

# February 2026

February 1, 2026

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3

*“The Relief of Good News”*

Just days before I write this, a major hurricane (Helene) tore across western North Carolina, destroying buildings, damaging property, and even killing people. Friends who had family or colleagues in that area were often tormented in not knowing how their kin and acquaintances were doing. Were they hurt? Had they survived? Did they have food to eat? The usual systems of communication were out. Access was limited. Anxiety was the order of the day.

Finally, the news began to filter through the distress, and in many, if not most, cases, the realities of what had happened to loved ones became available.

I thought of that as I read in 1 Thessalonians 3 how Paul was greatly disturbed by what might be happening to that early Christian community in Thessalonica. He worried that persecution had taken a toll on the believers (v. 4). He was tormented by the possibility that many in that congregation had given in to worldly temptations (v. 5).

Evidently, the email system was down so Paul knew that someone had to go in person to Thessalonica to find how things were going, so he sent Timothy to check it out. Can't you feel his nervousness, his torment, as he waited for a report? But, the news was good (v. 6). The believers in Thessalonica had been faithful, still had an appreciation of Paul, and had come through times of distress with faithfulness. Hooray!

Can I be a Timothy? Can I be one who finds where God's presence and power is still at work, even in those places that are threatened by pressures of the world and challenged by those who choose not to live by love? Can I give evidence of the initiative of God in a setting that seems devoid of divine caring? Sometimes it is hard to be a comfort to those in distress, but God's Light shines in ways and places where we least expect it.

The prayer that closes this chapter (vv. 11-13) gives us a handle for being a sign of God's continuing, abiding presence. What would love (v. 12) look like in this situation? What would holy living (v. 13) look like in this situation? Thanks be to God for such gifts!

*What Someone Else Has Said:*

Karl Barth (*God in Action*, Roundtable Press) wrote: "(The Church) arises from the election, decision, and disposition of God toward (humankind)."



*Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Thank You, Lord, for continuing to bless us with the Church. You bless us within the Church and You bless the Church to be for others..."

February 8, 2026

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4

*“A Royal Welcome for Our Monarch”*

The emphases in 1 Thessalonians 4 might have "Twenty-first Century" stamped on them. (1) There is the issue of sexual holiness (vv. 3-7). Does that sound like today? (2) There is the issue of how to relate to those outside our usual culture (vv. 11-12). Can you name those who come to engage our culture? (3) There is the issue of the torment of missing loved ones who have died (vv. 13-18). Whose name is on your list?

[1] Paul is clear that appropriate sexual behavior is not defined by society; it is defined by God (v. 8). Some folks might be surprised to note that the apostle understands that sexual expression can be exemplary of holiness (v. 4). Obviously, those in the Thessalonian church were in a culture where abuse of sexual gifts was common. (Look at 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:13, 18 for other examples.) Paul says, "Let your sex life be holy!"

[2] Evidently, Paul noticed that some in the congregation at Thessalonica were slacking off work responsibilities and taking advantage of what he called "outsiders." How do you define "outsider"? Might it be by language? Might it be by place of birth? Might it be by religious vocabulary? Might it be by economic measurement? The Twentieth Century New Testament renders 1 Thessalonians 4:12 this way: "so that your conduct may win respect from those outside the Church." How do you relate to outsiders?

[3] In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul offers a word of hope and expectation to those who have lost loved ones. He is saying, "It ain't over. Death does not have the final word." This would have been a big question for that first-generation church. They might have been wondering, "Even if Christ saves those who have died, what about us who have not died? If Christ comes back before we die, will He save us too?" The living and the dead are all alive in Christ.

Wow! There are at least these three issues in this chapter: sexuality, outsiders, death of loved ones. Paul may have been writing to Thessalonica, but his message surely has my Zip Code on it!

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Carl Michalson (*Faith for Personal Crises*, Scribners) wrote: "To be like God is not our responsibility; it is our sin...To be responsible to God is our task, and that task defines our very being as a human being."

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Thank You, grace-giving God, for moving in this very world where I live, to challenge me, to support me, to comfort me. You are with me so I do not travel this journey alone..."

February 15, 2026

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5

*"Stay Awake! Be Prepared!"*

This week's lesson closes out these reflections on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. The apostle speaks again of the coming again of Christ. As we wait for that Good Day, we are to be patient and helpful with all (vv. 14-15). We are to live a life of thanksgiving (v. 18). We are to refrain from evil (v. 22). We are to share this word with all (v. 27).

Earlier today, a friend of mine said he was going to come to visit me tonight. So, I made sure I had on hand his favorite diet soft drink, a magazine I knew he enjoyed, and the TV set on the game I knew he would want to watch. It worked. We had a delightful time.

But suppose I had not known when he was going to come. Would I have had the caffeine-free Diet Coke in the refrigerator? Would I have pulled *Our State* magazine off the rack? Would I have bothered to find out which channel was carrying his ball game?

The apostle Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they do not know when the Lord will return (v. 2). They simply must be prepared at all times—day or night. Always keep caffeine-free Diet Coke in the refrigerator! We stay prepared for our Lord's return by wearing the breastplate of faith and love (v. 8). We stay prepared for the Lord's return by the way we live with (and for) each other (vv.

11-15). We stay prepared for the Lord's return by accepting the peace of assurance that God will give us (v. 23).

Today I went to a nearby library to cast my votes in the early voting of the upcoming General Election. I was astonished that even though the signs pointed the way ("Vote Here"), there was no one in line. Usually, in early voting, I take my place at the back of a slowly moving line. Maybe I had hit the timing jackpot! I reached for the door that would lead to the voting booths. The door was locked. I tried another door. It was locked. As I turned in mystery, a woman opened her car door, stepped out, and said, "If you are looking for early voting, it starts tomorrow." I wanted it today, but it comes tomorrow. I'll be ready.

Will I be ready for the "tomorrow" of our Lord's return?

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Bruce Metzger (*Breaking the Code*, Abingdon) wrote: "...the central truth... is the clear and direct affirmation: Christ will return, as he had promised, and will destroy the forces of evil and establish God's eternal kingdom."

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus! Help me to live with the joy of expectancy. Help me to live with the opportunity of present-day serving..."

February 22, 2026

Text: Lamentations 1:7-20

*"When Comfort Seems Far Away"*

For the first weeks of Lent, we shall be walking in the Book of Lamentations. As a whole, it must be one of the saddest books in the Bible. Jerusalem has fallen, and the steady question of "Why? Why?" goes unanswered. It is a lament about hunger, rape, dying children, rejection, and destroyed property. As the title of this week's lesson says, comfort seemed far away.

Most of Lamentations is written as a poem. One dimension that is lost in translations is that in the original Hebrew, lines of the poem appear in alphabetical order...something like this:

Always I am  
Beaten, but  
Can I say to  
Divinity, will I  
Ever be able to  
Find and enjoy  
Growth in life?

As I was typing this, my phone rang. It was a former student who now serves as a pastor in a hurricane-damaged area. He said his wife and son were ignoring him. His neighbor was blaming him for yard trash caused by a fallen

tree. No one in his congregation had checked on his well-being. He even went to the town office and found the place was closed. The equipment needed to clear the debris was too expensive to buy or rent.

He closed the call by saying, "Thank you. I just wanted to tell someone." Truth to tell, I was honored that he felt free to dump all this on me.

I mention this incident because I think God must have been pleased that the writers of Lamentations felt free to lay their genuine thoughts and feelings on God. I don't have to pretend in front of God. I can unload my deepest hurt, my newest doubt, my daily weariness onto God's open ears. What a gift! I don't have to pretend in front of God!

*What Someone Else Has Said:*  
*In The Christian Art of Dying* (Eerdmans), Allen Verhey says, "...Christian hope is not inconsistent with lament." Then, he quotes Clifton Black: "The spine of lament is hope: not the vacuous optimism that 'things will get better,' which in the short run is usually a lie, but the deep and irrepressible conviction in the teeth of present evidence, that God has not severed the umbilical cord that has always bound us to the Lord."

*Prayer:*  
As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Let me be truthful with You, Lord. Right now, some things are not going well. Where are You? ..."

## March 2026

March 1, 2026

Text: Lamentations 2:1-9, 18-22

Psalm 130:1-8

*"Broken, Cut Down, and Scorned"*

Have you ever blamed God when things did not go as you thought they should? That tone of accusation against God leaps out from this week's reading in Lamentations. Even though Israel's disobedience in dealing with Egypt planted the seeds of this destruction, the poet sees God as the villain. Look at Lamentations 2:5: God is like an enemy. Look at Lamentations 2:6: God has destroyed the temple. Look at Lamentations 2:7: God has delivered the holy places into the hands of the enemy. At a minimum, we can say, "This ain't going to look too good on God's resume!"

Interestingly, even though the writer plops all the blame onto God, these verses still call upon the people to make pleas to God for help. Lamentations 2:18 begs Israel to pray to the Lord. Lamentations 2:19 calls for prayer night

and day. Lamentations 2:20 asks God to ponder what has happened to God's people. The text of Psalm 130 is the kind of prayer that one might offer in such a time of distress.

Guess what? The biblical evidence in these verses is that we can be open and honest and authentic in our prayers to God. Did we somehow think that God did not know what we were actually thinking and feeling? God's judgment would not be against what we are feeling, but against our failure to acknowledge it before God.

This is not to say that any attitude or prejudice or anger is acceptable to God. It is just to say that there is more authenticity in my prayer when I do not try to hide it when, as the title of this session says, I am "broken, cut down, and scorned."

When I see the honesty in these Lamentations verses that blame God, I get increased confidence in the report of the more powerful and loving actions by God. A relationship with God has little meaning unless we bring all of who we are.

Some congregations have a tradition of not singing "Alleluia" during these days of Lent. Lamentations helps us see that some prayers indeed are real simply because they do not include a claim of "Alleluia."

*What Someone Else Has Said:*  
Kel Groseclose (*Why Did God Make Bugs and Other Icky Things?*, Dimensions for Living) wrote: "It is quite possible for people of all ages to pray with childlike trust and openness. Children aren't the only ones capable of using simple, direct language."

*Prayer:*  
As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Here's what I'm thinking, Lord..."

March 8, 2026

Text: Lamentations 3:1-20, 31-33, 43-48

Psalm 103:1-10

*"The Symptoms of Affliction"*

Before you read these verses from Lamentations, let me give you a filter to use. If the anguish in the text is physical, raise your left hand. If the anguish in the text is emotional, raise your right hand. (I assure you; this will be good exercise!) Okay. Close this down for a moment and try that.

Do that for a moment.

Welcome back.

How did it go? How many times did you lift your right hand? How often did you lift your left hand? Were there times you lifted them both at the same time?

Brokenness in our relationship with others can express itself physically and emotionally. It is not surprising that the Lamentations poet sees both as evidence of how we feel (or don't feel) God's presence in our life.

Over against these hurts, pains, afflictions, we also get some good news: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases" (v. 22)... "The Lord is my portion...therefore I will hope in him" (v. 24)...

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him" (v. 25)... "For the Lord will not reject forever" (v. 31)... "...he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone" (v. 33)... "You came near when I called on you; you said 'Do not fear.'" (v. 57)

These same affirmations of God's caring goodness are expressed in the Psalm referenced in today's study. God heals! God forgives! God redeems! (Psalm 103:3-4).

If we think the writer of Lamentations is being open and forthright in naming all the ways he has suffered (Remember raising your left hand and your right hand?), can we also believe that he also understands and proclaims a God who brings healing and acceptance and new beginnings? Both of these experiences are indeed lived in the real world. Yes, God lives in the real world.

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

In *Grace Matters* (Jossey-Bass), Chris Rice quotes a friend who said: "I think the big paradigm shift is understanding that there is only one detail that matters: God loves you. Unless we are gripped by that fact, it's too dangerous to do anything. It's about God's action among you, or it's nothing... The more we understand who God is, the more we are changed."

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Where have You been, Lord? I need You. Put me on the timing of Your schedule..."

March 15, 2026

Text: Lamentations 4:3-10, 14-19, 21-22

Psalm 56

*"The Depths of Desperation"*

This morning, I had breakfast with a long-time friend. I told her that I was writing these commentaries on the Book of Lamentations. I asked her, "What do you think is the greatest value of Lamentations?" (Before you read her answer, why don't you pause and answer that question yourself?) She looked out the window and then said, "For me, its greatest value is that it gives me permission to lament and complain when things aren't going well."

Indeed! There is a time and place for naming

what hurts. There is a time and place for confessing how we have gone wrong. There is a time and place for acknowledging our disappointments. There is a time and place to admit that sometimes God seems absent. There is a time and place to be open about our losses.

Now, to be clear, this is not the primary truth of the Scripture, but we can't throw away these five chapters of distress and disaster. In a sense, the "depths of desperation" in these verses makes the Good News even better!

Lamentations 4:21-22 helps me see how shallow is my effort to care for all people. Edom was an enemy of Israel, and the writer seems delighted that the women of Edom will be humiliated by being stripped naked. Then, he is delighted that the "daughter of Zion" (his kin) will no longer be in exile. He seems to be saying, "Hooray that they lose and hooray that we win." If Lamentations had not shared that, I might have slipped away without asking when I had been just like that. When have I been pleased to see an "enemy" humiliated?

Lamentations helps me see myself as I am rather than as God wants me to be. Because of that difference, I need to repent.

Lent is often seen as a season of repentance. So, it is interesting to note that the root of the Hebrew word for Lamentations is *qûwm*, a term for the wailing of a musical instrument. These are days for moaning and mourning, a way of asking, "What now, God?"

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Emil Brunner (*I Believe in the Living God*, Westminster) put it this way: "To repent is really nothing else than to become honest before God and to see oneself as one is, in the mirror of God."

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Here is what I see, O Lord; help me use that as a new beginning point..."

March 22, 2026

Text: Lamentations 5:1-5, 14-22

Psalm 98:1-9

*"Remember Us! See Us!"*

In Lamentations 5:1, the poet begs the Lord to "remember...what has befallen us." The Hebrew word that gets translated as "remember" (*zâkar*) literally means "to mark." I get this image of a long list of all the things that have happened to Israel with a big check mark next to the ones that were painful, harmful, and lingering. (Look over this fifth chapter of Lamentations and see how many marks would have to be made!)

After noting all the dreadful things that have happened to his people (loss of income-v. 2,

death of kin-v. 3, dependence on enemies-v. 6, rape-v. 11, torture of leaders-v. 12), the writer pleads "Have you forgotten us?" (v. 20). Then, there is a prayer that acknowledges that God can restore these people to good things (v. 21). But then comes the boomerang: unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure." (v. 20). This collection of poems ends on a note of uncertainty.

Contrast that with Psalm 98. It is filled with words of victory (v. 1-2), words of love and faithfulness (v. 3), words of joy (v. 4), words of praise (v. 5), words of righteousness (v. 9). Look at Psalm 98:3: "He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness." There is that word *zâkar* again! Remember! Mark it for memory! It is as if the psalmist records God's answer to the plea of Lamentations 5:1, to remember all that has happened. God remembers and responds with love and faithfulness.

Both of these biblical references ring true (Lamentations 5 and Psalm 98). There have been times of hurt and loss. That cannot be denied. There is God's ultimate triumph and gift of recovery. That is to be celebrated.

As we live out the faith journey with others, let us recognize that some persons are dwelling in the distress of Lamentations. It is not authentic to deny someone else's pain. Others have seen a time of triumph in their lives. It is not authentic to say that someone else's joy is fake and unrealistic. Both experiences are real. This Lenten season is about ready to turn a corner. God hears our voice of repentance. God hears our expectancy of new life. God hears our lament and moves us toward a new song.

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Theodore H. Runyon (Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, Kingswood) wrote: "Of course, these spiritual senses with which every human being is endowed by the Creator have been dulled, by the Fall and the habits of sin and indifference."

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Remember, O Lord..."

March 29, 2026

Text: John 12:12-19

*"Your King Is Coming!"*

Palm Sunday. My memory goes back to my childhood Sunday School experience. The children's department of Sunday School always provided a drama to open the Palm Sunday worship service. Boys and girls would line up and down the main aisle of the sanctuary. They would wave fans that were supposed to be like palms. One child then came down the aisle, riding a stick horse. Young voices would call out, "Hosanna! Hosanna!"

Ah, yes. "Hosanna", that may well be the key word for remembering the Palm Sunday story. It literally means "Oh, save!" or "Please save!" J. B. Phillips renders it: "God, save him!" Charles B. Williams (*A Translation in the Language of the People*) writes: "Blessings on him!" *In Living Letters*, Kenneth Taylor translates it: "God bless the king of Israel! Hail to God's ambassador!" Today's English Version has "Praise God!"

Here is a question for each of us: "What do I call out when I am aware that I am in the presence of Christ, the King?" Maybe "Thank You!" Maybe "Help me!" Maybe "What do You want?" Maybe "Leave me alone!" Maybe "Are you sure?" Maybe "Who do you think you are?" Maybe "I want to be with You." Maybe even "Hosanna!"

As believers in the Christian tradition, we know well what comes next. Betrayal. Trial. Crucifixion. Resurrection. New life. And now, today-March 29, 2026. How does our "Hosanna" impact each of those ingredients in this Holy Week? How do we live out the "Hosanna" we shout? How do we relate to others who cry out "Hosanna"? How do we relate to those for whom this day carries no particular meaning?

Palm Sunday. As I recall that children's drama so many years ago, I remember the time I got to "ride the donkey" down the main aisle of the church. I was so proud! I loved the recognition! I was feeling pretty good about myself. As we sat down for the rest of the service, Pete Durham noticed my bursting ego. He leaned over and whispered, "Don't get too carried away. Remember what is going to happen on Friday."

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

In his book *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* (Abingdon), Laurence Hull Stookey has written: "The entry into the city is charged with irony, and it is about us as fully as it is about people in ancient Jerusalem. Our faith, too, is fickle; we are the crucifiers of the One whose coming we have called 'blessed.'"

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayers begin: "Lord, I cry 'hosanna,' but help me hear the rest of the story..."

## April 2026

April 5, 2026

Text: John 11:17-27; 20:9

*"I Am the Resurrection and the Life"*

On Easter Sunday, we are not surprised to be reminded of the resurrection of Jesus. What is surprising is that He makes the same offer to us. The story of Lazarus reminds us that death is not the final word for us and our loved ones.

A friend gave me a calendar that for each day has some unusual word. I seldom have ever heard of the word. Yesterday, the word-of-the-day was *nychthemeron*. (When was the last time you used that word in a sentence?) It means “a complete 24-hour period of both day and night.” That term has come to mind because the resurrection shows me that Jesus is in charge of day *and* night, of life *and* death. Jesus is in charge of the *nychthemeron*!

Unfortunately for you, this reminds me of a bad joke. Did you hear about the fellow who worked in the calendar factory? He got fired. “Why?”, you might ask, “was he fired?” He lost his job at the calendar factory because he took a day off. (Pause for your chuckle. You’re welcome.)

I mention that because Easter is evidence that in the final analysis, Jesus does not take a day off. Just when Death thought it has put an end to this grace-giving, forgiving, healing Love, boom! The tomb was empty, and that grace, forgiveness, and healing Love was poured back into the world. The New Testament word that gets translated as “resurrection” literally means “standing up again.” That’s a great image when the journey of life seems to have knocked us over! We even stand up again after death!

In the Gospel account, one of the women disciples, Mary Magdalene, is the first to give witness to Jesus’ resurrection (John 20:18). There was a time when the disciples did not have such a witness. Look at John 20:9. Contrast that with John 20:18. And I am left to wonder which of these verses better reflects my own life? Do my decisions and my relationships reflect the lack of understanding in John 20:9, or do they show the assurance of John 20:18? Read those two verses aloud and measure them against your own relationship with Christ.

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Alfred H. Ackley (no. 310, *The United Methodist Hymnal*) has written these familiar words: “I serve a risen Savior, he’s in the world today; I know that he is living, whatever foes may say. I see his hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer, and just the time I need him, he’s always near. He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart.”

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Risen Lord, You’re with me...”

April 12, 2026

Text: Psalm 34:1-6, 15-22

“*God Is Good*”

This week’s lesson is the first of five that roam around in the Psalter. The poets who wrote the Psalms travel through a wide range of emotions and observations. Our look today at Psalm 34 is

a look at the goodness of God.

Have you ever been to Platte City, Missouri? No, I haven’t either. However, I do have a friend who lives there. We were phone chatting the other day and she mentioned a restaurant she enjoys going to. She described the helpful staff. She told me about special items on the menu. She was pleased that it was a quick drive from where she lives. It got me so interested that I actually looked up the place on-line. Wow! It looked good. If I’m ever in Platte City, I’m going to that place! All it took was a word from someone I trusted.

I wonder if my witness to God’s goodness can be like that? I simply tell another how I have experienced the redeeming power of the Lord. I describe to a neighbor how God’s forgiving nurture has kept me on track. I share how God’s Light shines into the dark places of my life. That’s really what the psalmist is doing. Can my own life become that kind of witness? In Psalm 34, there are about a dozen times the poet uses the first-person term (me, I, or my) to depict how God has been good in the poet’s life. It is a good thing to tell others how God has been good, but when I tell how God has been good to me, it raises the value of what I share. All it takes is a word from someone trusted.

It is inspiring to note the various words used in this psalm to describe God’s activity: answered (v. 4), delivered (v. 4), heard (v. 6), eyes watching (v. 15), ears listening (v. 15), cut off evil (v. 16), hears (v. 17), rescues (v. 17), near (v. 18), saves (v. 18), rescues (v. 19), keeps (v. 20), redeems (v. 22). Which words would you use to describe how God has been present in your life?

As you review Psalm 34, do you see anything that makes you think “That was then, but this is now”? Read this psalm through the lens of 2026. Is it still true? Does it still reflect the human condition? Does it still describe how God works in this century? The psalmist offers an eternal view: “I will bless the Lord at all times” (v. 1). That includes this twenty-first-century day. Thanks be to God for eternal truth!

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

In *Living Our Beliefs* (Discipleship Resources), Kenneth Carder has written: “Amid a world where suffering and death are universally present, the questions are inevitable and necessary: Who is God? Where is God? What is God doing, if anything?”

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Help me find Your presence, O God, that I may rejoice in Your love...”

April 19, 2026

Text: Psalm 35:1-14, 22-28

“*Defend Me! Vindicate Me!*”

Are you looking for a biblical vocabulary that will

help you relate to others in a biblical way? Look at Psalm 35, and try these on for size:

- v. 1-God, fight against my enemies
- v. 3-Lord, draw the spear and javelin against those who disagree with me
- v. 4-O Lord, dishonor those who oppose me
- v. 4-Let those who are against me be confounded
- v. 6-Lord, let Your angel push my opponents into slippery abyss
- v. 8-Let ruin come upon them unawares

Well, you get the idea. The psalmist pleads with God to do all kinds of harmful things to those “who fight against me.” Give the psalmist credit for pouring his real feelings and hopes before God.

When you pray to God to help you in a difficult situation, do you—like David in this psalm—tell God how you want it done? When I insist that God help me in a specific way (by damaging my enemy, for example), I may miss it when God helps some other way.

The bottom line of this psalm is the celebration in verses 27 and 28. I like the way The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible puts it: “But let all who would see me righted shout for joy, let them cry continually ‘All glory to the Lord who would see his servant thrive!’ So shall I talk of thy justice and of thy praise all the day long.”

The painful plea for help in this chapter closes on a note of praise. The psalmist David tells why he is going to end up in a better place: “Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant” (NRSV). Not only does David anticipate the outcome, he promises to spread the news of what God has done. Joy and love become tools of witness. Does my life testify to healing, cleansing, restoring love of God? Although the poet David has his own ideas as to how God can deliver him (by torturing David’s enemies), in the final acknowledgments, he simply celebrates that God gets it done in God’s way.

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

Cassiodorus is quoted in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament VII* (Intervarsity Press): “Persecutors bestow worldly pleasures on their own souls, but the faithful turn their prayers to the Lord and place their joy not in themselves but in his praises.”

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Rescue the perishing...”

April 26, 2026

Text: Psalm 78:1-8

*“Pass the Story On!”*

Psalm 78 is one of the longest of the one hundred fifty psalms. It is seventy-two verses

long and much of it traces key events in the story of the people of Israel. Over and over again, it tells of God’s faithfulness and human brokenness. The chapter begins with an injunction to remember these accounts and to share them with others (Psalm 78:1-4).

How do I share the message of God’s steady love?

Last Sunday, there was a visitor at the service I attended. She was the only black woman there. No one seemed to know her, but she got a lot of “Welcome” and “Glad you can be here.” Later, I found out that she was the surgeon for one of my friends who had just had surgery. It turns out that as my friend had faced that dangerous operation, she had asked him how he could be so calm. He spoke of his faith and invited her to church. Now she says she will be back with all of her family. How do I share the message of God’s love?

Week after week, after week, Alice and Joyce would be embarrassed if I used their real names. They would restock the “Little Free Pantry” in our church parking lot. Cans of beans. Bottles of water. Boxes of crackers. And every day, homeless and wandering people enjoy these touches of hospitality. Once, a bedraggled man asked Alice, “Why do you do this?” She simply turned and pointed to the cross at the top of our steeple. How do I share the message of God’s love?

During most of the Sunday worship service, James is downstairs in the nursery being watched over by helpful caregivers. There is an exception. On the Sundays we have Communion, James’ dad will slip out the back door, go and get James, and bring him up to partake of this Holy Meal. Look at Psalm 78:4. James’ dad is living out that challenge. How do I share the message of God’s love?

Maybe an offering plate? Maybe a word of greeting? Maybe a forgiving spirit or an invitation to church? A sack of groceries? A study group? A smile of greeting? A caring answer? How do I share the message of God’s love?

Psalm 78:7-8 contrasts two ways of responding to God. Which one have you passed along?

#### *What Someone Else Has Said:*

In *Memory and Mission* (Abingdon), David Steinmetz says: “The authority of the Church to which Augustine alluded is the authority of the holiness of its life and the faithfulness of its witness.”

#### *Prayer:*

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Use me, Lord, even me...”



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