

**15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Lesson & Legacy**

**Psalm 78:1-8**

I wonder where you were last Wednesday at 11 o'clock? I was in Aldi grabbing a few things when the store manager requested everyone stand still for the minute silence on "Remembrance Day" 2020. The eleventh hour, of the eleventh month, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day. We paused to remember, those who suffered physically and emotionally, as a result of defending the freedom we now enjoy as a nation. We paused to remember those who died in the line of duty, who demonstrated such Courage, Endurance, Mateship and Sacrifice.

I posted on Facebook Eric Bogle's song "The Band Played Waltzing Matilda". It is a powerful rendition of a beautiful song that reminds us of the horrors of war. It brings tears to my eyes every time I hear it! It really is gut wrenching.

Remembrance Day and Anzac Day and the commemoration they represent are designed to remind us, "Lest we Forget"!

Psalm 78 encourages us to be inspired by our heritage and legacy. As the people of God when you know you have inherited a powerful story; when you love your parents, when there is unfinished business – then you know that the worst thing you can do is to forget.

Psalm 78 retells the rhythmic history of Israel: rebellion and redemption, sin and forgiveness, wrath and mercy. It tells us the story of how Israel was always breaking God's covenant while God was always keeping it. The author speaks like a prophet, urging us to listen. He is jealous over our hearts, yearning for us to learn a lesson from those who've gone before us, and leave a legacy for those coming after.

**Listen to this gospel rhythm:**

- v13: "He divided the sea..."  
v11: "They forgot his works..."
- v14: "He led them with a cloud..."  
v17: "they sinned still more against him..."
- v18: "They tested God in their heart..."  
v24: "He rained down... manna to eat..."
- v32: "In spite of this, they still sinned..."  
v38: "He... atoned for their iniquity..."
- v43: "He performed his signs in Egypt..."  
v42: "They did not remember his power..."
- v54: "He brought them to his holy land..."  
v58: "they moved him to jealousy with their idols..."
- v59: "He utterly rejected Israel..."  
v72: He sent a king to shepherd them...

This story should not be forgotten. This legacy must not slip between the generational cracks. Today we look at the first eight verses. Asaph begins the psalm by declaring the need to teach. The people, particularly the children, need to be taught about God's works. Verses 2-4 set the stage for what Asaph is trying to accomplish. The events and teachings from the past that their fathers told them, they are going to tell to their children and to the next generation. This declaration is exactly what the Lord commanded:

*“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates”. Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

### **What are the things we teach our children?**

Most parents would likely confess that they have taught the following things to their children: Don't talk to strangers; look both ways before crossing; don't do drugs or alcohol; and keep your room clean. Certainly, this isn't an exhaustive list, but the point becomes clear. There are things that children need to be taught. Essentially, these things relate to survival. All good mums and dads want their kids to be okay. It's just that basic. As the psalmist relates, there are also things we should not hide from our children.

### **What was supposed to be taught?**

#### **a) Asaph says that the mighty works of God need to be taught v4.**

Too often we think that we will teach our children by assumption. We assume they know our faith, but we never verbalize exactly what we believe in God and why. We simply think that our children know, but we never taught. We fear sitting our children down and explaining to them things about the Bible and explain why we are followers of Jesus. Moses said that children must be taught diligently. That means that we must be teaching them verbally on a regular basis. When we are sitting, walking, laying down, and rising up. In every place and at every time we are to be teaching about God's laws and God's mighty works.

#### **b) The second thing Asaph says that we need to teach our children is to trust in God v7.** Here is a place where we have great difficulty. If our lives do not reflect that we have fully put our trust in God, then our faith will look hypocritical and we will not be able to effectively teach our children about trusting God. We must teach our children that trusting in God is not simply a mental affirmative, but a complete life change. We must show our children that trusting in God is putting Him first above the things of the world that so often occupy our time.

#### **c) The third thing Asaph says we need to teach our children is to not be stubborn like their forefathers v8.** This requires the open admission of the parents to the children of what they did wrong and what the previous generations did wrong. For some reason, it seems that parents do not understand how to teach their children that they did things wrong in life. Parents today may have experimented with drugs and engaged in premarital sex. Yet, because they did it, they think they must allow their children to do the same. But parents need to tell the child that what they did was wrong, the reasons why, and the consequences for those bad actions. Teach the children to not do wrong, and have a heart to please Him alone.

**An Illustration** used by David Gunderson, lead pastor of the Bridge Point Bible Church in Houston Texas, back in 2016. It is fairly long, but stay with me, it is a powerful story.

Alexandre Dumas was a French novelist from the 1800's and the author of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. In this book we meet a handsome 19-year-old named Edmond Dantès. Dantès is a successful merchant sailor about to marry his beautiful fiancé Mercédès and be commissioned as captain of his own ship. But he is arrested, framed by a corrupt

judge, and sentenced to prison in “the dreaded Chateau d’If, an island fortress from which no prisoner had ever escaped.”

After years of torturous solitary confinement, Dantès meets an old Italian priest who teaches him “reading, mathematics, science, languages, philosophy, history, sword fighting, and economics.” On the verge of death, the priest tells Dantès about a secret treasure on the island of Monte Cristo. Dantès escapes in the priest’s body bag, finds the treasure of Monte Cristo, and builds a subterranean complex where he trains for the next nine years, masters all forms of combat, and creates three different identities, including the Count of Monte Cristo. He then re-enters high French society and dazzles the elites as a mysterious, wealthy, sophisticated new figure, exacting revenge on his betrayers while helping those oppressed by the powerful. His is the ultimate story of youthful dreams, unthinkable betrayal, unjust imprisonment, electrifying escape, hidden treasure, patient plotting, a messianic re-entrance into society, and of course, his final revenge.

But of course, the Count of Monte Cristo is fictional.

Except when it isn’t. See, the novelist Alexandre Dumas’ father died when Alexandre was just four years old. Alexandre would later write:

*“I worshiped my father . . . I love him still with as tender and as deep and as true a love as if he had watched over my youth and I’d had the blessing to go from child to man leaning on his powerful arm”.*

So, who was this beloved father, and how does he relate to the Count of Monte Cristo? The father was General Alex Dumas (1762-1806), the half-black son of a European noble and a slave woman. He would grow up to be the equivalent of a four-star general, marching alongside an envious Napoleon Bonaparte and commanding 50,000 men. One biographer writes, “*He was a soldier’s general, feared by the enemy and loved by his men, a hero in a world that did not use the term lightly.*”

Over six feet tall, with a striking physique and the high-class heritage of his father, he dazzled and confounded the all-white aristocracy in an age of absolute segregation. He was ambitious, aggressive, courageous, and unbendingly fair.

Picture young Alex Dumas sauntering into an elite 19th century French dinner party and being the strongest, most handsome, most striking man in the room, a room in which a black man did not belong. Picture this general sailing across the Mediterranean, then marching shoulder-to-shoulder across the Egyptian desert with Napoleon Bonaparte. Picture a towering man on his cavalry horse, fitted in a blue uniform with a red-white-and-blue sash, raining down sabre blows with “a sword arm . . . so powerful he could unseat a horseman with one blow.” Picture that same general now languishing in an island prison, the glory of his youth and military accomplishments all but forgotten, the victim of Napoleon’s overpowering jealousy and betrayal. Picture him dying in his own home at 44 years old, a betrayed and broken man, leaving behind a four-year-old boy who grew up cherishing a beloved father, a remarkable story, and unfinished business.

When that boy, the novelist Alexandre Dumas, grew up and wrote his own autobiography, he spent the first 200+ pages on his father. Biographer Tom Reiss writes:

*To remember a person is the most important thing in the novels of Alexandre Dumas. The worst sin anyone can commit is to forget. The villains of The Count of Monte Cristo do not murder the hero, Edmond Dantès—they have him thrown into a dungeon where he is forgotten by the world. The heroes of Dumas never forget anything or*

*anyone: Dantès has a perfect memory for the details of every field of human knowledge, for the history of the world and for everyone he has encountered in his life.*

As I mentioned earlier; Psalm 78 encourages us to be inspired by our heritage and legacy. As the people of God when you know you have inherited a powerful story; when you love your parents, when there is unfinished business – then you know that the worst thing you can do is to forget.

### **The reason why lessons from our legacy are important:**

The Psalmist suggests if we are faithful in teaching the mighty works of God, modelling what it means to trust in God, and warning them not to be stubborn, rebellious, this will prevent them from having unprepared hearts that lead to disobedience.

*“Then they would put their trust/hope in God, and not forget His deeds, but keep His commands.” V7*

1. This is the mystery now made known to believer's:

*“The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:26-27).*

As the hymn says, ‘My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.’ Having experienced it ourselves, THAT is what we want for our children and grandchildren!

2. That they “*might not forget His deeds*”. His works of creation, His works of preservation; His works of providence, His works of power; His works of redemption, His works of grace and mercy. The list could go on and on...

3. That they should “*keep His commands.*” ‘

*In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.  
And his commands are not burdensome, (1 John 5:3).*

*“Jesus replied; Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment”.*

*(Matthew 22:37-38):*

Each generation has a responsibility to tell the next one about the goodness of God, and to warn them of the mess that we make of our lives when we turn away from God's goodness. What a privilege we have to play our role to soften hearts to the story of scripture. To commit our days to the duty of making disciples, and to fill our mouths with the mighty works God. “Lest we Forget”!

### **Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for those who told us about ‘the praiseworthy works of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done’. Help us to ‘tell the next generation’ and help us to teach our children ‘so that the next generation will know them ... and they in turn would tell their children’. Lord, we pray that our children and grandchildren would ‘put their trust in God, and would not forget His deeds but would keep his commands’. In Jesus’ name Amen.