

Exod 03-02-23a

Once again, a scripture reading in Psalm 78 is subtitled, in the New King James, God's Kindness to Rebellious Israel. The Hebrew tells us this is a contemplation of Asaph, or a Maschil, M-A-S-C-H-I-L. The Maschils are contemplative poetry, contemplative lyrics to songs that are designed to be thought about at length, something you might bring to mind other than when you're singing it.

You would learn the song in worship, sing together with the group, and the words would stay with you to be thought about, prayed about, meditated upon at a later time. So, it begins in verse 1, And give ear, O my people, to my law, give ear, O people, to my law, 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 hide them from their children, telling to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, his strength, and his wonderful works that he has done. For he has established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded to our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, the generation who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God that he has commanded us. If we stop here, you will notice that there is a strong emphasis on memory, on recall, on rehearsing, and recounting and retelling the mighty works of God.

They were designed to be memorable, they were set down in oral tradition in the early days of Israel, and the idea is, it was codified in the law of Moses, that parents should make them known to their children for generations to come. This truth is recorded in the New Testament, where we are reminded that all these things were written for our instruction, upon whom the culmination of the ages has come. It is not just a Bible story, it is not just an amusing thing to know and tell as a fairy tale or make into a movie.

It is in fact vital to our spiritual life to think about these things. Now, I have sat in church pretty much all my life, and I have heard people say, you know, read your Bible, it used to be a little song, read your Bible, pray every day. Well, as a young lad, I tried that a few times, and was as amazed as ever that I could hardly get through it.

I would turn to the Old Testament, and pretty soon I would hit the gaps, or I would hit things I did not understand, that did not make sense to me, and I would get so many questions raised, that I could hardly get through the story. I did not understand why people were acting the way they were, why they were saying what they said. It was confusing to me, and I thought, well, you know, read your Bible, pray every day.

I mostly was praying to God, how come I cannot understand any of this that I am reading, and why it was discouraging rather than encouraging, because I found myself not really enjoying

the reading of the Bible, and that made me feel guilty. I thought, well, what kind of a Christian am I that I only enjoy reading the Bible? It is not something like the other books I was reading at the time, reading Jules Verne, and Rudyard Kipling, and C.S. Forrester, and a lot of other great authors, Mark Twain. Those books, I could hardly put down.

I read them on the school bus, and read them on the way home, yet when I would come to the Word of God, and I knew that I was a believer, and that I should love God, and I should enjoy the reading of Scripture, I struggled with it, and then I felt terribly guilty. I thought, well, what is the matter with me? Well, listen to this. It doesn't say that they should read the law, does it? He established a testimony in Jacob, and he appointed a law in Israel, and he commanded the fathers that they should make something known to God, but it wasn't the law itself, was it? Now, I know there is another place, put it on your forehead, put it on your hand, put it on your door post, talk about it with your children, and that is important, but this is stressing something different.

This says, Tell the generation to come the praises of the Lord, the strength and the wonderful works that He has done. Now, these wonderful works are Niflaot. Niflaot.

N-I-P-H-L-A-O-T. Niflaot. The O-T is the feminine plural, and you might think, well, N-I-P-H-L, that might be from nafal to fal, but this is a nifal of a different verb.

This is the nifal form of a verb pala, P-A-L-A, and it means to be marvelous or to be wonderful. It does not occur in the common stem, the calf stem. People wouldn't say, well, he went and was wonderful today, or as a declared sentence, but it generates nouns such as pele, P-E-L-E, which means wonder, or adjectival nouns like pili, P-I-L-I-Y, actually, pili, which means wonderful or incomprehensible, and we have niflaot, M-I-P-H-L-A-A-H, and remember when you put an M in front of many Hebrew words, that makes a noun out of the verb.

So niflaot, you can see the P-A-L-A in the middle of that, that means wondrous words. That word, for example, is used in Job 37.16, niflaot, where God is speaking to Job after the dialogues are completed. He said, do you know about the layers of thick clouds, the wonders of one perfect in knowledge, and it's talking about all those mighty works that are recorded in Job chapter 37 and vicinity.

So here we have something that is in the niflaot. Now, cal is a declarative stem. A lot of times we'll have a direct object.

Niflaot is the passive voice in Hebrew, the passive stem, and it means to receive the action. And so it is something that is made wonderful. Something is caused to be a wonder.

So what it says in Psalm 78 verse 4, tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, his strength, and his wonderful works that he has done. We're not going to hide them from our children. These are niflaot that he has manufactured.

This is asah. Remember the distinction between bara, to create something out of nothing, and

asah, which is to create something out of something. Now, why are we going to this level of detail? Because the nature of the wonders of God, God can take a commonplace and make it wonderful.

He manufactures it out of existing circumstances, using existing people. One of the things that you learn as a technical writer or an editor is to watch for redundancies in language. And existing is a word that can often be stricken from business writing.

We decided to upgrade our existing infrastructure. We had a meeting with the existing staff. Well, you can leave that word out and it makes equal sense.

It's just, of course they're existing. You couldn't. It's somewhat superfluous.

But here, the idea that something is already in existence, when *asah* manufactures something out of existing materials, out of materials that are already present in the environment, there is an emphasis on the current existence of the materials. But what does that mean to us? We sometimes think, well, I wish that an intervention of God would happen. They call this, theologically, the theological word is eruption.

But it's not like the eruption of Mount Vesuvius with an E. It starts with an I. I-R-R-U-P-T-I-O-N. An eruption, almost like an interruption, where God would part the skies and come through and manifest himself in a new and unique way and exert his power. Take the top off of a mountain, fire in brimstone, part the Red Sea, something great and mighty.

But the wonders that Israel is told here to remember and pass on to their children are God's wonderful works that he has manufactured. The things that he has made wonderful. He took something, both the passive voice of *Palah* and the *asah* verb here, give us a strong emphasis on God is going to work with what's there.

He took the dust of the ground and made man. He took the structural piece out of Adam's side and manufactured the woman. Our deliverance and our learning and the blessing of God and the forward progress of our souls toward that teleiosis that we looked at in Tuesday night's study that's often translated complete or perfect.

It means finished. How does God finish us? How does he bring us to the place of service and bring us to the place that he wants us to be? Christ-likeness, transformed minds, fruitful fields, all of the different metaphors and illustrations in Scripture. How does he do it? He does it out of existing materials.

He takes things that are ordinary and makes them wonderful. He uses what's in our souls, in our circumstances, and in the situations we find ourselves and he manufactures wonders. What remains is for us to recognize those wonders.

We know what's about to take place in Egypt in Exodus as we move into chapter 4 and following. We know that in these next few chapters great astonishing things are going to take

place. In our Luke study on Friday night we've seen the Lord Jesus for three plus years do great and astonishing things.

He says astonishing things. He performs great miracles. Yet in both of those situations, in Egypt and in Israel, in Jesus' day, somehow these wonders failed to impress, failed to convince, failed to compel, failed to move people to a change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

We will not hide these wonders from our children. We will tell the generation to come the praises of the Lord. We will tell of his strength.

We will tell of these things that were caused to be wonderful which God manufactured. He established a testimony. He appointed a law.

He commanded the fathers to make them known to the children. Why? So that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children. And what is the point here? Look at verse 7, Psalm 78.

So that they may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God. It doesn't say a generation that was predestinated to destruction, that was foreordained to drop in the wilderness. They did not set their heart aright.

They had the chance. They saw the wonders. They had to make a decision.

What is it that helps us recognize wonders in our life, the hand of God in our circumstances, manufacturing and causing things to be wonderful? We've got to have a frame of reference. We have to know the wonders that God has done before. As they examined paintings, recently there was an auction where a painting was sold.

It was a previously lost painting from Van Gogh. It had been missing and virtually unknown for decades and decades and decades. It was a previously unknown work.

It wasn't in any catalogs. It wasn't in any lists or chronological tales of how Van Gogh had painted. But this painting turned up and it was authenticated.

How did they know it was a Van Gogh and not a clever forgery? The finest experts in the world who had looked at every Van Gogh painting in person and up close who have done chemical analysis on the kind of paint that he used and the kind of brushes that he used, who have x-rayed and seen the layering that he does and know everything there is to know about how Van Gogh creates a painting, looked at this painting and said it matches in every detail. The canvas is of the right age. The paint is of the right composition.

The technique and style and the brushwork, everything is Van Gogh. It is a Van Gogh. I can

identify this recently discovered painting because I know the ones he's done in the past.

That's exactly how we see the leading and the wonder-working of God in our lives. We have to know how God has led and worked wonders in the past. Tell it to your children so that they may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep His commandments and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

God's wonders have been set down for us. We want to live that life. When we stop and think about it, when we slow down and sit still and we say, yes, I want to be faithful, yes, I want to serve God, yes, I want to be a hundredfold field, narrow road, straight gate, inheritance, perseverance, endurance, I want to do all of those things.

But then we get enmeshed in the day-to-day exigencies and slings and arrows of life and we suddenly bog down. I saw on the news where a man was fleeing and police were trying to chase him earlier this week somewhere in the area and because of all the rain we had, he started running across the field and so the police car turned off to follow him and bogged down in the mud and the man escaped. We don't know where he is because he bogged down.

He could not continue his progress when he got off the paved road. But we get into the mud and bogs of everyday life and it can stop our progress. What is it that keeps our progress going? How do we keep our focus and keep our mind on our business as believers? Remember the wonders of God that He has done in the past.

The Fathers have set them down for us in the Scriptures. Jesus commissioned the Apostles to write inspired Scripture in the New Testament. God commissioned prophets in the Old Testament to write these wonders down and preserve them for us.

Thinking about the Word of God, the power of God that comes into our lives through the Word and through the Spirit. What is the content of that Word? It's not just a phrase. It's not a magic black box.

It's propositional truth. It's knowledge of God's actual dealings with people in the past. How He has manufactured wonders for people who were in stress, for people who were facing challenges, for people who had a commission and a call to carry out.

That's really a story that we find in the early chapters of Exodus. God is calling people and these are not people that have anything to commend them as the ones to receive a call. You would think, well, wouldn't it be great if they were a mighty people in their own land and had resources and were some sort of global power like the United States is today? If God issued a call to the United States because look at the resources we have.

Look at the dominant position we hold in the world. Surely we are the ones to receive the call of God. Yet, when you look in the Scripture, not many mighty are called.

God has chosen the foolish things of this world and weak things of this world to confound the wise, to make His point in the great conflict that preceded human history, Satan and the angels who followed him. God is making a point about His own power. So that's the first eight verses of Psalm 78 and an extended discussion of them for our Scripture reading this morning.

Let's return now to Exodus where we resume the story in chapter four. Chapter four is sort of an unfortunate chapter break because we are still at the burning bush and the dialogue between Moses and God is still going on. But God has just informed Moses with an extended set of instructions and predictions comprising several verses here.

If you go back up, God gives the long speech of the whole encounter when beginning in verse 15, God said to Moses, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers... Does that have a resonance now that we've looked at Psalm 78? It's the Lord God of your fathers. Remember the works that they had told? The stories of Abraham, the stories of Isaac, the stories of Jacob and his sons? The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever.

This is my reputation. This is who I am to you. The God of your fathers.

This is my memorial to all generations. That idea of memorial is something we have not explored to a great extent. But let's turn quickly to a couple of passages.

Psalm 30, verse 4. Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. We ask ourselves the question in the middle of the week when it's Tuesday afternoon or Thursday at 10 a.m. in the morning, whatever it is I'm in the middle of, do I pause and give thanks? And if I decide to give thanks, do I have enough in my soul to give thanks about? Regardless of my circumstances, we like to think our happiness does not depend on our circumstances. We want to be the thermostat and not the thermometer.

We don't want to heat up when situations heat up. We don't want to cool off when the environment around us grows cold. We want to be that stabilizing influence, the one who keeps their head when all others are losing theirs.

We should have eternal truth guiding us. So, in the middle of the week, some odd point, do we stop and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name? Well, to do that, you have to have something to remember. Something in your soul.

Something about God. What is His name? We don't just say, they used to have that song that rehearsed all the different biblical names of God. I don't remember the tune of it, but there was a poster for a while that you could get that had all the names listed with a dark background.

I like that. It's great to try to run through that list of names and to think about the significance of each one. Yahweh Shabbatot, the Lord of Hosts.

The Most High, El Elyon. And El Shaddai, the Great Provider. You have all these different names

of God by which He is called, Wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father, and all the names that attach to the Lord Jesus.

Well, what's the point here? Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His, and give thanks and remembrance of His holy name. His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Psalm 97, verse 12, also talks about God's memorial name. Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous. Give thanks and remembrance of His holy name.

Psalm 102, verse 12, You, O Lord, shall endure forever and the remembrance of your name to all generations. Psalm 135, verse 13, Your name, O Lord, endures forever. Your fame, O Lord, throughout all generations.

For the Lord will judge His people and He will have compassion on His servants. Two different aspects of God's name, right? He blesses His servants, but He also judges His people. It's not all roses and blessings when we think of the name of God.

We are reminded that we serve the Lord in a gladness, but we also maintain a fear of the Lord, a healthy respect for the fact that we are evaluated. It's like serving in the military. There are great accomplishments, there are great rewards and benefits and blessings that come from a life of service in the military, but if you foul up, there are also severe consequences.

The Uniform Code of Military Justice do things to you that civilian law cannot. And to run afoul of the UCMJ, which is what we've had since the early 50s, and before that it was the old rocks and shoals in the Navy. The essence of it is the same.

There are great opportunities and great methods and great privileges, but from those to whom much is given, much is expected, and God will judge His people. That's also a part of God's memorial name. And finally, in this connection, Hosea chapter 12 and verse 5, he's talking about the history of God dealing with Jacob.

He talks about in Hosea chapter 12 and verse 1, Ephraim feeds on wind and pursues the east wind. Now, Ephraim are Israelites. They ought to be holy and righteous and faithful to God.

Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind. What is the east wind? Why do we care about an east wind? Well, think about the wind in Israel. The wind's coming from the west.

Where is it coming from? It's coming from the Mediterranean Sea. It's bringing moisture and cool breeze and wonderful things. If it's coming from the east, where is it coming from? It's coming from the desert, the barren reaches beyond Jordan.

The east wind, a lot of times, has come up from the southeast, from the Arabah. It's dry and hot and with white crops and evaporates water. Ephraim is feeding on the wind and pursuing the east wind.

He daily increases lives and desolation. He makes a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried to Egypt. He's looking to human solutions, human strength, human alliances.

The Lord brings a charge against Judah in addition to Ephraim. He will punish Jacob according to his ways, according to his deeds. He will recompense him.

He, Jacob, took his brother by the heel in the womb and in his strength he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought favor from it.

He found it at Bethel and there he spoke to us. That is the Lord God of hosts. Now you think about how late in time the prophets are, the minor prophets like Hosea.

He's still harking back to the God of Jacob. That is the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is his memorial name.

Yahweh is his memorial name. The name that he reveals to Moses in Exodus chapter 3. This is the name I will be known by to all generations. So what is the conclusion Hosea delivers here? So you, by the help of your God, return.

Observe mercy and justice and wait on your God continually. Remember what Jesus told the disciples in Luke 21? By patience possess your souls. Hupomone.

Bearing up under. Observe mercy and justice. Remember the things that God requires.

We published that in the bulletin many years ago. What does God require of you, O man, but to do what? To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God. What does it say here? Hosea 12.6 Observe mercy.

Observe justice. Wait on your God continually. Waiting on God is a function of humility.

Let God determine the time. Let God determine the means. Let God determine the purpose.

What God calls for, what God allows through the wall of fire, what God brings into my life, I will accept it. I will look for justice. I will look for mercy.

I will wait to see what God does. He will take these existing situations and manufacture a wonder. He will make what exists wonderful.

Well, that's something of the idea of the memorial name of God that we saw in Exodus, the closing section of chapter 3. Now, God in the midst of this extended statement to Moses, revealing his name, go gather the elders of Israel. Say to them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appear to me saying, I have surely visited you. I have seen what is done to you in Egypt.

I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Danites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, to land flowing with milk and honey. Then they

will heed your voice and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt. You will say to him, Our Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us.

Now please let us go three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. But I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go, not even by a mighty hand. God has already told us what the reactions are going to be, hasn't he? He told Moses, The people will believe you, Pharaoh will not.

This is what the response is going to be. Now, if God knows what Pharaoh's response will be, if God knows what the elders' response will be, and of course he had to wait a couple of hundred years before the Israelites were ready to receive deliverance on God's terms, but now they are. What do you think God knows about Moses' response to the call? God already knows that Moses is going to have some questions, some anxieties.

So in chapter 4, Moses says, Suppose they will not believe me. We saw these signs last time. The rod, the leper's hand, and the blood on the ground.

We are going to take a little bit further look at those when we come back from our break. But God anticipates. He knows when we are going to falter.

He knows when we are going to question. He knows when we are going to lack the faith to simply say what Mary said when Gabriel appeared and said you are going to be pregnant out of wedlock and what is conceived in you is of the Holy Ghost and you are going to be the mother of the Savior and she said let it be to me according to your word. Well, not all of us are at the point of being able to take such a momentous call at first go.

And Moses staggers a little here. He has some questions. We often have questions as well.

But by knowing what God did with Moses, knowing what God did with Israel, knowing what God did in the lives of several others who didn't immediately take up the flag and go charging to the high ground, knowing this will give us strength. And so that is what we are going to look at when we come back from our break. But let's pause here and give us a chance to muse on what we have seen this morning from Psalm 78 and Exodus chapter 3. We are going to go over that a little more.

Hey Daniel, were you able to join us alright? Hi there. I think because I unplugged this monitor I'm not able to hear that. The speakers kind of go together.

I unplugged the monitor. We have you all on the TV so everyone can see you. So act normal.

It's the branch tearing my shingles off. I didn't have a chance to get out there. Do you have a minute? Hold on.

We are seeing you fine. So I unplugged this monitor except the built in speakers. I think when the monitor saw there was no video it turned the speakers off as well.

I think it will work better because I will be working first. The TV here is okay? Okay. I think it will be better because I messed up because she had a video and there was no video.

Oh yeah. It didn't work. There were two documents.

Yeah. Your video is frozen right now. Could you see Matthew also? Yeah.

He got snowed in at home so he joined up. I was curious. I don't know if that would be aggravating any of your problems.

When you get it you call her and then she will figure out when to start. Well I am glad you got the audio and I think I got a good MP3 for the first lesson also. Hey Matthew can you hear me? I got speakers hooked up so you can talk.

Are you still getting some audio feed? Probably pretty delayed. It pauses your ongoing video if you do it under a window. You should see the other two windows that we have Matthew's in now.

What speed of machine are you using? Huh? I don't know. I got so spoiled. I can imagine living two minutes before.

We are running on 2000 now. 2000 is real twitchy. This is neat.

I found in my gear here I have a box that takes VGA output and pipes it to a TV set. So I have my window and your window all side by side on one screen. Yeah it's frozen.

I don't know if that saves bandwidth or not. We'll give it a shot. We'll take about 9 more minutes of pleasure and we'll start right back up at 11.

Okay well the technology is going forward and upward isn't it? You know what I think is if I could figure out a way to get a anyway maybe it's toxic enough but it would be nice if we had a plan where we would need for upstream bandwidth Okay well Yeah they're there. See him on the middle? He's having a little trouble with his camera. Someone's broadcasting to us.

That must have been Daniel. I can't tell what he's doing because he paused his video so he could be up to all kinds of nonsense and wouldn't know it. Yeah, that's a good thought.

Daniel, if that's you, you might want to cut your gain back. Well, that's usually better. Which instrument are you going to use? Piano.

Oh, a piano? Yeah, sometimes I keep it... Okay. Yeah, it's got to be tuned, I think, also. Okay, I think we're about ready to resume.

Let me get everything fired up here.