shopping and dining restrictions, and lately the Omicron variant. We were COVID-obsessed and COVID-anxious all year long.

Yet there were other things that happened. Kids got married, babies were born, students graduated, we still had jobs, we enrolled in universities and colleges. We could get out in our campers or go to the cottage. Some of us travelled far away. Jodie and I moved half way across the country to be here. We all have our personal memory boxes.

\*

Tonight we recognize that deeply connected to our personal stories is the story of God in this world. Not only are we caught up in cultural and personal stories, we are also caught up in the grand story of God and his saving work in Christ.

Psalm 103:2 calls us to

\*

Forget not all his benefits.

That tells us that the act of remembering can be a spiritual exercise. To recall the past, especially remembering how God has worked there is a deeply spiritual thing.

What we call to mind is all the benefits God gives to us. The Psalmist lists so many benefits that God has given to his people:

\*

forgiveness  
healing  
redemption  
love and compassion  
satisfaction of basic needs  
justice  
revelation of his character – compassionate, faithful, loving, eternal  
the eternal kingdom of God

These are what we call to mind: God's salvation, God's providence, God's character. Praise the Lord, O my soul. For all he has done, for all he is, for all he has provided, for his great salvation, praise his name.

\*

Psalm 103 calls us to remember these things. Hold these things in your heart. Let them be the truths that are at the center of who you are; the truths you live out of. Do not forget them. Forget not all his benefits, his blessings.

There are spiritual benefits in remembering.

\*

Remembering gives us courage. When Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem he was under constant threat of attack by their enemies. One source of great courage was through memory. He said to the nobles and officials and the rest of the people,

\*

Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes. Nehemiah 4:14

Remembering God's character gives courage when in danger. He is great and awesome. God proved it again in Nehemiah's day as he did this past year.

\*

Remembering gives us comfort. The writer of Psalm 77 was in great pain and distress. He was in despair. He was groaning all day long. His spirit grew faint and his soul refused to be comforted. Does that sound familiar? But then something happened that gave him comfort. He remembered God.

\*

Then I thought, to this I will appeal: "the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Psalm 77:10,11

Remembering is the turning point for him. In faith he looked beyond the present bewildering reality and remembered the saving acts of old and found hope and comfort. As I've seen people face their own pain and distress, I have seen how their memory of God's acts gives them comfort. I've heard stories of blessing and salvation that happened decades ago that still give comfort. God was with me then; he will be with me now. I believe this remembrance can help us through COVID. We are not the first generation to go through a pandemic. God's people have always found comfort in God's saving acts.

\*

Remembering gives us gratitude. When we remember God and his blessings, we are moved to gratitude. The apostle Paul, when he writes to the Philippians tells them that whenever he remembers them he thanks God.

\*

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now... Philippians 1:3,4

Memory and gratitude go hand in hand. When there is thankfulness there is praise. After recalling all the profound and deep benefits of God's character and care, the writer of Psalm 103 ends with the only thing left: praise.

\*

Praise the LORD, you his angels...  
Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts...  
Praise the LORD all his works...  
Praise the LORD, O my soul...

Tonight is a night of remembering. \*Forget not all his benefits.

Tonight in church we'll remember the highlights of church life. We'll see pictures that will remind us of all the things that took place in our community. It's so moving to put this PowerPoint together at the end of the year because so much has taken place and it reminds us that God has blessed us so richly. Even in the low places, the loss of people we loved, which gives us grief, God is with us and gives us the Spirit to give us comfort. He will still bless us in those low places, just as he does in the high places.

We will also take communion. This is traditionally the Psalm we read after communion. After we have lifted our hearts to heaven, after we have received the bread and wine, after we remember that we are surrounded by and deeply connected to the events of the cross and resurrection, after we have communed in the deepest place of our being with the risen, ascended Lord through these elements, we call upon that deep place to forget not all his benefits.

This remembering inspires us to courage. Life can be dangerous, especially when there is a pandemic. It's unpredictable and can make us anxious. Yet as we remember God's character and his actions towards us, we can be confident that no matter what happens to us we have strength. In our weakest moments he can give us strength.

Remembering summons up a deep and lasting comfort. We have a God who knows us and remembers us in our need. Jesus came at Christmas to be one of us and share our pain and sorrow. God is compassionate.

Remembering moves us to thankfulness and praise. After hearing the stories once again, let your soul be moved to sing and praise our God.

On this last night of the year, let this service be about memory and spirituality and being stirred to hope and confidence for the future.

AMEN