

## **Reflection: Memories & Hope**

How is your memory of history? I came across a joke when I was researching for my reflection.

- History teacher to a failing student: Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.  
Student: But history is so boring!  
Teacher: Well, if you don't do better you'll be retaking it next year.  
Student: What??  
Teacher: I TOLD you, those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it!

Have I got your attention now? What has this got to do with the scripture passage we read this morning.

The Psalmist Asaph starts the way any good speaker does – by trying to get everyone's attention.

Psalm 78 starts:

**1** Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

Asaph is trying to get everyone's attention.

So what was so important that Asaph wanted the people to hear. Asaph said he will tell the dark sayings as well as the glorious deeds so that children yet unborn will learn from what has happened in the past. He says he will tell how God has worked through their ancestors lives. He goes on to say it is the task of each generation to tell their children stories of the past so they have a strong faith in God & don't repeat the mistakes of their ancestors.

We only read the first 8 verses of the psalm– there are 72 of them. Asaph must have felt it was an important message.

Back in Old Testament days, the passing down of stories verbally was the only way that people heard about the past. Books and writing were not something the ordinary family would have access to so they passed on family history and

happenings by word of mouth. But Asaph, our psalmist, is saying that they should not only listen to the stories, but listen attentively to them. Learn from them. He was trying to remind people of the God of our ancestors & God's part in our daily living – God the Creator, the Holy Mystery, the basis of our faith.

My grandfather lived with us for many years after my grandmother died. As a child I often crawled up on his lap for comfort & to hear stories of his early life. As I got older, I didn't always take the time to stop & hear the stories because I was wanting to take part in the adventures of a teenager & besides I had heard the stories so many times I could tell most of them myself.

Years later, I wished I had listened more attentively to him & even possibly written down his stories. I did however learn from the experience. I made a point of talking to his daughter, my aunt, many times & wrote down many stories she told me & I did the same with my mother. Now I have a history of my ancestors that I can pass on to future generations. They will not only get a factual history, but also stories about how my ancestors actually lived & why they made certain decisions.

We are approaching Remembrance Day. On that day each year we repeat stories of how our forefathers fought for our freedom: our freedom to live in peace, our freedom of religion, our freedom to have a democracy. Here are a few quick facts about this special day:

1. Remembrance Day was first observed in 1919 throughout the British Commonwealth. It was originally called "Armistice Day" to commemorate the armistice agreement that ended the First World War on Monday, November 11, 1918, at 11 a.m.- on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Each year Armistice Day was celebrated on the Monday of the week in which November 11 fell.
2. In 1931 the name was changed to "Remembrance Day" & it was to be observed on November 11, no matter day of the week it fell on and that is the way it has been ever since.
3. Every year on November 11, we pause in a moment of silence to honour and remember the men and women who have served, and continue to serve Canada during times of war, conflict and peace. The [poppy](#) is the symbol of Remembrance

Day used mainly in the British Commonwealth. For example, the United States does not have the poppy as a symbol when they celebrate Veterans Day which is their version of our Remembrance Day.

4. Many nations all over the world observe this day as well.

Just like the psalmist said we should, we tell stories of the past on Remembrance Day so that by remembering the past horrors of war we will do everything in our power not to have another world war. By hearing stories of the World Wars & other wars, by speaking to veterans or families of veterans, and going to museums, we can learn and hopefully make decisions so that such awful things don't happen again.

In 2019 Doug & I took a European River Cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam with stops each day in countries along the way. On one stop, we took a tour of the Nuremberg Documentation Centre. According to Wikipedia, it is a museum in the north wing of the Congress Hall of the former Nazi party rallies. It's a museum that tells the history of Nazi Germany - concerned with the causes, connections, and consequences of Nazi Germany. In it are pictures, newspaper clippings, sound tracks, artifacts, & stories from that point in history. A very moving display. Part way through I remember hearing a group of tourists in tears saying, "I didn't know this all happened. How could this be & we knew nothing." I was dumbfounded. How could they not know?

The words of Asaph, our psalmist, keep echoing in my head. Keep telling the stories of our history and our trust in God from generation to generation. These stories can be passed on through family discussions, church, Sunday school, Bible studies, singing songs, doing outreach, many & varied ways.

But that is only the beginning. We pass on the history of our faith, but we also have to show our faith through our actions. Those who fought in wars gave their lives for what they believed. Is our faith obvious enough that people can see what we believe in by what we do. We are to be the light for others.

Our actions need to show that God is an important part of our past, our present and our future. We are never alone. With faith in God, we always have hope.

To sum this all up, I would like to close with the words from a hymn often sung at Remembrance Day services:

O God, our help in ages past,

Our hope for years to come,

Be thou our guard while troubles last,

And our eternal home.